



# Abhinaya News

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## Jagriti – The Awakening

The year 2001 began with our successful production *Jagriti-The Awakening* addressing the problem of domestic violence in the South Asian community and its impact on the lives of the women who undergo the abuse. The performance took place on Saturday, January 20 at the Mexican Heritage Theater in San Jose. Funded by an Arts Build Communities grant of the Arts Council of Silicon Valley, this thought-provoking production was based on a series of interviews conducted by anthropologist Usha Welaratna at Aasra, a local battered women's shelter. The centerpiece of the production was a dance solo by Artistic Director Mythili Kumar. In a series of vignettes she dramatized the lives of four women who were victims of domestic violence. Drawing from India's rich cultural and literary traditions, Abhinaya dancers also presented several pieces showcasing the exploitation of women through the ages as well as the strength and resilience of the Indian woman from ancient to modern times.

The performance featured over 14 dancers and musicians. Music composition and vocals were provided by accomplished Carnatic musician, Asha Ramesh; Vidya Ramakrishnan performed the nattuvangam (small cymbals); N. Narayan played the mridangam; Shanthi Narayan, the violin, Srinivas Prabhala, the veena and Abhinay Padhye, the tabla. The dancers featured include Mythili Kumar, Radhika Kannan, Satyasri Yendluri, Rasika Kumar, Malavika Kumar, Priya Jayachandran, Madhuri Sharma, Vishali Vanniarajan, and Vani Iswara, a talented dancer and teacher who has recently moved to the Bay Area from Chicago.

The City of San Jose and the California Arts Council also funded *Jagriti-The Awakening*. In addition, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as well as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation supported the production. The concert drew a diverse audience which included many social workers actively working with victims of domestic violence. We have received letters via email exploring whether Abhinaya intends to present the production in other parts of the US. A few excerpts might be repeated in other parts of the Bay Area in the fall of 2001.

**Abhinaya Dance Company Turns Spotlight on DV – By, Viji Sundaram, INDIA WEST 01/25/01**

SAN JOSE, Calif. - Using the medium of exquisite art, bharatanatyam dancer Mythili Kumar last week turned the

spotlight on the horrifying problem of domestic violence in the South Asian community.

The three-hour dance performance Jan. 20, titled, "Jagriti" (Awakening), was held at the Mexican Heritage Theater here. The event was attended by a near sellout crowd.

In vignette after vignette, Kumar and her team of dancers, including her own two daughters, portrayed both the inherent strength and resilience of the South Asian woman, as well as the suffering she often endures in order to make her marriage work.

The tone was set in the opening number titled, "Oh Woman of Bharat," where the dancers dressed in the costumes of different Indian states showed how women through the ages have lived their entire lives under the shadow of, first, their fathers, then their husbands and finally their sons, as Sage Manu had decreed.

Kumar's solo numbers, immaculately performed, portrayed true stories of women from the San Francisco Bay Area who were victims of domestic violence. Socio-cultural anthropologist Dr. Usha Welaratna provided the material after interviewing them at a Bay Area shelter.

There was the tale of a Muslim woman who comes to the Bay Area from her native Pakistan, excited to start life with the man she wedded in an arranged marriage, only to discover that she has tied the knot with an abusive and controlling man. The abuser's weapon of choice is a baseball bat.

Then there was the story of the well-educated engineer from Calcutta, who joins her husband in the U.S. and puts up with abuse for five years, before she gets up the courage to leave him.

Fear constantly dogs the Sikh woman, a mother of two, who has left her



husband, after years of abuse. She goes to the park with her children one day, but fearing she is being stalked, quickly goes back to her husband.

The woman from Tamilnadu takes the bold step of leaving her abusive spouse, but finds herself returning to him when the court awards him custody of their only child.

Choreographed by Kumar, artistic director of the Abhinaya Dance Company of San Jose, the production was aimed at bringing the issue of domestic violence out into the open and to let victims know "that they are not alone and that there is help available if they need it," she said.

Dancers included Radhika Kannan, Satyasri Yendluri, Rasika and Malavika Kumar, Priya Jayachandran, Madhuri Sharma, Vishali Vanniarajan and Satyavani Iswara.

