Shishya School Of Performing Arts
Presents
Bharatanatyam Arangetram
27 2024
SAT-APRIL
Diya Nagella
Conducted by Guru 'Kalashree' Sukanya Mahadevan
(Founder and Artistic Director, Shishya School Of Performing Arts)

Bharatanatyam Arangetram

Bharatanatyam is a classical Indian dance form with roots in ancient Sanskrit literature and temple sculptures. The name combines two words: Natyam (dramatic storytelling) and 'Bharata' a mnemonic symbolizing 'Bhavam' (emotion), 'Raagam' (melody), and 'Taalam' (rhythm), representing the dance's expression of emotion, melody, and rhythm in a dramatic format.

Bharatanatyam encompasses three main elements: Nritta (rhythmic movements), Natya (dramatic storytelling), and Nritya (a combination of Nritta and Natya), offering a rich, multi-dimensional performance experience. "Arangetram" (Rangapravesam in Telegu) is a Tamil word meaning to "ascend the stage". An Arangetram serves as a graduation performance and represents a major milestone in a dancer's journey. Arangetrams typically follow a traditional format called the 'Margam' which is a structured path to completion. This brochure will include the Raagam (melody) and Taalam (rhythm) for each piece.

About the school and Guru

Shishya School Of Performing Arts, founded by the distinguished performer, teacher, and choreographer Guru "Kalashree" Sukanya Mahadevan, is dedicated to teaching Indian Classical dance, mythology, and dance theater. 'Shishya' means 'student' in Sanskrit, reflecting the school's focus on education and qualification in the arts. Guru Sukanya, involved in the arts since age 6, has trained under renowned maestros like Shri Bhaskar, Smt. Indira Krishnamurthy, Padmabhushan Dr. Saroja Vaidyanathan, and the late Kalaimamani Dr. Saraswati Sundaresan. A visiting faculty at Rider University's world dance program, she has been honored with the 'Dr. Saraswati Award' by Vipanchee Natyalaya and earned the title 'Kalashree' for her contributions to the next generation. Under her direction, Shishya students have graced prestigious stages, including Carnegie Hall in 2020 (and invited for a return performance in 2025), and the upcoming International Summer Stages in Rome. Guru Sukanya promotes 'Art for Humanity,' encouraging students to use their talents for social good through fundraisers and teaching. Diya appreciates her guru providing her the opportunity to perform both at Carnegie Hall and in Rome. Diya is Guru Sukanya's 36th Arangetram – a testament to her impactful mentorship and role model of artistic and humanitarian excellence.

The Shishya

Diya Nagella has been learning Bharatanatyam from Guru Sukanya Mahadevan since age six. Diya has always loved dancing, shown through her involvement in Ballet, Bollywood, and her dedication to Bharatanatyam. Diya has participated in dance competitions like Naach Utsav and will perform at Carnegie Hall and Summer Stages in Rome in the coming year. Diya spends her Saturdays at the Shishya dance studio, student - teaching the beginner levels and dancing with her friends. Outside of Bharatanatyam, Diya loves running on her school cross-country and track-and-field team. She is a freshman at West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North.

Message from Diya

Dearest friends and family,

Thank you for coming to my Arangetram! I greatly appreciate your support and presence in the audience tonight. Bharatanatyam has such an importance in my life, as it is a unique representation of humanity and a beautiful art form. While watching my margaam tonight I hope you immerse yourself in the stories and emotions and feel the benevolence of dancing. A huge thank you to Sukanya Aunty - you have been a great mentor for me since I was a little girl, barely able to hold Aramandi. I have learned so much about dancing, Hindu culture, and lessons for life that I will never forget. Additionally, thank you Mommy and Daddy for the time and effort you have put into making today happen. Thank you for supporting me through whatever I choose to do, I am so blessed to have such loving parents. Mommy, I thank you so much for exposing me to this wonderful art form from the very beginning. And Lekha, thank you for being there for me always! Finally, I hope you all enjoy the show! Every piece is performed with love, and I hope my dancing touches your heart.

