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Faculty Profile

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Expanding the curriculum to include the study of African, Latin American and Asian cultures has been one of the College's highest priorities in recent years. The number and variety of courses in non-western civilizations grew steadily during the 1990s. New faculty members, among them Professor Salil Sachdev, who joined the Music Department in 1999, have added increased depth to our multicultural offerings.

Born and educated in India, Professor Sachdev is familiar with both Indian classical music and the folk, ceremonial and religious music of his native land. He received a thorough grounding in western classical music, beginning his studies in India and continuing in graduate school in the U. S. More recently, Professor Sachdev's interests have broadened to include West African folk music and drumming, Irish Frame Drumming and Solkattu, the rhythmic solfege language of South India. He plays the Djembe (West African drum), the Bodhran (Irish frame drum) and the Udu (Nigerian clay pot drum), as well as experimenting with unconventional percussion "instruments" like metal bowls and electronic hand percussion.

Bridgewater students enrolled in Professor Sachdev's courses in "Music of the World" and "Music of Africa" benefit from this extensive and varied background. In addition, Professor Sachdev has organized an African drumming ensemble on campus called "Khakatay," which means "laughing out loud" in the Wolof language of Senegal, West Africa. Beginning with seven students meeting on a voluntary basis, the ensemble has grown to nearly twenty, with students now able to receive academic credit for participating. While the group's repertoire consists primarily of traditional music from the West African nations of Guinea, Senegal, Mali and the Ivory Coast, Professor Sachdev also experiments with musical instruments and stylistic elements from other parts of the world. The performers are not all music majors, but come from a variety of different disciplines, which pleases Professor Sachdev, who believes that the ensemble provides an opportunity for students who are not majoring in music to participate in an enjoyable and disciplined musical activity.

When he is not teaching or directing "Khakatay," Professor Sachdev devotes himself to composing. His approach to composition is highly eclectic, his musical

language drawn from a variety of areas including western classical, jazz, rock, and non-western music. He deeply appreciates classical masters like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Stravinsky, as well as the Beatles, Frank Zappa, Art Tatum and Bill Evans. Professor Sachdev has composed works for piano, voice and orchestra as well as for less conventional instruments. "Burn" (1994) is scored for a solo mallet player accompanied by the tape of one of his electronic compositions; "Magic" (1999) was composed for a metal bowl, which proves to be capable of producing a vast palette of sonic textures, from delicate nuances to thundering loud sounds.

Professor Sachdev's interest in music goes back to his boyhood, and he remembers composing popular songs and playing hand percussion while growing up in India. After completing high school, he studied western classical theory and composition for four years with Harold Joseph, a well-known composer and conductor in India. He then pursued a Masters in Music Composition at Ohio University and completed a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Miami.

Professor Sachdev has travelled extensively, both to study and to perform. His interest in West African drumming led him to study with a drumming master in Guinea, West Africa, and he has studied the South Indian rhythmic musical system, as well as Frame drumming and the Bodhran (Irish frame drum). Assisted by a CART grant, he, along with Dr. Jabbar Al-Obaidi from the Department of Communication Studies and Theatre Arts, recently travelled to India to conduct field research and make a series of films and audio recordings of Indian folk music. Last summer, Professor Sachdev's interest in Irish music led him to participate in the International Summer School for Traditional Irish Music and Dance hosted by the Irish World Music Centre at the University of Limerick.

Through his course offerings, the performances of "Khakatay" and his work as Co-director of the Second Annual Multicultural Music Festival held at the College last October, Professor Sachdev has introduced the Bridgewater community to a wide range of musical experiences.