Mage Kirilli: Faith, Love And Country



The synchrony of violins, rhythmic drum beats, emotive lyrics and the deep timbre of vocals bring to life Mage Kirilli. A 16-track CD of songs by Anura Senanayake Senior DIG of Police, lays bare the myriad shades and poignant sentiments of a duty-bound

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“An individual who can wholeheartedly appreciate music is indeed triumphant,” declares Anura Senanayake. He first studied music formally at his alma mater, St Servatius College in Matara during the early years.

Although the opportunity to study music further, lay before him, he followed in the footsteps of his father and joined the Police as a sub inspector.

At 41 years of service in the Police, Anura Senanayake believes that his dedication and commitment stems from a deeper humane quality.

A sensitivity that he recognises, also allows him to appreciate and experience music. Over the years this casual penchant for music, has materialised into stage performances at Police events and functions. However, it was in 1984 at a musical show in Gampaha that his talent shone in the limelight. With the popular band Superstar and other prolific names such as Milton Mallawarachchi, Mohideen Beg, Jothipala and Latha Walpola scheduled to perform, a large crowd had flocked to the venue.

Noted in the Police for his singing talent, the then Chief of Police instructed that he perform on stage. Overwhelmed by the opportunity to sing in front of such a large audience in the wake of notable performances, Anura Senanayake was unsure of his ability. However, his performance of two songs, proved successful.

“While singing I felt I was doing it right. The audience was responding and it was well received,” he recollects. He marks this occasion as the turning point, as renowned music director, film director and keyboardist of the Superstar band, Sarath de Alwis approached him. “He suggested that with my ability it would be worthwhile to sing my own songs to reach people.” These encouraging words from a respected musician, was the validation Anura Senanayake needed. Following the incident he approached Elite Studio and together with musician Jayantha Gamage, who wrote and composed the song titled Mage Kirilli, Anura Senanayake recorded his first song in 1984.

Mage Kirilli is a song close to his heart and he sings the words in earnestness. It is about a dutiful man who, much like a bird that returns to his nest, must return home to his family every day. He makes a heartfelt plea that no harm should befall him. If his wings were to be clipped, then there would be no one to care for his family. He sings in appeal to protect the joy that rests upon the nest so that he would not witness tears of sadness of his loved ones. As the track that introduced him to the music sphere, it was chosen as the title to the CD.

More songs came into being at a leisurely pace while Anura Senanayake engaged in his Police duties. He never ventured into singing professionally and maintained a low profile. His desire to give something back to society once he reaches retirement, spurred him into put together a CD. A combination of new and old songs covered a spectrum of emotions and can be broadly identified as patriotism, spirituality, and love.

Sathara Maha Gangawe, composed by Navaratne Gamage and written by Ratna Sri Wijesinghe, is an example of a song that praises the island home and its many blessings conveyed in lyricized fervour while an orchestra of traditional drum beats conjure a rhythmic accompaniment. Sura Veenawe is a song of divinity and an ode to the Kataragama Deity. Penned by R M Ratnayake and composed by H M Jayawardena, it is a stirring combination of lyrics and music. The opening few bars with the mesmerising and percussive thumping of the tabla instantly sets the tone of spiritual worship. The chorus that chants waters of the Menik River overflows draws to mind the spiritual veneration of the Kataragama deviyo.

If Something Should Happen And His Wings Were To Be Clipped, Then There Would Be No One To Care For His Family. He Sings In Appeal To Protect The Joy That Rests Upon The Nest So That He Would Not Witness Tears Of Sadness Of His Loved Ones.

Another song that conveys a patriotic message is Gemunu Kumaru. Its central theme is accentuated with emphasis on a combination of traditional drums that maintain an oriental sound and feel. Composed by Jayantha Gamage, the lyrics written by Ajantha Ranasinghe complement a rousing melody to affect its message of inspiration. On the theme of patriotism Manu Dahama carries a different message of rising in unison in the aftermath of war.

The CD also includes a duet with Uresha Ravihari who contributes her vocals to Seetha Yamaye. A sweet tempered love song with eight violins to impart a melodic punch. The song is composed by Ajith Dharshana Jayaweera bringing to life the lyrics of Wasantha Kumara Hobawaka. Manimekalawo, a sentimental song composed by Sarath De Alwis alternates between dreamy flute music that complements its lyrics written by Saman Chandranath Weerasinghe and the springing rhythms of the tabla and dholki.

In putting together the songs for the collection, Anura Senanayake wished to include a song in praise of Buddhist virtues. He approached Rambukkan Siddartha Thero with the request to provide him with the lyrics, which resulted in the track Sadaham Mal. A melody composed by Rohana Weerasinghe unfolds with subtle complexity and proved to be a difficult song to sing. However, to the singer it is a song that instantly conjures images of a temple and tranquillity while conveying the virtues of a pious life and Buddhist teachings.

What could be the most poignant song in the CD is Prarthana Mal, composed by Mahinda Bandara and written by Kumaradasa Saputhanthri. The song contains the sentiments of a father as he gives away his daughter on her wedding day.

It touches on the cascade of emotions as the daughter steps into a new life while finding firm footing in society, leaving behind the protection of a father.

The entirety of the collection of old and new songs was put together over a period of two and a half years. “I am thankful to my family, wife and children for their support and input that helped make this all possible,” he states.

And all proceeds from the CD are made towards a fund that will finance the building of 3,000 houses for families of soldiers who have lost their lives or limbs in the war.

The CD was launched with a concert attended by President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development and other luminaries including a host of renowned artists and singers.

Anura Senanayake performed each of the tracks while his daughter Anuradha, following her father’s footsteps, performed a speical song as well. The songs and the concert received appreciative feedback from the distinguished gathering.











