

Akādemi

SOUTH ASIAN DANCE UK

MASTERS OF ABHINAYA



Saturday 1st November, 7.30pm
Rich Mix

Abhinaya: 'the art of expression'.

Join four of the UK's most respected and distinguished South Asian dance artists for the ultimate experience of expression in classical Indian dance. For one night only **Chitra Sundaram, Pushkala Gopal, Sujata Banerjee and Padmashri Pratap Pawar** will celebrate the rich breadth of Abhinaya in a truly memorable event.

Choreographed for the intimate setting of Rich Mix and inspired by the stories of India, artists will showcase their own interpretations through the art of expression. The informal environment will allow the artists to create a personal connection with the audience, supported by live musicians. **Witness the Masters of Abhinaya illustrate the art form in its true excellence.**

ARTISTS

Padmashri Pratap Pawar:

Padmashri Guru Pratap Pawar, is an outstanding exponent and teacher of the North Indian dance form, Kathak and the very first disciple of Padma Vibhushan Pandit Birju Maharaj. Having established himself in India as a celebrated dancer Padmashri Pratap Pawar was sponsored by the ministry of external affairs [ICCR] to popularise Indian dance forms in Guyana and Trinidad for 8 years and later taught at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, UK as their very first full-time Kathak teacher. The Triveni Dance Company which he founded in the UK in 1984 has toured extensively in the UK, Asia, Europe and the Americas, as well as in Africa and the Caribbean. As Britain's most senior professional kathak dancer and choreographer, Padmashri Guru Pawar has trained many students including British born Akram Khan. In honour of his life and dedication to the field of "kathak", Padmashri Guru Pratap Pawar received one of the highest Civilian Awards 'Padmashri' in India by the President of India in 2008.

Chitra Sundaram:

Chitra Sundaram is recognized as a performing artist of distinction in India, UK and North America where she has toured her solo works. Trained in the southern Indian classical dance-theatre form, Bharatanatyam, her research and performing works explore other approaches, vocabularies and devices. Her latest project and work-in-process, 'Sthreedom: The Good Wife' explores the conspired burden of chastity as the preeminent female virtue embedded in living conservative traditions, using Indian and Greek mythologies as well as dance, music, visual projections, spoken text and theatre. Chitra's earlier collaborations include Akademi's Coming of Age at the South Bank Centre and a commission to create an ensemble work Awaz/Voice for the Trafalgar Square Festival. Chitra teaches South Asian Performance Methodologies in the Department of Drama and Performance at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Pushkala Gopal:

Pushkala Gopal obtained her BA Honours degree in Mathematics and Economics. She was awarded a postgraduate diploma in Bharatanatyam in 1977 by the Ministry of Education, India. In 1983, Pushkala was awarded the British Council Fellowship and spent a year at Trent Park studying western techniques of theatre, dance and education. She has pioneered several education projects nationally. She has also choreographed in the dance drama genre, working with a range of internationally acclaimed artistes. Pushkala is unique in her versatility as a Natya artiste as she is a holistic performer. She has taught dance at Middlesex University and music on the Bhavan Trinity music degree. Pushkala is an FTCL in music and senior monitoring examiner of the Classical Indian dance faculty of the ISTD.

Sujata Banerjee:

Sujata Banerjee is a dynamic and versatile Kathak artist who has dedicated over 30 years to developing dance education in the UK and in other parts of the world. In 1982, Sujata came to the UK, set up her school and company which eventually became a UK registered charity. Sujata has been trained predominantly in the Lucknow style of Kathak, initially by Sreemati Ruby Bandopadhyaya, Pundit Vijai Shankar and to date continuing guidance from the legendary master of Kathak, Pundit Birju Maharaj.

MUSICIANS

Pirashanna Thevarajah is a senior disciple of Mridanga vidwan Sri. M. Balachandar. A versatile performer, he is one of the few percussionists of his generation to have a command of the various Indian percussion instruments such as the mridangam, kanjira, ghatam and morsing; and is also proficient in the art of konnakol (Indian spoken rhythm). He has collaborated and performed with many of the world's foremost Indian classical and contemporary musicians, including Pandit Ravi Shankar, Anoushka Shankar, Prof. TV Gopalakrishnan, Mandolin U. Shrinivas, violin duo Ganesh and Kumaresh, Susheela Raman and Talvin Singh to name a few.

Jasdeep Singh Degun is a young and upcoming Sitarist born and raised in Leeds, UK. Having studied Indian Classical vocals from a young age, Jasdeep started learning the Sitar at the late age of 15. He has acquired a deep insight into the art of Indian Classical music and continues to do so with his teacher, Ustad Dharambir Singh MBE. Jasdeep is a regular session musician having worked with musicians such as Guy Chambers, Cerys Matthews, and Melanie C to name a few. Jasdeep recently performed at the Royal Albert Hall at this year's BBC Proms showcasing his own original compositions based on Indian Classical music.

