

French connection to national anthems

There are quite a number which have interesting links with popular French tunes, discovers **Aneeta Sundararaj**

THE French national anthem *La Marseillaise* was composed in one night during the French Revolution on April 24, 1792 by Claude-Joseph Rouget de Lisle, a captain of the engineers and amateur musician stationed in Strasbourg in 1792.

It was played at a patriotic banquet at Marseilles, and printed copies were given to the revolutionary forces as they marched into Paris. They sang this song upon entering Paris and marched to its tune as they headed

to the Tuileries on August 10.

Interestingly, the song's composer, Rouget de Lisle, was in fact a royalist and he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new constitution. He was subsequently imprisoned and barely escaped the guillotine. The anthem was originally called *Chant de guerre de l'armee du Rhin* (War Song of the Army of the Rhine), but took on the name *La Marseillaise* due to its popularity with the volunteer army units from Marseilles.

The Convention accepted it as the French national anthem in a decree passed in July 14, 1795. *La Marseillaise* was banned by Napoleon during the Empire, and by Louis XVIII on the Second Restoration (1815) because of its revolutionary associations. Authorised after the July Revolution of 1830, it was again banned by Napoleon III and not reinstated until 1879.

(Source: Internet Modern History Sourcebook)

MALAYSIA

In 1956, as Malaya was poised for independence, Tunku Abdul Rahman headed a committee to choose a suitable national anthem. The one chosen was based on the State anthem of Perak. What, then,



is the origin of this State anthem? There are two related stories.

In the first, and more well-known story, Sultan Idris Murshidul'adzam Shah, the Sultan of Perak from 1887 to 1916, represented the Malay Rulers of the Federated Malay States at the coronation of King Edward VII in 1901. The melody for the state anthem played then was adapted from *Terang Bulan*, a song in an Indonesian *bangsawan*.

In the second story, an earlier Sultan of Perak, Sultan Abdullah, was banished to Mahe, Seychelles in 1877. While in exile, one of his daughters became an ardent pianist and played a popular melody, *La Rosalie*, regularly. Apparently, this song was composed by the lyricist Pierre-Jean de Beranger (1780-1857). When the Sultan returned from his exile, the melody for the State anthem was supposed to be based on *La Rosalie*. (source: www.seychellesweekly.com)

RUSSIA

In Russia, after the abdication of the last Czar in 1917, there were various factions within the Provisional Government of the time. The more radical socialist faction used *The Worker's Marseillaise* which had a similar tune to *La Marseillaise*. It was written by Pyotr Lavrov and first-published by 1875. After the Provisional Government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks in November, 1917, *The Internationale* was used more often. The song was originally created by two Frenchmen who were ardent socialists - Eugene

Pottier and Pierre De Geyter. (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Internationale)

