



# Abhinaya News



Abhinaya Dance Company of San Jose  
52, Harold Avenue, San Jose, CA 95117

**Phone: 408-983-0491 - Fax: 408-983-0492**

URL: [www.abhinaya.org](http://www.abhinaya.org) - Email: [abhinaya\\_sj@yahoo.com](mailto:abhinaya_sj@yahoo.com)

**August 2008**

## **Mayil Aadum Alagan – The Handsome Lord Muruga on the Peacock**

### **Spring Concert and Student Recital – March 2008**

In 1998, Abhinaya presented ‘Mayiladum Alagan’ which presented stories of the six shrines of Lord Muruga, a favorite deity in South India. In a repeat concert a decade later, with students from all age groups and levels of expertise, Abhinaya once again set a mark. The concert showcased performances by Abhinaya’s principal dancer Rasika Kumar, and company dancers Malavika Kumar, Madhav Vissa, Anjana Dasu, Anjali Thakkar, Sushma Umesh, Pooja Sohoni, and others enacting key episodes of Lord Muruga, followed by student dancers presenting favorite songs in praise of the handsome Lord.



### **Excerpts from a review by Nandita Verma of India-West**

The San Jose-based Abhinaya Dance company had over 80 dancers re-living the story of the handsome Lord Muruga, Lord Shiva’s youngest son, in its “2008 Spring Concert and Student Recital”. ...the theatrical performance comprising seven scenes began with the some-what hesitant movements of its youngest performers, but quickly reclaimed its strong and dramatic presence by the precise rhythms of the principal dancers.

Rasika Kumar, the daughter of the school’s founder Mythili Kumar, set the stage with a flawless solo rendition of “Thirupugazh,” a famed 15<sup>th</sup> century religious anthology praising the six-headed Muruga and his brother Ganesha. “To hold an audience as a solo performer takes a lot more,” the gifted veteran told India-West.

Rasika’s powerhouse monologue was quickly followed by the story of Muruga’s birth from Shiva’s third eye as the protector of the heavens and annihilator of evil. Madhav Vissa shone in his performance as Shiva, holding ground amid the racy performances of the women who outnumbered him by a ratio of 82 to 1.

Dasu as Ganesh and Thakkar as Muruga, though performing towards the latter half of the over three-hour show, easily managed to keep the audience in rapt attention with their representation of the young brothers quarreling over a mango, eventually won by Ganesha.

### **Excerpts from Audience Comments:**

“It’s a pleasure to the eyes. The girls dance like divine goddesses, and stories are so much into our tradition and our cultures. I don’t miss a chance to watch these concerts with my young daughters. Seeing this performance they also get interested and become curious about Indian classical dance,” said a member of the audience.

## **Recognitions for Rasika Kumar - Abhinaya’s Principal Dancer**



### **Reception for recipients of Artist Fellowship for 2008**

Congratulations to Rasika Kumar, who was recently awarded an Artist’s Fellowship for Performing Arts from the Arts Council of Silicon Valley. In honor of the artists, an exhibition and a reception were held at Triton Museum in San Jose on May 29. The theme that the artists were challenged to inspire was

“Wonders: A Celebration of the Artistic Excellence of Silicon Valley”, which was meant to reflect each artist’s individual and collective work. Rasika was delighted and overwhelmed to be part of a group of veteran artists in their respective fields.

### San Jose Dance Choreo Project performances

Rasika Kumar was selected for the second consecutive year to perform her choreography for sjDANCEco's 2008 ChoreoProject. On Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Rasika presented “Satvikam Shivam” that she originally premiered in July 2006 and performed at various venues in the Bay Area.

### 2008 San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Abhinaya premiered its commissioned piece “Shakti - the goddess of power” with choreography by Mythili Kumar and Rasika Kumar (with input from Malavika Kumar). This was performed by Mythili Kumar, Rasika Kumar, Malavika Kumar, Sharada Sripadam, Anjana Dasu, Vaibhavi Umesh, Anjali Thakkar, Sushma Umesh, Yatrika Ajaya, Neeraja Venkat, and Megha Ranganathan. Apart from being praised for their excellent presentation and the dancers enjoyed the camaraderie with fellow dancers who came from all over the San Francisco Bay area. Three international guest musicians formed Abhinaya’s orchestra ensemble: Sudev Warriar (vocals), K.S. Sudhaman (Mridangam), A.P. Krishna Prasad (Flute) along with Akhilesh Sista (veena), Mythili Kumar and Malavika Kumar (Nattuvangam).

The piece portrayed Shakti the goddess (Rasika Kumar) emerging from the fire created from the energy of all the gods. After defeating Bhandasura (Mythili Kumar), her power is represented by the multiple Shaktis (feminine manifestations) that symbolize the ultimate power inherent in all creation.



