



eastern Iran, is **Sima Bina**. Though known throughout the Middle East, her talents were kept hidden from the majority of the world. Encouraged by fans, Bina has agreed to make rare performances in Europe and the United States.

The Persian Art Center and Duke's Institute for the Art are sponsoring a concert by Sima Bina on Sunday, February 20 at 6 pm at Duke. Box office admission is \$22. Call 967-3718 or 684-6654 for ticket informa-

Persian politics can't silence Bina

SIMA BINA, at the Minkler Auditorium (1750 Finch East), Sunday, March 6. 325-401-6877.

By **ANDREW SUN**

Although the Khomeini era may be over in Iran, many of the country's orthodox Islamic rules are still in effect. For a dedicated female artist like **Sima Bina**, living in the shadow of those strict laws has to be frustrating.

Somehow, the Persian folk singer seems to have transcended the restrictions imposed on her. The 49-year-old singer started her career at the age of nine singing on Radio Iran's children's program, then trained in folk and traditional Iranian vocal styles with two of Iran's music masters before becoming one of the country's most prominent female vocalists, specializing in the Khorasan music of eastern Iran.

But in 1979 a revolution took place, and the new regime instituted a stringent Islamic fundamentalism. Women's voices were forbidden to be heard in public, let alone be heard performing on a stage—a rather strong blow when you've trained all your life to sing.

Yet in the last 15 years Bina has maintained her craft. The singer still resides in Iran, but this year, following an invitation to present a series of lectures on Iranian music at Duke University, she is taking the opportunity to do some public performances in the West.

The concert this Sunday at Seneca College's Minkler Auditorium—co-presented by the Iranian Community Association of Ontario—is her first public performance in 15 years.

Artistic struggle

"I am delighted to contact my fans and friends through this series of North American concerts," Bina says through a translator and a fax machine. "I have been relatively active in the last 15 years, researching, collecting and re-



Iranian singer Sima Bina must fight restrictive fundamentalist tradition to maintain her career.

cutting Iranian folk music, mostly from villages and remote parts of eastern Iran, as well as teaching and giving private concerts."

While limitations on artists have been lifted enough for her to travel abroad, it is still a difficult thing to be an artist in the Islamic world. And even though Bina will perform in public here, she is hesitant to speak openly about the social and political system in her homeland.

"I guess the authorities should answer these questions, not me," Bina diplomatically answers, declining to comment on the laws that have banned her from public performance. "This is a question regarding Iranian social and political situations, and it is not my field of interest."

"Arts and music are not exceptions. If a government imposes restrictions on different aspects of social life, it applies to music and arts as well. However, life goes on. Real artists continue to create

in spite of all of these restrictions. Many are working and succeeding and being amazingly active and productive in their fields."

With plans to return to Iran after the Duke University engagement, Bina knows when to hold back. When pushed for further thoughts on the codes for women, which are viewed as repressive in the West, she declines again.

"Again, I'd rather talk about music."

HOT TICKET

