

outrEACH

presents

Odissi Classical Dance

*featuring Priti Haria and Nitya Abraham of
Kala Shakti School of Indian Dance, CT*

to benefit survivors of the Gujarat Earthquake



Jointly organized by:

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*“There is no knowledge, no craft, no study, no art, no penance, or even action
which is not a part of Natya. Natya is a rich all-encompassing Art”.*

— Natya Shastra

Kala Shakti School of Indian Dance

Kala Shakti School of Indian Dance was founded in 1982 in Stamford by **Sonal Vora**, its Director and a disciple of Padmavibhushan (highest honor for distinguished achievement), Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, and Guru Natbar Maharana. The school conducts regular classes, intensive workshops, lecture-demonstrations, and private lessons in Odissi Classical Dance, producing hundreds of students in the last 18 years. Moreover, Sonal Vora is the Secretary of the Association of Indians in America (AIA, CT Chapter), and is actively involved in raising funds for the Gujarat earthquake.

Priti Haria began her training in Odissi from Sonal Vora in 1993. Since then she has performed at many places, including South Street Seaport in New York City, Yale University – Festival of Arts, Palace Theater – Census 2000, and the World Fest '98 in Stamford. She has attended three extensive summer workshops taught by her Guru. For Priti, the Odissi dance has always been a means of inspiration and relaxation. In future, she plans to pass on her art to the younger generation and keep this beautiful form of dance alive. Currently, Priti enjoys assisting her teacher Sonal in shaping young dancers. She is married to a wonderful husband, without whose support, she feels, she would not have been the artiste that she is today.

Nitya Abraham is a sophomore at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, majoring in Biology. She began learning Odissi in 1996. She presented her first performance known as “Manchapravesh” in 1999 with the blessings and guidance of Sonal Vora. This was quite an achievement, as she accomplished it in a mere three years, whereas most dancers require twice the time. Since then, Nitya has performed at religious festivals, cultural fairs, schools, and fundraisers throughout the tri-state area. In the summer of 2000, she trained under Padmavibhushan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra for three weeks in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Nitya continues her Odissi training even with her rigorous college coursework and hopes to continue sharing this beautiful dance with aficionados of culture and dance alike.

Odissi Classical Dance from India

Odissi is an ancient, breathtakingly beautiful form of sacred dance, which was originally developed in the temple of Jagannatha in Orissa in East India, as a form of worship and meditation. It is believed to be one of the oldest surviving classical dances, dating back to the Second Century B.C. Women dedicated to Orissan temples danced Odissi as a sacred ritual. Like other classical dances of India, Odissi originated in the Natya Shastra treatise.

Odissi dance style has captivated audiences all over the world. Its characteristic charm, fluid movements, stunning sculpturesque poses, and alluring music has attracted many students of dance from different parts of the world to study and perform this dance style.

Odissi is perhaps the most lyrical of the Indian classical dance forms. It is a dance of delight, love, passion – human, lyrical, pure, and divine. Handed down from teacher to disciple for thousand of years, Odissi emphasizes and in fact, centers on spirituality and devotion. Padmavibhushan Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra is credited to be one of the most important revivor-pioneers of present-day Odissi.

Program

Saturday, March 24, 2001, 8:00 p.m.

Mangalacharan (Namami)

Batu Nritta

Saveri Pallavi

Moksha

Mangalacharan (Namami)

Traditionally the first item of the Odissi repertoire, Mangalacharan is a prayer for an auspicious beginning. On entering the stage, the dancer offers flowers to Lord Jagannatha – the ruling god of this dance whose image generally sits on the stage, and also bows to mother earth. These steps are called the “Pushpanjali” and the “Bhumi Pranam”. The dancer then performs a piece called the “Bighnaraj Pooja”, wherein Lord Ganesha is invoked to remove obstacles from the dancer’s path.

The dancer says, “O Ganesha, I bow to you, while you are seated under the Kadamba tree. You are the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. You are fond of sweets and consequently have a large belly. But the large belly is also the keeper of many a secrets and the source of divine wisdom. You have the ears and the tusks of an elephant, since you have been endowed with the head of this great animal; but the rest of your body is human. Being the son of Lord Shiva, who is the Lord of Dance, you too have inherited his dance expertise. You hold in your powers the ability to remove all obstacles. I bow to you to grant me a pure and sound mind.”

