

1/31/75

Dear Tom -

Lin is trying to all this course
to UC extensions for the summer.
It occurs to me that it would
be well for it to be included
in the regular summer session
as Mus. 111 (non Western music)
with

"The Art of South Indian Drumming" - A Course Proposal by Elinor Barron

(Academic Coordinator)

Mr. Trichy Sankaran, acknowledged as one of the foremost rhythmic virtuosi and leading mridangam players in India, will be featured as the main guest lecturer in this course on the theory of time and rhythm in South Indian Classical music. Mridangam is the hand drum of South India used both for accompaniment and solo performance in the South Indian concert ensemble. Students will learn, in a graduated series of lessons in oral recitation, several "time signatures" (talas) and many patterns of drum syllables which are the foundation of the drummer's art. The student will also learn to utilize this expanding vocabulary of drum language in the context of specially designed group and solo improvisations. Simultaneously with learning the art of recitation, instruction in playing this drum language on the mridangam will be given. This course provides an opportunity to learn the tradition of South Indian Classical music, and the culture from which it springs, through extensive listening to selected recorded material, reading background material, and discussion with one of South India's leading mridangam players.

In a time of world culture, this course provides an opportunity to study intensively a system of music from a tradition older than Western European Art Music but just as contemporary and viable today. The course is intended to teach a basic understanding of South Indian music and its theory with practical application in the arts of oral recitation of drum language and drumming

Trichy S. Sankaran

Trichy Sankaran, a master graduate of the Madras University, is one of the leading Mridangam (drum) players in South India. He studied first under his cousin P.A. Venkataraman and later under the eminent percussionist, the late Palani Subramania Pillai. He made his debut in the musical firmament in 1955, and since then has accompanied all the leading instrumental and vocal soloists in South India.

Acknowledged as one of the foremost rhythmic virtuosi in India, Sankaran has to his credit several awards and prizes. He has performed with great success at the International Cultural Festival at Shiraz, Iran. He has also participated in the unique joint concert featuring Ustad Vilayat Khan and Lalgudi Jayaraman, with Pandit Shanta Prasad as the second percussionist. He has toured many places in Canada and the United States giving concerts and lecture demonstrations with many eminent artists from India. He took part in the Stratford Festival, Canada, in August, 1973.

Trichy Sankaran has always displayed a very keen innovative spirit in his concerts. His solos have been replete with originality and spontaneous improvisations. Sankaran is on the staff of York University at Toronto in the Department of Music, as a full time faculty member since September, 1971. He has trained several talented North American students in the technique and theory of drumming. Sankaran recently participated in a film on the teaching of Indian music commissioned by C.B.C.

He has presented a scholarly paper on the 'Art of South Indian Drumming and the Teaching of it in the West' at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Society for Asian Studies, on June 1, 1974, at the Edward Johnson Building, Toronto, Canada.

He has started doing some new experiments of providing drum accompaniment to the new music and electronic music in the West. Recently he played with great success, with the musicians of the West at the Palais des Beaux Arts, in Brussels, Belgium.

About Sankaran

"Trichy Sankaran's solo revealed his mastery over the percussion instrument. He played with amazing verve and dexterity producing endlessly varying sequences of tones and rhythms" (Hindustan Times).

"Another bright star in the musical firmament.... His drumming was an object lesson in percussionistic logistics" (Times of India, Bombay).

Proposal of a New Experiment

Mridangam is a classical drum of South India used both for accompaniment and playing solos. Accompaniment itself is quite an art and requires experience in the field. The teaching of accompaniment has been one of the difficult subjects and until now, it has been taught with much effort by letting the student listen carefully and pick up the art of accompaniment gradually over a period of years. I have already done some research on the lines of accompaniment by way of writing out some standard playing. I am interested in the analysis of the strokes in terms of timbre, intensity and the balance with which the drumming phrases are handled in playing. I believe that the balance of the combination of drum patterns played by both hands in accompanying the melodic lines is important and worth analysing.

And also I wish to compare the drum accompaniment provided by the excellent drummers of South India and like to generalize and establish certain standard patterns for accompaniment. The success of the project not only will give me the greatest pleasure of having done something very interesting in this field, but also the students of Indian drumming might ~~also~~ be benefitted.

Trichy. S. Sankaran.
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