Program (Margam)

Pushpanjali – 'Ekadantaya Vakrathundaya'

Ragam : Raagamaalika **Taalam :** Adi (8 beats)
Composer : Ajay and Atul Gogavale

The first dance of the margam is an offering of prayer and flowers to the God. Hence the name Pushpanjali-"offering of flowers". This Pushpanjali is in praise of Lord Ganesha, destroyer of all obstacles. We offer our prayers to his many attributes - Ekadantaaya (the one with a single tusk), Vakrathundaaya (a twisted trunk), Gowri Thanayaaya (the son of Parvathi), Gajeshaanaya (the one who is the Lord of elephants), Bhaal chandraya (the one whose forehead is as luminous as the moon) and Shree Ganeshaya (the Lord of Ganas).

Alarippu

Ragam : Nattai **Taalam :** Misra Chapu (7 beats)

Alaru, a Dravidian word, means 'to blossom'. Alarippu, meaning 'flowering', represents the opening of the body and limbs, serving as a warm-up to prepare the dancer physically and mentally for the demanding sequences ahead. Starting with eye and neck movements, the dancer gradually progresses to intricate footwork, building momentum and speed as the performance progresses.

Jatiswaram

Ragam : Husseini **Taalam :** Roopakam (6 beats)
Composer : Guru Lalitha

A Jatisvaram combines 'Jati' (rhythmic syllables) and 'Svaram', (musical notes) creating a harmonious blend of melody and rhythm. This piece showcases the dancer's technical skill, precision, and grace. Mainly instrumental, without lyrics, the dancer's movements synchronize perfectly with the musical notes and rhythm. This piece highlights the beauty of geometric patterns, footwork, and the dancer's ability to interpret the music through movement.

Shabdam

Ragam : Raagamaalika
Taalam : Misra Chapu (7 beats)

Shabdham combines Nritta (pure dance) and Abhinaya (expression) to tell a story. It uses both music and lyrics, often in praise of a deity. The term 'Shabdham' means "sound" in Sanskrit highlighting the importance of vocal expression in conveying the narrative. It includes a traditional Jathi (pure footwork) that precedes each part. This Shabdam, choreographed to a beat-of-7, describes various physical and character traits of Lord Ganesha.

Varnam –"Sakhiye.."

Ragam : Sankarabharanam **Taalam :** Aadi (8 beats)
Composer : Dandayudhapani Pillai

A varnam is a cornerstone piece in the Bharatanatyam repertoire representing a synthesis of Bhavam, Ragaam and Taalam. It is a lengthy, complex composition that serves as the centerpiece of a performance, showcasing a dancer's technical proficiency, stamina, expressiveness, and interpretative skills. In a varnam the dancer executes intricate footwork synchronized with musical composition, demonstrating mastery over rhythm and precision. She also interprets and conveys the emotions of the song, often depicting stories or themes from Hindu religion.

This item allows the dancer to express a wide range of emotions, connecting with the audience through the narrative. This varnam, Sakhiye Indha Jalam, depicts the dancer (the heroine or "nayika") pining for Lord Vishnu. As she calls for him, she describes his many heroic traits. It also highlights aspects of female friendship as the dancer describes her feelings to her friend, her "Sakhi". The Sakhi, the nayika's friend, is an important character in the Indian artistic tradition. She is someone with whom one can share the innermost secrets of self and soul. The sakhi patiently listens to the nayika's woes of love and in doing so becomes the poet's primary audience. "Dear friend, why is Vishnu playing tricks on me? Why doesn't he come? Without him my life has no meaning. He, the god, who helped Panchali from the evil plots of the Kuravas, the god who won over Ravana with the help of Hanuman, I wish he would come and marry me"

Padams and Krithis

Padams and Krithis, focused on abhinaya (expression), are typically love lyrics or devotional pieces performed at a slower tempo. They offer the dancer a broad canvas to portray the diverse moods and emotions of the Naayikaa (heroine), providing ample opportunity for expressing a wide range of sentiments and emotional nuances.

Shiva Padam – 'Vadakayil'

Ragam : Mohanam **Taalam : Aadi (8 beats)**
Composer : Guru Lalitha

This beautiful, one of a kind Shiva padam is a special choreography by Guru Sukanya and is a legacy Shishya School item passed on through generations of Guru Shishya parampara (tradition). Guru Sukanya performed a version of this in her own Arangetram. The piece, composed for dance, celebrates Lord Shiva as the cosmic dancer residing in Chidambaram's Tillai Ambalam (the sacred stage of Lord Siva). It vividly depicts Shiva dancing with his left leg lifted, adorned with a snake garland, the Ganges, and a crescent moon in his tresses, accompanied by celestial musicians: Narada with a tambura, Nandi on drums, Brahma with finger cymbals, Saraswati playing the Veena, and Krishna on the flute, all amidst devotees celebrating his presence.