Manorama Prasad is regarded by many as one of the foremost exponents of the Carnatic vocal tradition based in Europe. She started learning her art at the age of five, born into a family of musicians, in her native Bangalore in south India and began performing at 13/14. Under the tutelage of the grandson of another great Carnatic figure, Mysore Vasudev Archaraya she excelled in her music training. Having moved to the UK, she began performing at community events but now the interest has gone far beyond that and has taken her to Europe to perform. She has been an artistic director, most noticeably for Samya and Tarang, the UK's national South Asian Music Youth Orchestra and Indian Classical Music Ensemble. In 2006, under her direction, the troupe performed for both the Queen and the President of India at the time, APJ Abdul Kalam. In the same year it also performed at Darbar, and linked up with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in a cross-genre concert in front of the late and very great sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar.

ORDER OF THE EVENING:

INVOCATION – SHIVA PANCHAKSHARA SHLOKA

Source: Adi Shankara (8th-9th century CE)

Music: Manorama Prasad

The *Shiva Panchakshara Shloka* is a celebration of the Hindu deity Shiva as the elemental universe. It is embodied in a sacred five syllable mnemonic 'Na-Ma-Shi-Va-ya', consecrating life as earth, water, wind, fire, ether.

DEVARANAMA: PUSHKALA GOPAL

Devaranama is a composition written by Purandaradasa, 16C; the grandsire of Carnatic music, urging the devotee to find his beloved Lord Vishnu whenever and wherever the devotee calls. The Abhinaya interpretation uses the concept of Ekaharya Lasyanga i.e. the same character playing different parts. The text lends itself to improvisation where different devotees are portrayed in passing, with detailing of the Prahlada story and the Draupadi story. The music composition and arrangement is by Pushkala with her own voice and TV Ramprasadh on the vocal track.

NAYAK BHED: PADMASHRI PRATAP PAWAR

Choreography: Padmashri Pratap Pawar

Music composition by Pandit Birju Maharaj

Copyright: Pratap Pawar Triveni dance company

In the *Natyashastra* there are detail descriptions of both male protagonists (*nayak*) and female protagonists (*nayika*).

Padmashri Pratap Pawar will focus on the male protagonists and will depict two heroes and one villain:

- Dheer Prashat nayak (Lord Shree Ram who is serene, brave and kind)
- Khalnayak (Kansa who is cruel and vindictive)
- Dheer Lalit Nayak (Lord Krishna who is serene, brave, romantic and artistic)

While depicting the narratives of these protagonists, Padmashri Pratap Pawar will also depict other minor characters such as Sage Gautham, Ahaliya, Vasu Dev (the grieving father) and the young maidens of Vrindavan.

JAVALI – PARULENNA MAATA (GOSSIP): CHITRA SUNDARAM

Composer: Dharmapuri Subbarayar (19th century)

Javali's are a bold and fast-paced genre of Southern Indian or Carnatic music and, hence, of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dance. *Javali's* typically feature an experienced courtesan/woman and a situation of love troubled by infidelity. Here the heroine cajoles, scolds, questions, pleads with her lover, the deity of Dharmapuri, an aspect of Vishnu/Krishna:

"Please don't believe hearsay, dear beloved, the Lord of my life-breath!! Why has your face turned so? What is the matter that is so secret? Who has bewitched and taken hold of you? Which woman, who walks like a drunken-elephant, has made you so dull? O Just Lord of Dharmapuri, treat me fairly, for I am devoted only to you! Dearest beloved, please don't trust so easily what people say."

GAT BHAV – SITA HARAN: SUJATA BANERJEE

Gat Bhav is a traditional Kathak piece where all characters of a story are danced purely on rhythm. This piece is based on the story of abduction of Sita. During exile, Rama, Sita and Laxman lived in the forest. Sita made forest her home; trees, flowers, leaves, animals and the nature was her companion. The demon king Ravana disguises himself as a mendicant, tricked Rama to go deep in the forest in search of a golden deer which never existed. Laxman draws a line across the hut to protect Sita which she crosses and gets abducted. Ravana brings Sita home, in Lanka on his flying Chariot on the way fighting with the big bird Jatayoo.

INTERVAL

GHAZAL: PADMASHRI PRATAP PAWAR

Choreography: Padmashri Pratap Pawar

Music: Pandit Vishwa Prakash

Copyright: Pratap Pawar Triveni dance company

Ghazals generally are poetry written in "urdu". The Ghazal being performed this evening is a composition that was written by the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1857. This ghazal expresses a deep sense of pathos of loneliness: During the British Raj the Emperor was exiled to Rangoon in Burma and his last wish was that after his death, that his body be buried in India as, "that is his beloved". This last wish was not fulfilled and it is this sentiment of separation and loneliness which are expressed in the ghazal.

