

Fine Arts Festival a happy coincidence



Byron Johnson photo

The Thyagaraja Festival drew over 200 to Mac Hall Saturday. Here York faculty John Higgins and Trichy Sankaran perform with fellow musicians.

The Faculty of Fine Arts "Arts of March" festival included more than 30 events - yet this cornucopia of performances and exhibitions resulted from a happy coincidence.

Earlier this year, the Faculty's schools liaison and community relations officer, Heather MacArthur, noticed the coincidence in mid-March of many events planned by departments in the Faculty: the music department's "York Music Week '78", York Cabaret's *Brecht's Class*, the third year theatre ensemble's *Our Town* the interdisciplinary production of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, (directed by Dean Joe Green), a student-run exhibition of student work in the Fine Arts Building, an exhibition of Ethiopian art at the AGYU, and more.

Given this proliferation of events put on by the faculty's departments and various affiliates, MacArthur set out to co-ordinate a festival that would build on all the parts to "focus on the faculty as an identity". It would be a "summary for

Fine Arts."

With a bit of schedule-shuffling, and the addition of some new events, Arts of March was born.

Dance and TV workshops were added. A rehearsal for the dance department's annual spring concert was thrown open to visitors, as were many classes. Tours and talks by Faculty professors, and screenings of student films, were added.

Aside from pulling all the departments (dance, music, theatre, film and visual arts) together for a major undertaking, and adding to the learning experience of students, the Festival was a very conscious step towards building the Faculty's (and York's) community relations.

The university's isolation from the surrounding community (and vice versa) has repeatedly been

identified as a problem for York, and the Faculty has been one of the university's most active units in trying to integrate York into its setting.

Advertising for the Festival centred on North York community papers, and the results were sometimes gratifying. Saturday's Thyagaraja festival of South Indian classical music was "a huge community success", according to MacArthur. Over 200 East Indian Torontonians attending the celebration honouring the patron saint of Indian musicians.

The Festival, says MacArthur is "an important start" in "breaking down the barriers" for this university, set off past suburbia. The Arts of March Festival will be back next year to build on that start.

Jewish Arts Festival

By Laura Brown

The Jewish Arts Festival held March 12-19 provided the university community with a chance to appreciate and understand Jewish culture.

Festival activities ranged from art exhibits to panel discussions, and featured guest speakers such as Academy Award Nominee Harry Rasky.

The idea of a Jewish arts festival originated in the office of the Jewish Student Federation (JSF). Interested volunteers put in three months of preparation for the week-long event.

According to Lou Garber, JSF director, the festival "cost us a couple of grand - and we lost a couple of grand." Garber continued, "We hoped not to lose money, but we weren't really doing it as a profit-making event. We wanted to bring Jewish arts to campus for the university community and we wanted to provide an opportunity for student artists, who are Jewish, to do their thing."

Three art exhibits were held during the week. At Founders, Israeli graphics were displayed and student and professional works were set up in Winters and Bethune. The art was on sale, but according to Garber, few works were sold. "It would have been nice if people bought art works but we realized it would be too much for student pocket books". The art prices ranged from \$20 to \$5,000.

The presentation of Jewish films was followed by appearances and speeches by prominent figures in the

film-industry. *Lies my Father Told Me*, a feature film about life in the Jewish ghetto of Montreal, was wrapped up with a discussion led by the film's star, Jeff Lynas.

The co-ordinators of the festival aimed to create group participation during the week-long event. Cooking demonstrations held daily in the JSF office drew in a group of 30 people each session. According to assistant director, Randy Robinson, participation became so great at one point, "that with everyone cooking and all trying to put their two cents worth in, the demonstrator was shouted down and almost quit."

The organizing group felt the week went smoothly. "The only problem was getting gallery space for the exhibits. We used Founders, Winters and Bethune, but they're spread so far apart," said Garber. Many programs were held up because people not familiar with the campus got lost trying to get from one college to another.

Robinson said the festival was educational. "One thing we learned about Jewish art was that there is often sorrow and pain behind the creation of it." Comedian Alan Gould expressed this when speaking of the jokes concentration camp inmates made about their situation. Gould's conclusion: "Jewish humour is Jewish tragedy".

"If the festival had been attended by more non-Jewish people it would have extended a greater understanding of Jewish culture," Robinson said.

This year's festival was the first of what the JSF hopes will become an annual event.

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