



PERFORMING RIGHT

TOP FIJI COMPOSER GIVES GUEST LECTURE ON COPYRIGHT



Laisa Vulakoro with accompanying musician, Sam Mawi, giving FIT music students in the ethics course a practical understanding of the value of their work.

A lecture on copyright was music to the ears of students in the Ethics, Values and Governance course at Raiwai Campus recently. Popular Fiji composer Laisa Vulakoro spoke to students about her life as a musician and the importance of protecting the rights of performers and recording artists. She illustrated her lecture by performing several of her most popular songs.

Ms Vulakoro told the students how she was passion-

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Noticeboard

Thursday 28 May, 4-5pm, Room E206 (large lecture room in E Block, Samabula Campus: FASEMS seminar on the application of remote sensing for renewable energy resource assessments in the Pacific islands, by Dr Anirudh Singh, USP Physics Division.

29 May: Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Day, when Fiji celebrates the life of the late senior statesman.

25-29 May: Study week for Semester students, followed by Semester 1 examinations. Exams for Trimester students.

FIT Council meets on Thursday 28 May, starting at 9.30am. This will be the second scheduled council meeting for 2009, the first was held in February.

ately interested in music from her early childhood on Yacata island, where she grew up in a family of 14 brothers and sisters “almost the whole island.” Her father became the *talatala* and was the village church choirmaster, so Laisa grew up learning gospel songs.

“Rather than telling us to do our homework, he would call us to learn a new song,” she said. But young Laisa’s interest in music went beyond *a capella* singing and gospel rhythms, it wasn’t exciting enough for her and she wanted to hear lots of instruments and different songs. The only radio in the village belonged to her father, and it stayed tuned to Fijian music. So when the rest of family went to church, Laisa would sneak back to the house and take the radio out to the kitchen where she would tune it to the English stations and listen to loud pop music.

“Of course, if my father noticed I was missing from church I got a hiding,” she said. But nothing could discourage her passion for music. When other children were asked in school what they wanted to be when they grew up, she always said “a star.”

“I wasn’t sure exactly what it meant, but I new I wanted to sing and be famous.”

There was no music school in those days, but Ms Vulakoro persisted in her dream. To get her first job she went to the Hyatt Regency resort, then known as the Warwick, and asked for a chance to sing with Fiji’s hottest band at the time, Nostradamus. She got hired as a back-up singer for \$40 a week “although I just wanted to sing and would have done it for nothing.” Ms Vulakoro’s career took off and she has become one of the South Pacific’s most popular vocalists, receiving both Fiji and French honours. She became known as the Vude Queen and her compositions sold internationally.

Importantly, she became Director of the 320-member Fiji Performing Rights Association, which handles the royalties due on music copyright for Fiji composers. Ms Vulakoro explained how the association operated, collecting licence fees from radio and television stations, hotels, restaurants, shops, and others for playing or performing their music and those of international composers. Through affiliation the Australian performing rights association, Fiji composers could also receive royalties on their work performed overseas. The FPRA was also trying to help control piracy, the problem of shops selling unauthorised copies of composers’ work.

Nothing could discourage her passion for music. She always said she wanted to be a ‘star’, whatever that was.

Ms Vulakoro told students about the outrage and distress musicians felt when they found pirate copies of their work, and how shopkeepers tried to evade prosecution. She described also how people tried to see her concert in Levuka without paying for tickets. She was performing on the wharf because it was the only area large enough for all her Ovalau fans. Shipping containers were used to enclose the area, but some people climbed the masts of yachts to see for free. Ms Vulakoro explained she was earning the ticket money on a grueling tour of Fiji, and those people were cheating her and her musicians.

Some people thought that composers and performers made millions, but for most that was not so and she had sought other ways of using her music to make a living, including composing jingles and licensing ring tones and holding music for telephones.

Ms Vulakoro is proud that she has remained a musician for her whole career, even though, like many of the world’s great composers, she has never learnt to read or write music notation. “I create in my heart, and record in my mind,” she said.

She advised FIT music students to look after their talent and to avoid putting anything toxic, such as drugs or tobacco, into their bodies. They also needed to keep fit so that they could perform well, dress well and keep up the energy on stage, which was a way of respecting the audience.

Ms Vulakoro is fit and energetic, a keen sportswoman, involved in women’s rugby and now volleyball, and recently led a medal-winning team to New Zealand. She said her role model was Tina Turner, who didn’t become internationally famous as a solo performer until she was 47. “But I had a baby at 47, so fame and fortune are on hold for a little.” In Fiji, however, Ms Vulakoro is the star she always wanted to be and her performance was greatly appreciated by students and staff on Raiwai campus.



REMOTELY ASSESSING PACIFIC ENERGY RESOURCES: FASEMS seminar series

Dr Anirudh Singh, of the University of the South Pacific Physics Division will speak on the application of remote sensing-GIS techniques for renewable energy resource assessment in Pacific island countries in the next 2009 seminar series held by the Faculty of Applied Science, Engineering and Maritime Studies (see Noticeboard P1).

An abstract from his presentation explains that biomass and solar energy are two of the most

important indigenous renewable resources available to Pacific island countries. Quantitative data on the extent of their availability is, however, limited, and there is an obvious need for a detailed assessment of these resources.

Traditional means of collecting such widely geographically-distributed data can be slow and resource intensive, and a faster, less labour-intensive data-gathering methodology is appropriate. The techniques of Remote Sensing and GIS, in the forms of satellite imagery and Digital Elevation Models are ideally suited for this research.

After discussing the role of resource assessment in the utilization of renewable energy, Dr Singh's presentation will highlight two cases in which the application of Remote Sensing-GIS can provide important data-gathering techniques. The first is in the collection of information on the total biomass cover of a country for the purpose of informing policy decisions on the development of indigenous renewable energy resources. Satellite imagery is a powerful tool for determining the general biomass cover of a region, and the location and amount of specific vegetation types such as coconut, mahogany, pine and other woody biomass recourses within this cover.

The second is the accurate assessment of the geographical distribution of solar energy resources. The incident (short-wave) solar radiation varies greatly from location to location due to the contribution from reflected (short-wave) radiation from the slope and aspect of the local terrain. The presentation will reveal how the use of Digital Elevation Models, coupled with computer modeling of direct solar radiation, can provide site-specific data on the extent of solar energy resources available at any geographical location.



Beautiful Nadave, where the FIT Academic Board and senior staff met at the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development to work on the institute's strategic plan.

Picture: Navinesh Mudaliar

