



College-Conservatory of Music
Composition, Musicology, and
Theory
University of Cincinnati
PO Box 210003
Cincinnati, OH, 45221
(513) 556-6046

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To: United States India Educational Foundation

I write this letter in support of Dr. Atindra Sarvadikar's proposal for a Fulbright-Nehru Postdoctoral Research Fellowship. Dr. Sarvadikar is proposing to offer two one-credit ensemble courses on North Indian classical music through our department of musicology in the 2018-19 academic year. The College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati is an ideal environment within which to offer such ensemble classes. These courses are open to students from across the university, but the enrollment primarily consists of conservatory students pursuing the BA, MA, DMA, and PhD degrees in music. Currently we offer "world music" ensembles in the area of North Indian percussion (tabla), Himalayan drumming, and Zimbabwean mbira music; these courses introduce the practical and theoretical dimensions of performance within a non-Western art form. Dr. Sarvadikar's courses would be a welcome addition to our ethnomusicology curriculum that would serve to expand the creative abilities and professional horizons of a significant number of students.

Before discussing the applicant's qualifications I would like to discuss the ways in which I see Dr. Sarvadikar's pedagogical interests fitting into our course offerings. Through my own research and teaching interests (sitar and Himalayan drumming, for which I received a Fulbright-Nehru Senior Excellence Award in 2016-17) and those of two adjunct faculty members, Dr. Kanniks Kannikeswaran (specialist in South Indian classical music) and James Feist (specialist in North Indian percussion/tabla), our department has developed a specialization in Indian music within an otherwise traditional, Western-music focused conservatory of music. There are approximately 5-7 courses annually offered in Indian music at the conservatory, with approximately 50 students enrolling in these courses each year. We currently have no one on the faculty who specializes in Hindustani vocal music. Dr. Sarvadikar would offer a new specialization to our department while also complementing our existing curriculum.

In a short number of years, Dr. Sarvadikar has had an accomplished singing career as a disciple of legendary singers Prabha Atre. He has also distinguished himself as an astute scholar of the nuances of one particular lineage of vocal performers (Kirana gharana), which was the focus of his dissertation and a subsequent book published by Sanskar Prakasha. Dr. Sarvadikar integrates his performance and his research interests through his teaching. Having taught a number of non-Indian students in recent years, Dr. Sarvadikar



is well aware of the many challenges that such students encounter when learning this art form. These include the challenges of learning the correct diction in vocal compositions, complex melodic ornaments (gamakas), rhythmic cycles (talas), and unfamiliar scalar forms and improvisational gestures that make up the melodic frameworks of this music (raga).

Dr. Sarvadikar and I have corresponded for several weeks about his proposal and he has shared a number of innovative techniques for teaching rhythmic, melodic and prosodic aspects of this music both independently and simultaneously. Having taught Indian classical music for the past six years at the college level, I am convinced that Dr. Sarvadikar's ideas are groundbreaking and that he has developed original methods of teaching this music that are uniquely catered to non-Indian students. He has created a number of exercises that can be implemented individually in what he describes as "customized training modules" to help students confront with particular challenges. For instance, he advocates that students who have difficulty conceptualizing the rhythmic cycle of a melodic composition should practice singing the pitches of the composition while vocalizing the drum strokes of the rhythmic cycle. Such an exercise is not part of the conventional techniques of learning Indian classical music and yet it will hone in on the particular difficulty that non-Indian students have in synchronizing melodic phrase within a repeating rhythmic cycle. This synchronization of melodic and rhythmic structures is absolutely essential to Indian music practice, and yet this step is often the most challenging for non-Indian students. This is just one of many customized exercises that he has designed to facilitate the comprehension and execution of this challenging art form.

Will Dr. Sarvadikar's efforts produce polished performers of Indian classical music at the University of Cincinnati? No. This is an art form that requires many years of sustained practice and deep cultural immersion. Yet I have little doubt that Dr. Sarvadikar's teaching will facilitate inter-cultural respect and dialogue while significantly expanding the musical and conceptual abilities of our students—these are the explicit goals of our ethnomusicology program. I wholeheartedly endorse Dr. Sarvadikar's application to teach at the University of Cincinnati in 2018-19, and I hope that the Fulbright committee will seriously consider supporting this application.

Sincerely,



Stefan Fiol, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology
College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati
P.O. Box 210003
Cincinnati, OH 45221
Phone: 513-556-9529
Email: stefan.fiol@uc.edu

