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Photo



Ustad F. Wasifuddin Dagar will perform a concert at UCLA on Saturday.

Society promotes traditional art

Group to give free, classical indian concert to expose, preserve form

- [Jess Rodgers](#)
- Published: Thursday, October 16, 2003

Ustad F. Wasifuddin Dagar comes from a family that has been dhrupad vocalists for four and half centuries.

Dhrupad is the oldest form of Indian classical music, an art form that was once reserved for the inner

temple of the king's courts and has made a public debut only recently.

On Saturday night, Dagar will give a free concert put on by the Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth and the North American Dhrupad Association.

He will also host a workshop on Friday evening that will teach students about the dhrupad art form and introduce them to techniques such as voice throwing.

Because dhrupad is sung in Sanskrit, the average person cannot understand the text, and for this reason, Dagar likes to take time to explain each piece.

"My mission is to explain to people not to get scared of the classical things," Dagar said.

"They're not boring. How can you spend 20 years doing a boring thing?" he asked. "There's a beauty in it, which is why it's still around century after century."

According to Dagar, people too often focus on what others are thinking or doing. His goal is to allow his listeners to focus back on themselves, letting the rhythm of the music help them explore their own inner thoughts and feelings.

"(Dagar) is mind boggling – the depth, the maturity that he shows. He's a very introspective artist, especially when he's onstage," SPICMACAY president Natarajan Ramachandran said.

Dagar's father and uncle, who were known as the Dagar Brothers, did much to promote dhrupad when it was on the verge of being a dead art form half a century ago.

The current popularity of the art both in Indian cities and abroad is perhaps a direct result of the brothers' extensive touring and lecturing.

Dagar believes dhrupad music appeals to a broad variety of people because of the diverse culture from which it comes.

"We always say the glass is half full, never half empty," Dagar said. "Dhrupad is our musical heritage, and it has the culture of India in its music.

"People talk about dhrupad and ask questions, which is a positive sign. Slowly, slowly dhrupad is growing."

SPICMACAY is a group primarily devoted to reviving interest in the traditional art forms of countries like China, Japan and India among young people.

The club decided that dhrupad is the first of the traditional art forms it wants to promote.

Dhrupad is not for those who need instant gratification and enjoy toe tapping to their music.

But as Americans have turned from fast paced exercises like aerobics to activities that require such focus as yoga, it seems they are more open to the idea that sometimes the most rewarding things are those that require time and effort.

"There's a lot we can gain from these (traditional art forms)," Ramachandran said. "It's not about entertainment. Dhrupad is a very beautiful art form. But it's like anything that has beauty – you have to spend a little time with it."

Ustad F. Wasifuddin Dagar performs at Tom Bradley International Hall on Oct. 18 at 6 p.m. For more information go to <http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/spicmacay>. Admission is free.

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