



ILAIYARAJA

Akademi Award: Creative & Experimental Music

Born on 1 June 1947 in Pannaipuram in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, Shri Ilaiyaraaja was initially trained in Carnatic music by Swami Dakshinamoorthy. He was later a student of T.V. Gopalakrishnan, the well-known Mridangam player. He studied Western music under Dhanraj.

Shri Ilaiyaraaja entered the Tamil film industry in the 1970s and has enjoyed a highly successful career as a composer, singer, conductor and lyricist. He has composed music for over four thousand songs in some nine hundred feature films and documentaries. Besides films in the South Indian languages — Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada — his work has found a place in Hindi and Marathi films. *Johnny* (1980), *Mouna Ragam* (1986), *Kamagni* (1987), *Geethanjali* (1989), *Guna* (1991), *Aur Ek Prem Kahani* (1996), *Hey Ram* (1999), *Shiva* (2006), *Cheeni Kum* (2007), and *Paa* (2009) are some of his well-known films. Shri Ilaiyaraaja has also composed Keertanas in rare ragas. A Gold Medalist of the Trinity College of Music, London, he is the first Asian to have worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to create a symphony performed and recorded at London's Waltham Town Hall. His acclaimed albums are *How to Name It* (1984), *Nothing but Wind* (1986), and *Thiruvagasam* (2004), an oratorio of ancient Tamil poems transcribed partially in English by Stephen Schwartz and performed by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. His works *Rajavin Ramana Malai* (2000), *Music Messiah* (2000), and *India 24 Hours* (2003) have also received high praise from lay listeners and critics. He has trained many young people to work as music directors in the Indian film industry.

For his outstanding work as a composer, Shri Ilaiyaraaja has received a number of coveted awards. These includes the National Film Awards for Best Music Direction (1983, 1985, 1988, 2009), the Tamil Nadu State Film Awards as Best Music Director (1977, 1980, 1981, 1988, 1989, 2008), the Kerala State Film Award as Best Music Director (1995), an honorary doctorate conferred by the University of Arizona, U.S.A. (1994), and an Award of Appreciation bestowed by the Federation of Tamil Sangams, North America (1994). He was conferred the Padma Bhushan in 2010.

Shri Ilaiyaraaja receives the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to creative and experimental music.