Lakshmi Padam – "Bhaagyada Lakshmi"

Ragam : ShreeRaagam **Taalam :** Aadi (8 beats)
Composer : Purandaradaas

A famous composition by Purandaradasa, this piece stands out as a splendid fusion of agility and grace, marrying rhythm with melody. It is performed in adoration of Lakshmi, revered in Indian culture as the deity of wealth, wisdom, skill, and proficiency. In numerous Indian traditions, the birth of a baby girl is celebrated as the ushering in of happiness and prosperity. The dancer portrays Lakshmi as a beacon of fortune, embracing her presence in their lives with open hearts. She is envisioned arriving amidst the gentle jingle of bells, heralding an abundance of wealth, and savoring the delicacies presented to her during the Friday Pooja (worship). This piece is a special choreography by Guru Sukanya.

Krishna Padam – "Chandana Charchitha"

Ragam : Brindavani **Taalam :** Ekam (4 beats)
Composer : Jayadeva

Poet Jayadeva is renowned for his 'Ashtapadis', primarily focusing on the romantic and passionate themes between Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis. His work is celebrated for its radical approach to depicting divine love. This piece is a contemporary rendition of a traditional Ashtapadi, choreographed by Guru Sukanya to meet the modern dance' s requirements, while also symbolizing the universal nature of God and love across different religions and cultures. Diya beautifully captures the Sringara Bhaava (emotion of love) of this item. She begins with a duet between Radha and Krishna where Radha sings and plays instruments and asks Krishna to dance for her, setting the stage for the portrayal of the traditional Rasleela (divine dance of love and joy) in the second half.

Special Presentation

Tillana

Ragam : Paras **Taalam :** Aadi (8 beats)
Composer : Pooci Sreenivaasa Aiyyangaar

Tillana is a nritta (pure dance) piece characterized by elegant steps, sculptural poses, and dynamic patterns. The adavus (steps) progress through slow (Vilambit), medium (Madhya), and fast (Dhrut) speeds, culminating in exhilarating climaxes (teermaanams). The item ends on a high note in Dhrut speed to captivate the audience. Tillana includes three main parts: the Pallavi (the opening), the Anupallavi (the second phrase), and the Charana (final section). The Charana ends with 'sahitya' (lyrical passage) that praises a deity, a patron, or a guru. This Tillana honors Goddess Raja Rajeswari, the mother of the universe, representing the amalgamation of the three principal female deities: Mahakali (strength), Mahalakshmi (wealth), and Mahasaraswati (knowledge).

Mangalam

Ragam : Kurunji
Taalam : Thrisha Ekam (3 beats)
Composer : Bhadragiri Ramadasu

The "Mangalam" is a short concluding piece intended to wish well-being, prosperity, and auspiciousness to the audience and the performer. Diya's mangalam is beautiful piece in Telugu in praise of Lord Rama.

Acknowledgements

Choreography:

- Late Padmabhushan' Dr.Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan
- 'Kalashree' Guru Sukanya Mahadevan

Orchestra:

- **Nattuvangam** : Guru 'Kalashree' Sukanya Mahadevan
- **Vocal** : Smt. Soumya Balaji
- **Mridangam** : Shri Karthik Subramanian
- **Rhythm pads** : Shri Sandip Iyer
- **Violin** : Smt. Nirmala Rajesh
- **Flute** : Shri Vishveshwar Nagarajan

Master of Ceremony

- Chaitanya Attaluri

Makeup Artist

- Sonali Chanekar

Photography and Videography

- Fotolaya

Technical Support

- Anil Thadimalla

Sound Engineer

- Raja Natarajan

Lighting Co-ordinators

- Vicki Agrawal
- Nakul Agrawal

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For further information on the teacher, or the school, please email shishya.arts@gmail.com, call 609-841-3244 or check out www.shishya-arts.com.