The resonant and melodious voice of Bay Area singer Asha Ramesh made the performance even more soul-stirring and powerful. Sanskrit scholar Dr. Sarasvati Mohan and R. Radhakrishnan composed many of the lyrics.

Ramesh's first ever CD was released at the event. Proceeds from its sale would go to fund Aasra, the Fremont-based support group for battered women.

### Fall Festival of Dance

'It doesn't just rain-it pours!' September, the season of autumn, Sharad as is known in India, is when leaves fall off the trees and fill the ground. This September, however, it will be dancers, both local and internationally known, filling theaters in the Bay Area and performing every weekend in September.

The September festival features two arangetrams (which are free events).

- **Arangetram by Swati Prasad:**

Swathi Prasad, an enthusiastic young dancer who will be a senior in the fall will perform her Arangetram on September 8, 2001. She along with her father, former Abhinaya student J.U.B.V. Prasad and her family have been wonderful volunteers in the past and we hope other families will follow suit. September 8, 2001 at Cubberley Theater in Palo Alto

- **Arangetram by Sonia Bose:**

Sonia Bose is the daughter of Sharada Bose, Abhinaya dancer and teacher and will be a sophomore in the fall. She is dedicating her summer to intensive training and practice in order to achieve this milestone of the Arangetram in her dancing career so that she can be an active participant in Abhinaya's productions in the years to come. September 16, 2001 at Mexican Heritage Theater in San Jose

- **Performance by student Madhuri Sharma:**

Madhuri Sharma, a talented dancer trained with Abhinaya from 1990 and later went to India. With further training from Padmini Ravi in Bangalore, she performed her Arangetram in

January 1999 and relocated to California later that year. She has performed in Abhinaya productions and is presenting a performance to raise funds to support the acquisition of used books in the US and donating it to institutions in India. Sunday, September 9, 2001. Abhinaya Cosponsors this event with ICSC.

- **Folk Dances of India directed by Mallika Sarabhai**  
(Co-sponsored by Abhinaya Dance Company)

Daughter of the dancer Mrinalini Sarabhai and Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Mallika Sarabhai is an internationally renowned artist who trained as a dancer in the Pandanallur technique of Bharata Natyam as well as Kuchipudi. She has received several awards and is a multi-talented artiste representing a new generation of successful dancers and Indian women. Mallika played the role of Draupadi in both the French and English versions of *The Mahabharata*, directed by Peter Brook, and traveled with the troupe around the world. That launched her on a career as an actress as well as a choreographer of works centered round women's issues like *Shakti and Sita's Daughters*. She has successfully explored theater, mime, music, dance, choreography, and various media of film and television. She is a director of Mapin Publications and a co-author of the book *Understanding Kuchipudi*. She is the director of the Darpana Academy in Ahmedabad and tours the company JANAVAK within India and abroad. Under her direction, a concert of colorful and vibrant folk dances from various regions of India will be presented in concert tours throughout the USA. Abhinaya will be co-sponsoring this production on September 22, 2001, the proceeds of which are to go towards Mallika Sarabhai's efforts in mitigating the devastating effects of the earthquake in her native Gujarat. Saturday, September 22, 2001 at Foothill College Theater.

- **Pancha Maha Bhoota** (see below)

### **Pancha Maha Bhoota – Grand Production** Sunday, September 23, 2001

*Pancha Maha Bhoota* – the five primordial elements namely, Prithvi(earth), Aakaasa(sky), Jala(water), Vaayu(wind) and Agni(fire) will be depicted in a unique production choreographed by renowned master-artist and guru **Dr. C. V. Chandrasekhar** on Sunday, September 23, 2001 and performed by the Abhinaya Dance Company. Dr. C. V. Chandrasekhar accompanied by his wife Smt. Jaya Chandrasekhar, also a dancer, teacher and choreographer will be resident gurus with Abhinaya for three weeks from August 28 to September 24, 2001.