THE PITCAIRN ISLANDS

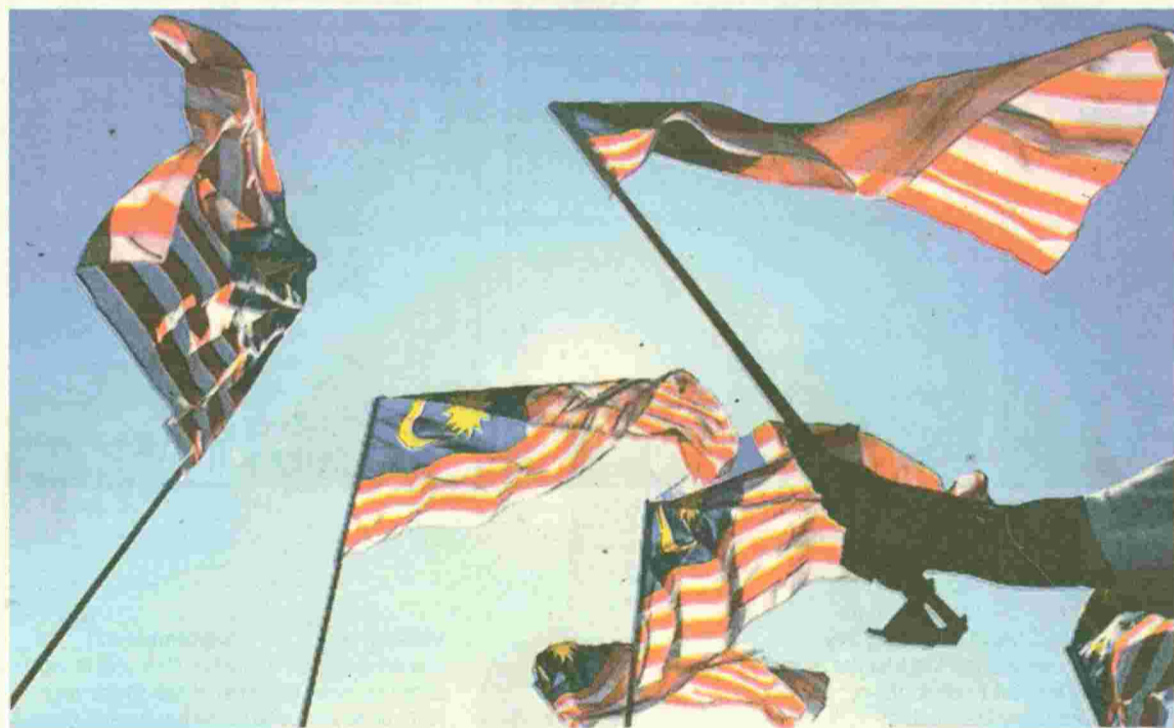
The Pitcairn Islands are a remote British colony in the South Pacific and the site where the mutineers from HMS *Bounty* landed. Their official national anthem is *God Save the Queen*. In *The Mutineers Of The Bounty And Their Descendants In Pitcairn And Norfolk Island*, Diana Jolliffe Belcher wrote that around 1817, one of the unofficial anthems used was a local poem by Reverend G. H. Nobbs which was set to the tune of Rousseau's *Dream*.

This tune was originally a serenade from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's one-act opera, *Le Devin du Village*. It was first performed before King Louis XV and later at the wedding of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. (source: www.nationalanthems.info/pn.htm)

CANADA

The original French lyrics of *O Canada* were written in 1880 as a patriotic poem by a judge, Adolphe-Basile Routhier, and set to music by a French-Canadian composer, Calixa Lavallee. Thereafter, the words were rewritten numerous times and the anthem's English lyrics were performed for Edward VIII in 1936 and King George VI in 1939 on their visits to Canada.

In 1967, it was approved by Parliament as the national anthem, and was made official by the National Anthem Act of 1980. (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O_Canada)



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As part of the 2014 French Language Week, a French singing competition has been organised for Malaysian talents of 18 years old and above, to showcase their vocal abilities in French. Only French or Francophone songs are allowed. Translations, contestant's creations and adaptations will not be eligible.

Contestants will be judged by a panel comprising representatives from Alliance Française de Kuala Lumpur, Francophonie organisation committee in Malaysia, and the local and French music scene. Judging criteria includes vocal ability and quality, appearance, stage presence, knowledge of song, pronunciation, rhythm, and overall impression.

Contestants have until March 8, 2014 to register. Video recordings have to be sent in by noon on March 8, 2014 and must be in .mp4, .avi or .mpg format. The final competition will take place at Help College Auditorium, KL on March 15, 2014. Finalists must pay the registration fee of RM15 cash to the organisers on the day of the finale.

TO REGISTER

- Fill in the registration form on the website www.alliancefrancaise.org.my and email to french.singing.malaysia@gmail.com
- Send via email or by post a CD or video recording of you performing one (1) song in French to french.singing.malaysia@gmail.com by using www.wetransfer.com to upload your file
- Or by post a CD to Alliance Française de Kuala Lumpur - Singing Competition, 15, Lorong Gurney, 54100 KL. If sending by post, attach a print-out of the completed registration form. Confirmation email will be sent once file or CD has been received.

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