

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Conference offers chance to explore Indian culture

It's easy to see that Sumita Chaudhery, dressed in a colorful sari, is proud of the culture and arts of her native India. When Chaudhery came to the United States in the early '60s, she brought the knowledge of traditional dance, music and literature with her. Chaudhery will share all three at a conference and celebration of Indian culture Friday-Saturday, May 12-13, at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. Chaudhery, who teaches Indian dance and music privately, has been an English professor at the college for 30 years. Conference attendees need not be Indian to participate in the conference, which is sponsored by the college's International Institute. The institute promotes cross-cultural understanding in the community. The Aditi Institute of Fine and Performing Arts also sponsors the conference. The Aditi Institute is a nonprofit dedicated to creating awareness of Indian culture.

Chaudhery would like to invite everyone to "experience the mystery and mysticism of this fascinating country" as scholars, artists and performers explore Indian dance, poetry, philosophy, food, and film.

Deadline to register for the conference and dinner (catered by the Peacock Restaurant, Dearborn) is Monday, May 1. Some tickets for the dance recitals on Friday and Saturday evenings may be available after that date.

Dream
"It's a dream of mine to bring in international events to the college because I feel students, faculty and the community need that as a way to broaden our horizons," said Chaudhery. "From a cultural standpoint, India is one of the ancient civilizations with dance, music and art forms all its own."

"There's a totally different concept of music and dance in traditional Indian arts. The theory and practice are totally different from Western concepts. Philosophy is primarily a non-violent or introspective one. In today's harrowing life, that becomes a great way to find some peace."

Recitals of dance and sarod (an ancient Indian string instrument) on Friday evening and a dance recital Saturday night feature styles of dance ranging from odissi to manipuri. After a 6 p.m. Indian dinner on Saturday, guru Naba Ghana Shyam-Singha and his seven-member troupe will dance a north Indian recital. Shyam-Singha is from Assam in the easternmost province of India. The dance troupe is based in the Washington, D.C., Maryland area.

"This form of dance is very vigorous and the music sounds tribal," said Chaudhery. "Food in India is different if

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Art of India Conference
What's: A celebration of Indian culture including dance, poetry readings, round-table discussion, yoga lecture and demonstrations, and dinner.
When: 1-4 p.m. and 7:30-10:30 p.m. Friday, May 12. Saturday, May 13, program begins 8:30 a.m. and concludes 8 p.m. with a concert.
Where: Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty, between Six and Seven Mile roads, Livonia.
Cost: \$70 for all events, or \$25 conference, \$15 concert/dance recital (Friday), \$40 Indian buffet dinner/dance recital (Saturday). For more information or to register, call Rebekah Weber at (734) 462-4400, Ext. 5641. Deadline for registration is Monday, May 1.



Schoolcraft Jazz Band

Jack Pierson (left) performed with the Schoolcraft College Jazz Band at the Livonia Mall. Below, Schoolcraft College Jazz Band horn section. Bottom photo, Westland fireman Andy Buck lays down the beat.

Making a comeback

IN FULL SWING

STORY BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN • PHOTOS BY BRYAN MITCHELL

Count Basie would have loved the mellow sounds coming from the Schoolcraft College Jazz Band Monday evening. The 18-member ensemble didn't need a dimly lit smoky room to set the mood for their version of the legendary jazz master's *That Warm Feeling*. Their big band beat drew a standing-room-only crowd to the most unlikely of places — the Livonia Mall — during a week-long celebration of the arts.

It was hard to believe that the band had been together only since September. Jazz is definitely making a comeback at Schoolcraft College, thanks to band director Jack Pierson. The concert was the proof.

"It's sort of a community group and is a mix of college students, a high school student and people who played in high school and college but went on to careers in different fields," said Pierson, who directed the band 15 years ago before it was disbanded. "Educationally, I'm trying to expose everyone to a variety of styles of big band jazz including contemporaries like Puff Daddy. We perform an assortment of music from Stan Kenton to Thad Jones, and Don Ellis from the '60s and '70s who played unusual time signatures."