### Review by Rachel Howard, Chronicle Dance Correspondent

#### “30<sup>th</sup> annual S.F. Ethnic Dance Festival suggests debate: preserve or innovate?”

Most of the nine troupes on Saturday's opening tilted toward preservation while innovating in subtle ways. Patrick Makuakane, known for setting hula to pop songs by Cyndi Lauper, created a new suite in homage to the ancestral navigator Maui for his mesmerizing Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu company, whose members were dressed in loincloths and paper skirts, and pounded traditional wooden anvils. Abhinaya Dance Company of San Jose used the fleet, foot stamping movement of South India's bharatanatyam style to tell the story of the Goddess

Shakti, Artistic Director Mythili Kumar entering a fierce showdown with her tall, unflappable daughter Rasika Kumar.

#### Excerpt from review by Allan Ulrich of © VoiceofDance.com 2008 - “The World in View”

Additional evidence of the fusion of ancient and contemporary sparked *Shakti—the Powerful Goddess*, another festival commission featuring Abhinaya Dance Company of San Jose. Mythili Kumar’s troupe, adept in South Indian Bharatanatyam, deployed that style in the service of a good versus evil parable that included the kind of spacious patterning one expects from American modernism. Kumar’s ferocious Shakti was not a deity you would tangle with. But her dancing daughter, Rasika Kumar, adorned with ankle bells, proved a feisty rival.

### Other Past Performances by Abhinaya

#### March 2008 Shivarathri Celebrations

##### Sanatana Dharma Kendra

Mythili Kumar, Rasika Kumar & Anjana Dasu performed special pieces in praise of Lord Shiva in the temple.

##### Shiva Tandava Nritya

This year at the annual event of dance, bhajan and meditation organized by Anuradha Prabhaskar in celebration of Shiva, the Lord of Dance on the auspicious night of Mahasivaratri, Mythili Kumar presented a talk on the significance of the various Shiva Tandavas based on a 1986 presentation at the Music Academy Chennai. Mythili Kumar also performed “Nandanar Charitram” and Rasika Kumar performed “Bho Shambho,” a favorite piece depicting Sandhya Tandava.

#### April 2008 Sri Papanasam Sivan 2-Day Festival

This event was organized to pay homage to the great composer, Sri Papanasam Sivan and was held at the Divine Science Community Center Inc. in San Jose. Competitions were held for both music and dance disciplines in presenting the compositions of this composer. Some of Abhinaya dancers won prizes and all received special recognition for their performance in the festival in both group and solo performances. In the senior category, Anjana Dasu won the first prize; in the junior category, Rekha Nagarajan and Susmita Bhat, won the second prize; Chinmayi Aryasomayajula, Kavita Varadarajan, Kaushika Vayyala, and Eesha Khare won the third prize. Rasika Kumar and Anjali Thakkar gave brilliant performances.



### **May 2008 Cornerstone Event – National Dance Week – All Kinds of Dance (AKOD)**

Based in San Francisco since 1984 and on tour throughout the US and the world, the Lively Foundation is dedicated to presenting the best in artistic and educational projects in dance, music, and related arts. Abhinaya Dance Company student dancers performed a piece honoring Lord Ganesha, and Lord Subramanya, describing the god who rides on a peacock. Dancers: Ananya Sriram, Abhinaya Srikant, Sahana Vishwanath, Madhunila Chandra, Shreeya Anand, Renuka Belwalkar, Bhavana Bhandikallu, Vasaly Panchumarthi, Goonja Shah, Sweeya Raj, Rachna Unadkat, Maya Sripadam, Astha Tripathi

### **May 2008 Choreography Showcase**

On May 31, Abhinaya presented a showcase of different choreographic works at Hoover Theatre. The performance featured Mythili presenting “Nandanar Charithram.” Rasika Kumar presented “Gitopadesam,” which had been choreographed by Smt Indra Rajan and adapted by Mythili Kumar in 1991. Malavika Kumar presented “Nandanandana Gopala” in the Kuchipudi style of dance. Madhav Vissa and Anjana Dasu both presented solos. Company dancers Vaibhavi Umesh, Neeraja Venkat, Sushma Umesh, and Sameera Mokkarala also performed. Special guest artist Sri Vishnu Tatva Das, founder, and director of Odissi Vilas based in Marin County is recognized as one of India’s most prominent Odissi dancers. His Odissi performance was exceptional and portrayed both vigorous nritya and involved abhinaya. A glowing review by Smt. Seeta Dorairajan for the Tamil magazine, Thendral commented on the exceptional moving choreography for Gitopadesam and Nandanar Charitram. The reviewer stated that all the dancers shone in their performance.

### **June 2008 "Shakespeare on the Square" Festival**

Downtown San Jose was home to the Shakespeare on the Square Festival during the month of June. Arclight Rep theatre presented Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night set in India. Abhinaya Dance Company performed during the pre-show performance, “Green Show” every weekend during the month of June. The dancers presented pieces in praise of Lord Krishna and Subramanya with the Arclight actors weaving in and out in order to create a captivating show.