THUMRI – DAGAR CHALAT: SUJATA BANERJEE

Composed: Pandit Bindadin Maharaj

Tala: Addha

A semi classical Hindustani *vocal* tradition which has been popularised by its use in Kathak genre. Krishna's pranks kept all *gopis* (the girls of Brinadavan) busy, harassed, amused and also often upset. In this piece the *gopis* get together to catch him, tease him by dressing him up as a girl. Low and behold, he is even more beautiful when dressed up this way!

PADAM: PUSHKALA GOPAL

Padam by Kshetrayya 17C, in the language Telugu. Padams are love poems and very special to the Bharatanatyam repertoire. They portray the feelings of a lover, in this case a Nayika or heroine, who laments about the discord between herself and her beloved. She remembers a time when he would gaze at her face without a flicker of his eyelids and even ask for the flame of the lamp to specially light her face, even before the fading of daylight! Ayyayyo. In the voice of Sikkil Gurucharan from *Peranandam* cd of Charsur.

MOTHERSONG – CHINNAN CHIRU KILIYE (MY TEENY TINY PARROT): CHITRA SUNDARAM

Verse: Subramania Bharathi (1882-1921); Language: Tamil

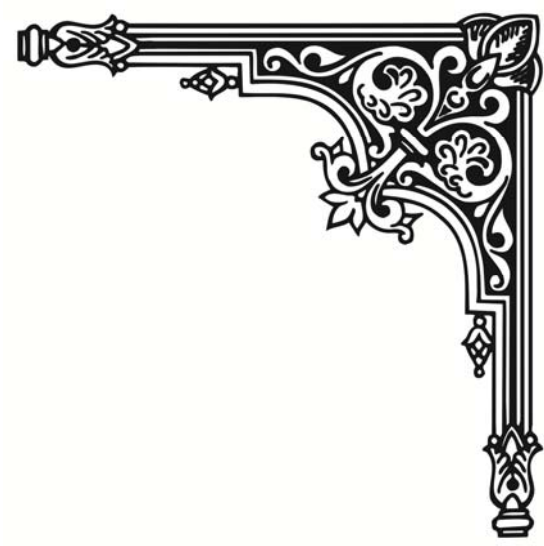
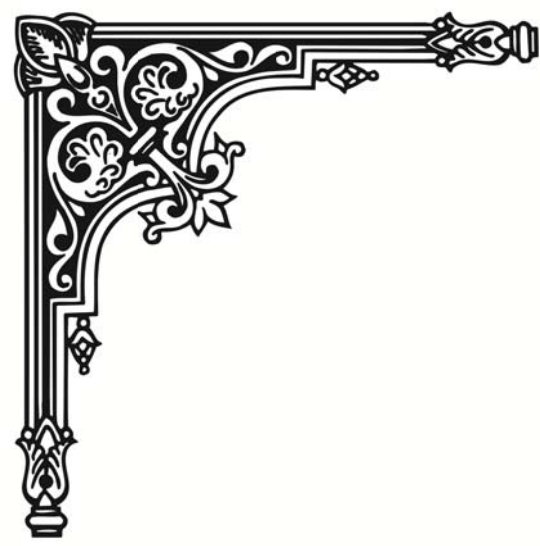
'Paatu' translates as 'song' and covers a range of popular compositions that do not fall into the formal categories of the Carnatic system. In this song, the mother describes her love for her child as a baby, and, all grown up.

"My teeny tiny parrot, my lifelong treasure, you destroyed my sorrows and lifted my life. You are a work of art that's come alive! When you come running (to me), my burning heart is cooled with a kiss exchanged, I get, like, intoxicated with a hug, I go mad with joy when your face turns red, I am disturbed When frowns cross your forehead, my heart shudders When your tears fall, my blood oozes out of my heart Oh, pupil of my eye, through which I see all, I ask: I is my life-breath not yours!"

BLESSING – MANGALAM

Composer: Pandit Ravi Shankar; Language: Sanskrit

A short finale invoking blessings for the elements as well as the body, mind and soul, for all.



AKADEMI ADDA

Following the performance will be the launch of the Akademi Adda: an informal gathering of passionate, like minded individuals. It will include a post-show discussion featuring a Q&A exploring the journey each of the artists. Together with the performers we will discover how the artists creatively engage and interpret Abhinaya throughout their careers.

The perfect opportunity to network with fellow dance lovers, feel free and comfortable to discuss ideas, tips and opinions over a drink at the bar which will be open throughout.

So don't forget to come along, it's free!

