

Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra's Stage Dramas *Maname* and *Sinhabahu*: A Rare Treat for Sri Lankan-Canadians

By Kumudini Nicholas

Three years ago, a group of *Peradeniya* alumni explored their nostalgic enthusiasm and established the *Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya – Ottawa Chapter (AAUPOC)*, an organization mandated to serve the current university students who need help to further their education. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope not only for the needy students, but to the Sri Lankan-Canadians who live far away from their motherland craving to capture the moments of delight experienced during their youth. It came as a joyous break to appease this longing, to recapture the memorable moments once felt in the open-air theater in *Peradeniya* University, on the day the late Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra's cultural masterpieces *Maname* and *Sinhabahu* were staged in Ottawa for the first time in a Canadian theatre.

The *AAUPOC* organized the event to commemorate Professor Sarachchandra's birth centenary. Several hundred Sri Lankan and non Sri Lankan-Canadians from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto gathered with their families and friends to enjoy the Sri Lankan classics. After the ceremonial lighting of the traditional lamp by Dr. Sange De Silva, the President of the *AAUPOC*, the President of the Toronto Chapter, Mr. Dhammika Premaratne*, and Mrs. Lalitha Sarachchandra, the widow of the late Professor Sarachchandra, the theatrical play *Maname* came to life on stage.

The current executive committee carried through the project, which was commenced by the previous executive committee, with unimaginable help and encouragement from all members of the association who rallied around for the successful completion of the project. The Sri Lankan-Canadians in the community praised the enormous undertaking and the fruitful completion of the event with enthusiasm and appreciation.

The organizational skills and the sensitivity to the human needs were exhibited by the executive committee members and their families, when they presented a space within the facility, for the attendees to socialize while tasting traditional Sri Lankan

snacks. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to mingle with friends and relatives for over an hour, during the interval before the commencement of the second drama *Sinhabahu*.

Mrs. Lalitha Sarachchandra's efforts over the years have helped to keep Professor Sarachchandra's treasured heirlooms of Sri Lanka alive and secure for the new generations to appreciate and enjoy. Her announcement that the classic drama *Maname*, which thus far has been staged only in Sinhala, will be soon presented in Tamil wowed the audience.

At the curtain call, Mrs. Sarachchandra introduced the team of actors, musicians and singers with a deep sense of appreciation and affection. Among them were, Sanath Wimalasiri (Maname Kumaru / Sinhabahu), Taranga Karunanayake (Maname Kumari) Nihari Wickramarachchi (Suppa Devi) Jayantha Bandara (Sinhaya / VEDI Raju). The audience responded with a thunderous applause.

The electrifying performances, the feeling of being among fellow Sri Lankans fulfilling the nostalgic cravings, and the enthusiastic remarks from the audience provided a memorable evening to all those who were present at the event.

The AAUPOC executive thanks each and everyone who contributed by selling and buying tickets, attending the event, donating valuable time, talents and treasures, and a variety of many other ways towards the success of the project.



** The AAUPOC graciously acknowledges and thanks Mr. Dhammika Premaratne for being instrumental in bringing the Maname and Sinhabahu drama troupe to Canada, and the past executive member Dr. Dhammika Herath for working with Mr. Premaratne and making it possible for the current executive committee to stage these plays in Ottawa.*