Dr. C. V. Chandrasekhar retired as the Director of Music and Dance at the M.S. University of Baroda, India. He is one of India's outstanding choreographers. He is also a well know dancer and singer. He has trained several of India's finest dancers and has choreographed for dancers all over the world in many Indian languages. Trained at the

Kalakshetra Institute of Fine Arts in Chennai, he has a firm foundation in classical music, Sanskrit and dance theory and practice. He has produced many dance dramas and performs both dance and music in them. His dance dramas have won praise both in India and abroad. He is equally at home with both contemporary and traditional concepts in dance and music. He has dealt with abstract themes in a most ingenious manner and his use of body movements and group movements to convey emotions and ideas is unique for a style otherwise dependent on the face and gestures for such a projection. His major choreographies in recent years include *Ritu Samharam* and *Meghadutam* of Kalidas, *Bhoomija (Ramayana)* and *Aparajita (Devi Mahatmyam)*.

The concept of *Pancha Maha Bhoota* comes from various aspects: descriptive from ancient literature, sacred as related to the Gods, and visual through lines and metres. This will be portrayed through the medium of Bharatanatyam. This is a unique opportunity for Abhinaya dancers to work with internationally renowned choreographers who will also be conducting workshops so that our younger dancers may derive inspiration from their visit to the Bay Area.

### Gujurat Earthquake Relief Concert

The devastating earthquake that hit the state of Gujarat on January 26, 2001 caused irreparable damage to the cities of Bhuj and Ahmdavad. Over 100,000 people died or lost their loved ones, were rendered homeless, or lost all their worldly possessions. Several public buildings, schools, hospitals, were razed to the ground and have to be rebuilt. Several organizations have been collecting donations and many have donated on their own accord. Our objective with this concert on March 24, 2001 was to garner the efforts of the entire Abhinaya community, the board, students and teachers and our faithful audience into contributing to the relief fund since the earthquake victims will continue to need ongoing aid for resettlement. Abhinaya was pleased to offer the collected funds to Indians for Collective Action, an organization directly involved in the relief efforts in Gujarat.



Abhinaya raised \$10,000 and Bhupen Mehta of the ICA accepted the check and applauded the entire contingent of

Abhinaya dancers whose families had helped to raise the money towards the Earthquake Relief Fund. The concert was a sold out event and the show was spectacular with the costumes, lighting and the dancers all synchronized beautifully.

### News from the Abhinaya office

Arlene Terneus, our part-time office manager for almost two years left the non-profit world for a career in the airline industry. Abhinaya student and volunteer, Vaishnavi Solanki who is pursuing a degree in Telecommunications came to the rescue. She is working part-time in the office and intends to continue to do so until she graduates. With the help of a recent grant from the California Arts Council, Abhinaya is hoping to fill the post of Administrative Director to manage Abhinaya's increasing budget and enrollment. We are looking for a well-organized individual with computer skills and dedication to the arts who can also network with the arts community in San Jose, representing Abhinaya and the Indian dance community's interests. Please send us relevant information via email to abhinaya\_sj@yahoo.com if you or somebody you know meets the required qualifications.

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### Board News

K. S. Sreeharsha, Chairperson of Abhinaya's Board of Directors (1992-2001) retired recently from his position as Professor in the Materials Engineering Department of San Jose State University and simultaneously resigned from the chairmanship and the board of Abhinaya. As Chairperson of Abhinaya's board during its crucial growth, he has provided consistent leadership and represented Abhinaya in many meetings of the arts community over the years. Prior to joining the board, he and his wife Pushpa Sreeharsha, as parents of senior student Kavitha Sreeharsha, were active volunteers for every Abhinaya production since 1986. Dr. Sreeharsha had led the board through several board training sessions and his dedicated service to the promotion of classical dance in the Bay Area will not be forgotten. Incidentally, Dr. Sreeharsha hails from a family long devoted to Gandhian values and causes – it was he who suggested the idea of doing a production on Gandhi, which resulted in Abhinaya's acclaimed *Gandhi-the Mahatma* (1995).

### Grants Awarded to Abhinaya

Abhinaya Dance Company continues to get major support from the Arts Commission, City of San Jose. Additional support over the years has been from the Arts Council, Silicon Valley and the California Arts Council (CAC) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This year,

Abhinaya has been recommended for additional support from the CAC in its funding categories of Multi-Cultural Advancement and New Generations. The first will support the salary of an administrative director and the second will sponsor the performances of our most dedicated teachers and company members who represent the next generation of California artists. The company also received a venture grant from the City of San Jose. Foundations such as the Hewlett, Packard and the Farrington have also supported the company.

