

In a unique artistic exchange, Akademi brings together Somita Basak and Hélène Lesage for an evening of Bharatanatyam in its purest form. Both artists bring their own distinctive style and interpretations of this sculptural Indian Dance Technique. These artists have cultivated their technique through a journey of rediscovery. Join Akademi to celebrate the culmination of this journey.

The NAVODIT programme challenges artists to create a better understanding of their performance work in relation to themselves. It launches dancers at the early stages of their careers by providing a foundation for their artistic development. Somita and Hélène unite to showcase their established repertoire, refined through Akademi's artist development programme NAVODIT.

NAVODIT showcases classical Indian dance and supports emerging artists as they rise and establish themselves as part the cultural landscape of the UK.

### 1. Invocation: Ganapathi Stuthi followed by Alarippu

Ragam: medley of compositions

Talam: various

Choreography (Stuthi): Priya Shrikumar & Jayan Kumar

Choreography (Alarippu): Chitra Sundaram

Performance: Hélène Lesage joined by Somita Basak

The delightful elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganapathi or Ganesha, being 'the conqueror of all obstacles', is invoked with praise and entreaty to bless the performance for success. The traditional technical solo Alarippu has been reworked spatially and as a duet for this Navodit event.

### 2. Jathiswaram

Ragam: Saveri

Talam: Rupakam

Choreography: MK Saroja and Maria-Kiran

Performance: Hélène Lesage

Jathiswaram is a 'pure dance', or nritta piece, exhibiting geometric and graceful body movements of the form to make visual through dance the melodic and rhythmic structures of the composition.

### 3. Kirtanam

Srichakra raja Ragam: Ragamalika

Talam: Adi

Composer: Agasthiyar (author and date still contested: 15th- 18th C)

Choreography: Priyadarshini Govind

A well-known composition extolling the beauty and bounty of the Mother Goddess: Revering her by her many names, Rajarajeshwari, Lalithambika and Narayani, 'Bless me!' entreats the poet.



**Somita Basak**

Somita Basak is one of the UK's young upcoming dancers of the South Indian classical dance form Bharatanatyam. Somita is a trained yoga and dance instructor and teaches regularly at the Urdang Akademi, London. Somita auditioned with Akademi in February 2013 and has been selected Akademi's artist development project NAVODIT, which will build and develop her extensive performance experience. Somita regularly performs across London in solo both and group choreography.



**Hélène Lesage**

Born in France, Hélène started her dance training in ballet at the age of four, which lead her to studying at the Conservatoire National de Région of Nantes. Hélène has always been interested in different dance forms. After learning Flamenco for one year, she discovered her passion for Bharatanatyam. Since 2008 she has been training in Bharatanatyam (Kalakshetra style) under various gurus across France and the UK.

#### 4. Varnam - Nanda gopalan ennai

Ragam: Gaurimanohari

Talam: Adi

Composer : Madurai R. Muralidharan

Choreography: Jayan Kumar

Performance: Hélène Lesage

Varnam displays, in a single but layered work, both technique-based vocabulary and narrative expression, or nritya, and abhinaya. In this example, the heroine indirectly addresses the object of her love, the god Krishna, appealing to her close friend or sakhi, to convey her message of desperate longing to her beloved.

#### 5. Javali - Nee maatale

Ragam: Purvi Kalyani

Talam: Adi Composer: Tirupananthaal Pattabhiramaya (19th C)

Choreography: Inspired by Priyadarshini Govind, coached by Pushkala Gopal

A traditional fast-paced genre featuring strong courtesan-heroines: here, the woman is upset as her lover has made her many promises of expensive jewellery, promises he probably never intended to keep! The scene starts when he places a gift of flowers in her hair, which she unravels. She challenges him, with much sarcasm:

*What happened to all the words that you spoke, the promises of gifts you made?*

*The other day you pinched my cheek and promised me a nose ring, where is that?*

*Repeatedly, you came to me proclaiming love, and promised me a pair of bangles, even a pair of earrings.*

*What happened to all of that?*

*Were all your words written on water or have they blown away in the wind?*

#### 6. Tillana

Ragam: Kathanakuthuhalam

Talam: Adi

Composer: Dr M Balamuralikrishna (20th C)

Choreography: Priyadarshini Govind

A customary 'finale' work with joyous explorations of the movements and rhythmic variations typical of this dance form: this one features the signature of the composer as a dedication to the god Krishna.

**Lighting Design: Stuart Walton**

**Artist Mentor: Chitra Sundaram**

**Navodit Coordinator: Nina Head**

**Akademi Team: Mira Kaushik, Nina Head, Rob Lynden, Monique Deletant Bell, Antareepa Thakur, Alton Brown, Sydney Rae, Christina Christou, Renu Mehto & Jaykishen Patel**

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#### Background to Classical Dance Style

**Bharatanatyam** is a classical Indian dance form originating in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. This dance form denotes various 19th and 20th century reconstructions of *Sadir*, the art of temple dancers. *Sadir* in turn, is derived from ancient dance forms. Bharatanatyam is usually accompanied by classical music. It takes its inspiration from the sculptures of the ancient temple of Chidambaram. Bharatanatyam, as the name depicts is the combination of: 'Bha' - Bhavam (means expression), 'Ra' - Ragam (means music), 'Ta' - Talam (means beat or rhythm) and Natyam (means dance) in Tamil. Bharatanatyam is a reworked dance-form from the traditional "sadir" known for its grace, purity, tenderness, and sculptural poses. Today, it is one of the most popular and widely performed dance styles and is practiced by male and female dancers all over the world.

#### Akademi South Asian Dance UK

Akademi is a pioneering, progressive arts organisation that exists to enhance the practice, understanding and appreciation of South Asian dance in the UK. Since 1979, Akademi has been taking South Asian dance into unconventional spaces, re-defining the parameters of the art form itself. For more information about Akademi, please visit:

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