

UNIVERSITY NEWSBEAT

Prepared and paid for by the Communications Department, S802 Ross, 667-3441

Festival Honours Composer

WEST MEETS EAST TO MAKE MUSIC

This week students of South Indian classical music will enjoy a special opportunity to perform with celebrated guest artists and members of Toronto's Indian community at the Tyagaraja Festival.

Over 300 people, between the ages of two and eighty, are expected to squeeze into the McLaughlin Junior Common Room on Saturday, March 17, for a day-long celebration honouring Tyagaraja, one of the three great composers of classical South Indian music.

In an interview, Trichy Sankaran, visiting assistant professor of South Indian classical music at York, explained why Tyagaraja was, why a Festival was named in his honour, and how the Festival was transported from India to Toronto.

"Tyagaraja composed thousands of songs in honour of Lord Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, whom he worshipped. In India, where music, philosophy and religion are all intertwined, his songs were tremendously popular because of their simplicity, their easy-flowing nature and profound philosophy. He felt that music itself was a form of yoga and believed that when music is practiced with devotion, it is the easiest path for realization," continues Prof. Sankaran.

According to Prof. Sankaran, listeners absorbed by the enchanting sensuality they

sometimes hear in Tyagaraja's compositions should remember that in Hindu philosophy "the material and spiritual worlds are regarded as inseparable, and there is no contradiction between love on a human plane and love on a spiritual plane."

Music and Feasting

In India between 7,000 and 10,000 people gather together annually for three days of music and feasting in the tiny village of Tiruvaiaru, where Tyagaraja lived. The professional, semi-professional and amateur musicians coming to participate feel honoured to be included in the Tyagaraja Festival. All have given money into a great fund that will provide two meals a day for the entire audience at the Festival.

At York, while the feeling of sharing is the same, the tradition is somewhat different. The festival lasts only one day, and the food that's offered for lunch is home-made and brought by the local Indian community.

Fond memories, homesickness, enthusiastic friends, as well as combined support from the Indian community, York's Music Department, and McLaughlin College are factors responsible for the Festival finding a new home in Toronto.

When Trichy Sankaran first went to the Festival in India in 1956 as a boy of 14, he was singled out to perform a solo on his mrdangam, a two headed Indian drum. Palghat



Trichy Sankaran watches student Clara Henderson perform at last year's Tyagaraja festival.

Mani Iyer, Secretary of the Managing Committee and a giant among Indian musicians, hushed the audience by saying "this boy will give a solo now. I want you all to listen carefully." Looking back on that time Prof. Sankaran mused that one of the great advantages of the Festival is that it gives necessary encouragement to up-and-coming musicians.

Origin

Prof. Sankaran first came to Canada in 1971 to develop the South Indian music program with Jon Higgins. Longing for the tradition of the Festival, Prof. Sankaran encouraged his friend Dr. Krishnan to hold the celebration in his home in 1972. From this mini Festival, enjoyed by 50 select guests, the Tyagaraja Festival has grown into a major event enjoyed by a large section of the local Indian community. For this substantial success Prof. Sankaran credits the sponsorship of York's Music Department and McLaughlin College, both of which enthusiastically supported hosting the Festival at York from 1973 onwards, and the Bharati Kala Manram, Toronto's South Indian community group.

Prof. Sankaran's hopeful prophecy of the music students' participation is bearing fruit: annually, close to three-quarters of the students enrolled in upper year singing and drumming classes are performing. The largely Indian audience has been impressed each

year that Canadian students want to be involved in their culture, that they're working hard to develop a high technical proficiency and an intuitive understanding of the music, and that they're actually accomplishing their goal and performing the music well and with feeling.

Focus for York Students

Indian music students at York regard the Festival as a major focus of their studies. Drummers and vocalists will be practising together for at least two full months in advance of their performance on the 17th.

Percussion students must work through numerous rhythmic exercises in order to develop their technique and play accompaniment for the Tyagaraja compositions. It is recognized by the audience as a great accomplishment to have learned these complex pieces of drumming.

Similar respect is felt for the vocal students, who prove how much they have developed when they are able to sing Tyagaraja's technically difficult and subtly ornamented compositions from memory, with good knowledge of the text.

Neither drumming nor vocal students sight read their music. All is handed down in the traditional Indian manner of the oral tradition. This presents both a unique challenge and a unique difficulty for the Western student

who must learn as a disciple directly from the teacher through careful listening, imitation, and memorization.

New Possibilities

Prof. Sankaran feels that the oral tradition opens up new possibilities for the student, and that "this particular aspect of ear training in music is highly regarded by many Western composers and musicians who feel that Western notation has closed off important avenues of expression."