Pierson realized there was a need for the band after he passed-out fliers in July at the Michigan Jazz Festival at Schoolcraft College. The answer to his call for musicians was overwhelming. Over the last eight months, the band's sound has matured so rapidly as to earn them an invitation to play this year's Michigan Jazz Festival on Sunday, July 16.

"I was surprised by the turn-out last fall," said Pierson. "The first concert last fall was good in the right instrumentation with five saxophones. We picked up a couple of drummers along the way. Two bass players alternate. There's also guitar and piano."

Education
Pierson is big on education, so when the opportunity arose to direct the jazz band at Schoolcraft, he jumped



SACRED MUSIC

Choir members ring in Easter season

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Half way through rehearsal choir members rolled their eyes as director Jim Lenz reminded them that they were ringing the Palm Sunday service at St. Thomas a' Becket Catholic Church in Canton.

"We've got to be here at 9 a.m. with bells on," he quipped.

That's an inside joke. The St. Thomas a' Becket Church choir is composed of handbell ringers. Founded by Lenz in 1993, the Ding-a-ling's primary function is to ring handbells at Mass. Although most group members have either played an instrument or sung in a choir, members needed no musical training in order

to join — just an interest in bells. Lenz would then do a little arm twisting to secure a commitment to the choir. Of course, when family obligations arise, Lenz is only too happy to fill in himself or call in another ringer. This night, Cathy Piasta, a member of Our Lady of Good Counsel's handbell choir, was filling in for Vivian Cook, who was in Chicago for the opening of daughter Mary Kay's new play.

Positions to fill
"Each person has their own position, and you have to have every position filled," said Lenz. "It would be like having a couple of keys broken on your piano if you didn't. But the biggest challenge is keeping 12 women happy."

There he goes again. But that's why members stay on for years. Lenz is a cheerleader for the ancient art of bell ringing. He began as a ringer with the choir at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Plymouth in 1989.

"I fell in love with it," said Lenz, who still rings with the Good Counsel choir. "It's just fun. I've been playing piano all my life. With the handbells it was fun to hear your own little part become part of the total sound."

Their movements create a visual rhythm that ebbs and flows. It looks simple enough, but don't be fooled. It takes a certain flick of the wrist to produce a note.

"At first it was hard to get used to,"

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Majestic: Donald Alley took this photograph of a Great Horned Owl.

Artists spring for out-of-the-ordinary mediums

By LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Local artists aren't letting any grass grow under their feet, even if it is springtime. Members of Artifacts Art Club and the Needlework and Textile Guild of Michigan are exhibiting everything from serene landscapes to jazzy jackets and vests at shows in Livonia and Plymouth through the end of April. The surprise is you won't find any watercolor florals or heavy oil paintings of barns.

Sherry Eid has a way with colored pencil. Her delicate portraits are just some of the works third graders at Livonia's Cass Elementary will see when club members take them on a guided tour of the Artifacts Art Club show. Eid believes it's important to introduce children to original art. She and other club members have worked with teachers for the last few years to encourage these third students to take an interest in painting, drawing, photography, and sculpture.

"It's a delight to have them come through," said Eid. "Beforehand, the teachers ask the children what each piece might be after hearing the title. My portrait of the Native American Dancing Wolf — the kids think it's a wolf dancing in the living room."

Not to be missed is Peggy Greys' "Beware of the Dogs." The students thought the work would show mean dogs. Quite the contrary. The panel features two dogs

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Art Exhibits

Artifacts Art Club exhibit works in a variety of mediums through Friday, April 28 at Livonia City Hall, 33000 Civic Center Drive, east of Farmington Road. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Friday, and 7-9 p.m. Monday and Wednesday.

The Needlework and Textile Guild of Michigan show a diversity of fabric art through Wednesdays, May 3 at the Plymouth Community Arts Council, 774 N. Sheldon at Junction. Opening reception 1-3 p.m. Sunday, April 16, or enjoy the fashion show and luncheon 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, May 3 (\$20). Call (734) 416-4278 for information.



Appealing music: Don Hosman (right) and Leslie Queen rehearse for Palm Sunday services at St. Thomas a' Becket Catholic Church in Canton.