

Ponniah Pillai

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Ponniah Pillai (1889- Jun 30, 1945)

Ponniah Pillai was born on 1889. He traced his origins to Tirunelveli district, to Senthil Annavi, a veena player from Tirunelveli Nellaiyappar Temple. Senthil Annavi's son Mahadeva Annavi was brought to Thanjavur by then ruler, Tulaja II. Mahadeva's four sons were the famed Tanjor Quartet and K.Ponniah Pillai was their descendent.

Ponniah Pillai trained under his own Father and also from his father-in-law, the well know dance teacher, Pandainainallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai. He also traces his musical lineage to Tyagaraja, Thiruvottiyur Tyagier from whom also Ponniah Pillai learnt, was a son of Veenai Kuppaiyer, a disciple of Tyagaraja. Besides that He also traces his lineage to Muthuswamy Dikshitar for the Tanjore Quartet were disciple of Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

Ponniah Pillai left his mark in the field of composing. He was pioneer in making music a college and University Disciple. He had served as teacher in the music departments of Annamalai and Madras University and was a member of the board of studies in both. The stalwart had served as president of the music academy's annual conference in 1993. After the award of Sangitha Kalanidi award was instituted by the academy in 1942, he received the honor. He contributed to resuscitation of the works of earlier composers and Ponniah Pillai propagated the songs of his ancestors very well.

Professor P Sambamoorthy who was the head of dept of music, Madras university who was closely associated with Ponniah Pillai, in an article in Hindu on Jul 5th 1945, stated various contributions and style of Ponniah Pillai and traced his illustrious lineage, adding that he was unostentatious person with genial temperament, who was ever anxious to preserve the highest standards in the realm of art.

Many people still recall Ponniah Pillai's services to the cause of Sangeetham and Music Academy in particular.

He left for heavenly abode on 30th June 1945 on the same day his contemporary Muthiah Bhagavatar left the world.