Toronto's version of the Tyagaraja Festival means cultural exchange as well as cultural immersion. The highlight of the day for many members of the audience over the last few years has been the performance by York music students of one of Tyagaraja's compositions on a marimba. "They are thrilled and fascinated," says Prof. Sankaran, "to hear an Indian composition played on a Western instrument."

The Festival begins at 8:30 a.m. in the McLaughlin Junior Common Room. Guest artists for the day include Jon Higgins, vocal, T. Viswanathan, flute, and Trichy Sankaran, mardangam. These artists can also be heard at a concert at the Art Gallery of Ontario at 9:00 p.m. Friday March 16, and both Viswanathan and Sankaran will also be appearing on campus in a concert Thursday March 15 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 218 Bethune College.

Footnotes

ST. PATRICK PATRON OF CAMPERS

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day early! Tonight in the 8th floor lounge in the Ross Building, the York Youth Connection will be throwing a "Top o' th Evenin' Irish Disco Dance to raise funds for their annual summer camp.

The youngsters who participate range in age from 10 to 17. Most come from Ward 3, the densely populated area south-west of York where overcrowding, delinquency, and lack of recreational facilities make 'summer in the city' a tough business.

During their four weeks at York they'll get involved with music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. In quick succession they could be carving totem poles, hand making musical instruments, painting the tunnel, or improvising a skit. They also swim every day, and have instruction available anytime they need it.

Cost per child per month's session is a mere \$35.00. Denys Brown, Vice-Chairman of the York Youth Connection for York, explains that "if a family can't afford this fee, subsidy money has been made available in the past through willing faculty and staff members."

Mrs. Brown also praises Bethune for being the host college since 1976 when the summer camp first started on pilot project money from Wintario. And she expressed appreciation also to the Graduate Students Association which is subsidizing the Irish Disco night.

Door prizes are being offered.; Admission is \$1.00 for anyone wearing a half a yard of green, and \$1.25 for all others. All proceeds go

to the York Youth Connection, so go and drink to the health of its summer camp.

ENERGETICS

Biology and energy conservation students take note: this Saturday, March 17, the Biology Graduate Students Association will be presenting a day-long symposium on energetics.

Talks include the energy of cells, the energy of animal and plant populations, and the problem of energy conservation during extended space flight.

Of interest to all students regardless of their discipline, will be the morning workshop by Howard T. Odum, one of the founding fathers of ecology.

"This workshop promises to be controversial according to Chris Taggard, co-coordinator of the symposium with Robert Keenan. He explains that Odum will be describing "how energy moves through a system and how it is reworked to become higher quality of energy" and that he will also be applying his theory to numerous other fields including economics, political science, and religion.

Odum's open workshop starts at 9:00 a.m.; the lectures follow at 12:45. Both are offered in Stedman Lecture Hall D. Everyone is welcome. Admission is free, no registration is required. For further information call 667-2496.

DISUNITY

Author David Bell will discuss *The Roots of Disunity*, his recently completed book on the

Canadian political environment, at 12 noon, Tuesday March 20 in McLaughlin College's Senior Common Room (140). Coffee will be provided, but bring your own lunch.

WINDS DO CLASSICS

The globe-trotting York Winds are presenting an evening of continental classics on Thursday March 22 at 8:30 p.m. in Burton Auditorium. The program, which features works by Jacques Ibert, Vivaldi, Anton Reicha, Jacques Hétu, Carl Nielsen and Beethoven, was specially chosen for this, the Winds' final campus concert for the year as artists-in-residence at York. Admission is free.

STUDY FRENCH FREE

Want to study French free this summer? The Department of the Secretary of State is offering bursaries to cover the full cost of tuition and accommodation for a six week language immersion program beginning July 2. All courses would be offered in a university setting by qualified teachers.

To be eligible, you must be: a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant; at least 16 years old as of December 31, 1978; a full time student in secondary or post-secondary Canadian educational institution during the current academic year; and have at least

grade 12 education.

For further information, and to apply for the bursary, contact provincial co-ordinator Mr. W. H. Clarkson in Toronto at 965-5241.

CANTOR SINGS SCHUBERT

Tenor Thomas Schwartz, Cantor of Toronto's Emmanuel synagogue, will perform Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* in recital with pianist Mark Yolleck at 3 p.m., Sunday March 18 at Fine Arts on Markham (596 Markham Street).

The \$2.50 admission requested at the door will help support the Friends of Music scholarship fund for York music students.