

USF Center for India Studies Celebrates its first Anniversary on September 12, 2010

The Center for India Studies celebrated its one-year anniversary with friends, dignitaries, and a special multimedia musical theater production, *Chitram – A Portrait of India*, directed by internationally renowned composer Kanniks Kannikeswaran. About 550 in the audience were swept to a standing ovation as this grand performance came to a close at the Oval Theater, Marshall Student Center at the University of South Florida. More than 40 USF students performed, volunteered and helped with production alongside the Tampa Bay Indian community. The speakers included the Consul General of India at Houston, Sanjiv Arora, USF Provost, Dr. Ralph Wilcox, USF Dean of International Affairs, Dr. Maria Crummett, and Director of the Center for India Studies, Dr. Gurleen Grewal.

The production of *Chitram* is the exciting culmination of more than a yearlong process of building the Center for India Studies and a celebration of the tremendous success of the Center. In its first year, the Center for India Studies at USF has brought to the forefront knowledge of the rich history of India, more cultural diversity on campus, and provided a forum for academic exploration. Through a yearlong lecture series, cultural events, and interaction with students, faculty, and community, the Center has been a dynamic conduit and resource for USF. [remove quotes]

Kannikeswaran, who is currently an artist-in-residence at the Center, is a visionary musician, composer and music educator whose pioneering creations have brought diverse communities together in various cities in the United States. *Chitram* took spectators on a journey through time, documenting five millennia of cultural history through choreographed dance sequences amplified by a sophisticated chorus of singers, and an illuminating commentary with visuals of India's ancient temple architecture, landscapes, and diverse people. Alongside members of the Tampa Bay Indian community, more than 40 USF students performed, volunteered and helped with the production.

Dr. Maria Crummett, Dean of International Affairs said that she was gratified that USF students were part of the Chitram experience. "The power and the magic of the music were felt both by the performers and the audience," said Dr. Crummett. USF graduate student in Mass Communications, Samira Obeid helped assist and promote the production: "I am an international student from India and the Center for India Studies has been a great avenue to showcase all the wonderful things India has to offer. This show really helped bring exposure and recognition to the Center and its purpose."

The Tampa Bay community will be working with Kanniks over the next few months towards a spectacular performance of his magnum opus 'Shanti – A Journey of Peace' next semester. *Shanti* is an expansive, collaborative musical theater production that explores the meanings of peace and interconnectedness through raga based choral music. Shanti has been hailed for its ability to build community around music; it has personally touched the lives of 900 performers and has been seen by over 9000 in 3 cities. Shanti's symphonic music score based on ragas will be performed by a Tampa based cast of over 180 local artists in a grand performance in February 2011.

Find out more about the Center for India Studies at www.global.usf.edu/indiastudies.