

Living Traditions

Ancient music of India, Africa and Europe in Eugene

For at least half a century, a compelling American archetype has been the indie musician — the young jazzier picking up a trumpet, the idealistic folkie or rocker with guitar and a loft or garage, the geek with a bedroom and a MacBook.

But for much of history and much of the planet, music was a family thing, and linked to social institutions and to other arts, especially dance and poetry. This Friday, May 2, the University of Oregon's World Music Series brings to Eugene a venerated representative of traditional music making. **Aniruddha Knight** is a ninth-generation inheritor of one India's most distinguished musical dynasties. At Beall Concert Hall, his ensemble will present a suite of music and dance created between 1920 and 1980 and performed in the style established almost two centuries ago at South India's royal court of Thanjavur and made famous by Knight's great-great grandmother, Vina Dhanammal. In this extremely sophisticated *bharata natyam* form, music and dance and composition and improvisation are intimately linked, with the dancer singing, setting the pace and cueing the musicians. As a biracial and bicultural artist who lives in Connecticut and performs throughout India and North America, Knight himself represents both past and future: inheritor of a beautiful ancient musical and choreographic tradition and protagonist in bringing it out to the rest of the world.

These days, great music doesn't stay in a single family or even a single continent. Another great musical tradition arose at least a thousand years ago among the Shona people of southern Africa, and thanks to the Johnny Appleseed-like efforts of the late Zimbabwean musician Dumisani Maraire, it's spread to around the world — including, for the last two decades, to Eugene. On May 3, two of his musical progeny, the marimba bands **Kudana** and **Hokoya**, will perform the

irresistibly danceable music of Zimbabwe at Cozmic Pizza. Proceeds from the concert will support an American tour by the award winning Zimbabwean ensemble Mawungira Enharira, who'll perform here in June.

The American musicians who play in Kudana and Hokoya exemplify how traditional music spreads from old world to new. So does **Jaya Lakshmi**, who heard Indian devotional music in Hawaii. Entranced, she adopted her current Hindu name, began singing and leading kirtan (Hindu devotional group singing) and writing her own devotional songs using both Sanskrit and English. The Eugene-based singer-songwriter leads the scintillating tribal trance band One at Last (formerly Lost at Last) and has also released several solo CDs, including the new *Sublime*, abetted by guitarist/sarodist Deva Priyo and tabla master Daniel Paul plus flute, cello and violin. She's performing May 10 at the Far Horizons Montessori School.

While it's important for ancient music to evolve, it's essential that audiences have the opportunity to hear great music performed as its creators intended. At a free show at 4 pm on May 4 at Tsunami Books, a veteran group of historically informed Baroque musicians, the **Cristofori Trio** (Margret Gries, baroque violin and viola; Rachel Streeter, baroque flute; Edwin Good, Cristofori piano), will play music of Telemann and C.P.E. Bach — and a brand new piece for those authentic instruments, former Oregonian Duane Heller's "Three Dances for Arpicimbalo," which includes Heller's accompanying poetry, recited by local poet Anita Sullivan. This is a rare opportunity to hear the only modern copy of one of the first pianos, an instrument made in 1722 by the piano's inventor, Bartolomeo Cristofori — who called it an arpicimbalo. Probably a good thing that name changed, but it's great to have a chance to hear the closest possible approximation of how one of the Western

Aniruddha Knight



tradition's most important instruments actually sounded, and how it sounds in a distinctively 21st century composition.

The American tradition is to look forward, and futuristic sounds abound this month. On May 3, Future Music Oregon, the UO's music technology program, presents the electronic sounds of guest artist **Carla Scaletti**, who along with composing ear-stretching music and playing harp in symphony orchestras also developed a computer language for sound design and established a corporation to sell it. The concert, in Room 163 of the UO music building, gazes even farther into the future with works by UO student composers. On May 6, one of jazz's real trail blazers, dazzling New York guitarist **Ben Monder** (who's played with everyone from Lee Konitz to Maria Schneider) will join some of Eugene's finest jazzmen (**Toby Koenigsberg**, piano; **Tyler Abbott**, bass; **Jason Palmer**, drums) plus UO students and faculty. On May 4 at Beall, the **Oregon Wind Ensemble** plays music of Stravinsky (the futuristic for their time *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*) and contemporary composers Joan Tower and John Mackey, whose new concerto for soprano sax and winds features UO prof **Idit Shner**. And the next evening at Beall, the **Eugene Symphonic Band** celebrates its half century mark with 20th century music by Lewis Buckley, Clifton Williams, Michael Gandolfi and Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* dances. **EW**



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