## Abhinaya Board of Directors:

**Chairperson:** Raju Ananth

**Treasurer:** Kamal Nair

**Members:** Priya Dharan, G. S. Sathya, Ramarao Yendluri, Ranjani Chandramouli, Ann Malmuth-Onn, and Bhaskar Vissa.

## Abhinaya Calendar of Events-2001

Date	Description	Venue	City
January 14, 2001	Pongal Festival	Shiva Murugan Temple	Concord
January 20, 2001	Arudra Natyanjali Festival	Shiva Vishnu Temple	Livermore
<b>January 20, 2001</b>	<b>Jagriti – Awakening</b>	<b>Mexican Heritage Theater</b>	<b>San Jose</b>
January 26, 2001	Music in Action – with dance demo	At two schools	Mountain View
January 30, 2001	Music in Action – with dance demo	At three schools	Mountain View
January 30, 2001	Music in Action – with dance demo	At two schools	Mountain View
<b>March 24, 2001</b>	<b>Earthquake Fundraiser – Student and Company Performances</b>	<b>Louis B. Mayer Theater</b>	<b>Santa Clara</b>
March 26, 2001	Dance demo and performance	Packard Foundation	Los Altos
March 31, 2001	ICSC Dance Festival (Anu Ranganathan)	Spangenberg Theater	Palo Alto
April 1, 2001	De-Anza Family Day-Malavika Kumar	Euphraet Museum	Cupertino
<b>April 8, 2001</b>	<b>Abhinaya Traditional Concert-Sponsored by Community School of Music &amp; Arts</b>	<b>Center for Performing Arts (second stage)</b>	<b>Mountain View</b>
April 14, 2001	<i>Ne Vidhya</i> – Earthquake Fundraiser -Ami Buch	Sheraton Hotel	Sunnyvale
April 28, 2001	Ameya Ananth, Anu Ranganathan and Sneha Krishna for <i>Kids with Disabilities</i>	Stanford University	Stanford
May 9, 2001	Young Audiences of San Jose – Lecture/Demo	Randall Elementary School	Milpitas
<b>June 17, 2001</b>	<b>End of Term Recital</b>	<b>Monte Sereno Amphitheater</b>	<b>Monte Sereno</b>
June 25 – July 26, 2001	Summer Camp (3 weeks)	Monte Sereno Studio	Monte Sereno
<b>September 8, 2001</b>	<b>Arangetram – Swati Prasad</b>	<b>Cubberly Theater</b>	<b>Palo Alto</b>
<b>September 16, 2001</b>	<b>Arangetram – Sonia Bose</b>	<b>Mexican Heritage Theater</b>	<b>San Jose</b>
<b>September 22, 2001</b>	<b>Abhinaya cosponsors Folk Dances of India-Directed by Mallika Sarabhai-</b>	<b>Foothill College</b>	<b>Palo Alto</b>
<b>September 23, 2001</b>	<b><i>Pancha Mahabootam</i> –Choreography-Dr. C. V. Chandrashekar</b>	<b>Foothill College</b>	<b>Los Altos</b>
October 13, 2001	Vijayadasami – Student Concert	Monte Sereno Amphitheater	Monte Sereno
<b>October 14, 2001</b>	<b>Music Concert Fundraiser for Aasra (co-produced)-Asha Ramesh &amp; party</b>	<b>Santa Clara Convention Center</b>	<b>Santa Clara</b>
Fall 2001	Young Audiences of San Jose	Elementary Schools	San Jose
<b>October 2001</b>	<b>Jagriti – excerpts (repeat of January concert)</b>	<b>Venues TBD</b>	<b>Hayward/SF San Jose</b>
<b>November 3, 2001</b>	<b>Kuchipudi Rangapravesham by Sonia Sangha, student of Jyothi Lakkaraju</b>	<b>Canada College</b>	<b>Belmont</b>
<b>November 11, 2001</b>	<b>Tradition vs Innovation - Fall Repertory Concert</b>	<b>Spangenberg Theater</b>	<b>Palo Alto</b>
January 19, 2002	Arangetram – Madhav Vissa	Mexican Heritage Theater	San Jose