The dancer also performs a three-fold salutation, called the “Sabha Pranam”, to God, the Gurus, and the Audience.

Batu Nritya

Traditionally the second item of the Odissi repertoire, “Batu” refers to “Batuk Bhairava”, one of the 64 forms of Lord Shiva, who is considered to be the ‘Destroyer’ of the Hindu Trinity of Gods. This is a pure dance item with no interpretational content. The dance involves gradual unfolding of the body or a process of limbering up for the rest of the repertoire. This dance contains in its choreography, fine examples of the resemblance Odissi bears to sculpture. This dance reflects myriad sculptural poses found in the great dance hall or the “Natamandira” of the Sun Temple of Konarak in Orissa, India.

The dancer will demonstrate some poses from these temples. These poses depict celestial dancers and musicians playing the Veena, the stringed instrument; the Venu or the flute; the Mardala or the two-headed drum; and cymbals.

Saveri Pallavi

Pallavi is a pure dance item that places an equal emphasis on the twin aspects of melody and rhythm. In Sanskrit, “Pallavi” means ‘to grow’. Like a creeper, the Pallavi grows in pace and complexity, slowly yet surely. Hand gestures and body movements are not meant to tell a story here. Rather, they are used to create and enhance beauty.

However, Saveri Pallavi is an exception in that it seems to have “Shringara” or ‘beautification’ as its sub-theme. No wonder that it is sometimes referred to as the “Shringara” Pallavi.

Moksha

Odissi performances traditionally end with Moksha. This dance represents a spiritual culmination for the dancer. The word “Moksha” means ‘liberation’. In this, the dancer as it were lets herself go, floats on the wings of music and rhythm, to soar into the realm of pure aesthetic delight. Movement and pose merge to create ever new patterns, ever new designs in space and time. The dance moves onto a crescendo that is thrilling to both, the eye and the ear.

In a well-known hymn or Shloka, the dancer prays to Shiva and Shakti, the male and female aspects of divinity to bless her and everyone else. With the cosmic sound of the “Om”, the dance dissolves into nothingness — just like Moksha or the deliverance of the soul in real life.

outrEACH

'outrEACH' is a non-profit organization founded in Bombay on December 2, 1999 to communicate for a cause that we care about. Our goal is to reach out to EACH one in need and make positive changes in society, using communication as our tool – verbal or non-verbal, audio and visual, one-on-one to world-wide-web.

'outrEACH' has identified 'Elder Abuse' as the first major cause. Our work-in-progress is a documentary on the same subject, to be complemented by PSAs (Public Service Announcements) about Older Persons. In Spring 2000, in partnership with "Bombay Times", 'outrEACH' invited 'reader-response' to their two-week long press campaign on 'Elder Abuse' as a prelude the documentary. This resulted in a high-level meeting and 10 commitments to act on the so far, well-concealed issue of 'Elder Abuse'.

Prior to our formal registration, 'outrEACH' sprung into action in collaboration with AGNI (Action for Good Governance and Networking in India), The Times of India, Indian Oil Corporation, Indian Railways and hundreds of volunteers to send 275 metric tons of relief material to Orissa in eastern India within 3-4 weeks of the supercyclone in November, 1999.

Although 'outrEACH' does not claim to be a 'disaster/relief' organization, we are working diligently to help survivors of the major earthquake that hit Gujarat on January 26, 2001.

***Your contribution towards this performance
will support outrEACH to meet its goal.***

In addition, if you wish to write a check to benefit Gujarat, you could make a tax-exempt donation to:

The Association of Indians in America, CT Chapter

c/o Mike Gamadia

1230 Hope Street, Unit #1, Stamford, CT 06907

Please mention 'Gujarat Earthquake Relief Fund' in the memo.

Credits

Venue: Pixel Obsessive Studio
Exhibition & Program: 'outrEACH', Rajul Mehta

Thank You

Introduction to Odissi: Sonal Vora
Performers: Priti Haria & Nitya Abraham
Sound: Nick Bell & Aaron Nisbet
Videography: Ryuhei Shindo
Display support: Atsuko Shindo
Catering support: Cristina Coelho
General support: Bonnie Hirsch
Juanna Valdes

Facts: World Bank Report, March 14, 2001
Satish Nandgaonkar
Salil Tripathi

Photos/Visuals: Dinesh Ahir, AGNI
Mitesh Thakkar, AGNI
gujaratindia.com
rediff.com
timesofindia.com