Dancers: Eesha Khare, Soumya Khare, Rekha Nagarajan, Susmita Bhat, Lakshmi Venkatesan, Gayatri Venkatesan, Pooja Sohoni, Serena Chacko, Pooja Pandey, Gayatri Divekar



### **Kuchipudi Convention draws renowned artists from India**

Dr. Yamini Krishnamurthy was a special guest during the Kuchipudi Convention in June 2008 at the Flint Center in Cupertino. She was also a guest at a gathering hosted by Mythili Kumar who has been acquainted with Dr Krishnamurthy since her days in New Delhi in the early 70s. “Yamini Krishnamurthy was a scintillating performer and an inspiration to me when I was a student in New Delhi – I am indeed thrilled that she was able to visit my home and meet all my students”, says Mythili Kumar. The Kuchipudi convention brought dance historian and scholar, Dr. Sunil Kothari to the Bay Area. He presented a demonstration on innovations in classical dance on June 29, 2008. In addition, Abhinaya Dance Company members Yatrika Ajaya and Sharada Sripadam, got an opportunity to participate in master artists’ Dr.Raja and Radha Reddy’s production at the Kuchipudi convention, and were greatly appreciated for their excellent dancing.



**Dr. Yamini Krishnamurthy (L) & Mythili Kumar(R) in the 1970s**

### **Abhinaya Board Members**

Chairperson: Raju Ananth

Treasurer: Bhaskar Vissa

Secretary: Sharada Bose

Members: Priya Dharan, Ann Malmuth-Onn, Kamal Nair, G.S.Satya, Bipin Thakkar, Meera Chari, Ram Varadarajan

## Lifetime Friends of Abhinaya

Abhinaya would like to recognize the contributions of the following people for over ten years by naming them as a **Lifetime Friend of Abhinaya**. Each lifetime Friend of Abhinaya will be entitled to a non-transferable ticket for themselves and a spouse for all Abhinaya performances indefinitely.

Kamal Nair, Shantha Sundar, Raju Ananth  
Bhaskar Vissa, Sreelatha Vissa, Preeti Vissa, Madhav Vissa  
Bipin Thakkar, Daksha Thakkar, Anjali Thakkar, Sachin Thakkar  
Punitha Ajaya, Hotranatha Ajaya, Devika Ajaya, Yatrika Ajaya  
G. S. Sathya, Sharada Bose, H.S. Sundaram, Vigneshwara Mokkarala  
J.U.B.V. Prasad, Sharada Sripadam, Asha Ramesh  
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Vasanthi & Kannan

### Donors:

Ramarao Yendluri and family  
Shyla Sohoni and family  
Ram Varadarajan and family

### Other:

Lawrence Thoo  
Joe Rodriguez

## J.U.B.V Prasad named Distinguished Volunteer Fundraiser

J.U.B.V. Prasad, Abhinaya's past student, parent and long-time volunteer, was recognized and honored as a Distinguished Volunteer Fundraiser by the Association for Professional Fundraisers (APJ) - Silicon Valley Chapter. This award recognizes a volunteer who has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills in coordinating and motivating groups of volunteers for a major fund raising project(s) for the benefit of a charitable institution(s). This award will be presented at APJ's Philanthropy Day 2008 to be held on Monday, November 17, 2008 at the Hyatt Regency, Santa Clara. At the event APJ will recognize all of the hard work, dedication and commitment that Prasad's has put in as a key volunteer fundraiser for Abhinaya's 2007 Fall production of Prithvi – The Mother Earth. In addition, a short write-up about Prasad and his efforts with a photograph will be featured in the San Jose Magazine. Congratulations to Prasad!

## Upcoming August Performances by Abhinaya

### Sunday, August 10, 2008: 6pm. Yuva Bharati presents **Kalpna: A dance concert based on Student Choreography**

As part of Yuva Bharati's first-ever student choreography showcase, Rasika Kumar will present a solo choreography piece, "Gandhari's Lament" at Mission City Center for the Performing Arts at 3250 Monroe St. Santa Clara, CA. Malavika Kumar presents her choreography for a group piece titled

"Leela" with company dancers Anjana Dasu, Neeraja Venkat, Yatrika Ajaya, Madhav Vissa, Preethi Vissa, Pooja Sohoni, and Rasika Kumar. [www.yuvabharati.org](http://www.yuvabharati.org)

### Wednesday, August 20th at 9pm and Thursday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 7pm - WestWave Dance Festival

Dancers' Group and DanceArt have selected Rasika Kumar to perform in the 2008 WestWave Dance Festival. Rasika will be presenting her work "Gandhari's Lament" alongside eleven other artists at Yerba Buena Center for the Performing Arts in San Francisco.

## Fall Collaborative Concert: "Rivers - A Mystical Journey"

### Mark Your Calendars – November 15 & 16, 2008

The fall collaborative concert *Rivers – A Mystical Journey* will premiere in November 2008 at the Mexican Heritage Theater in San Jose. This will be collaboratively created by choreographers Mythili Kumar and Rasika Kumar along with guest artist and master composer from Southern California, Babu Parameswaran. The theme was a suggestion of by longtime advisor to Abhinaya and dance connoisseur, Shantha Raman. Mythili Kumar will design the concert, selecting lyrics in several Indian languages from ancient texts to contemporary compositions that reflect the life alongside the riverbanks of North and South India.

## News from the Abhinaya Office

### Thank you, Goodbye & Good luck to Lakshmi

Lakshmi Parige who has been with Abhinaya in the role of Office Manager since September 2002 will be moving on to newer pastures. July was her last month with Abhinaya. We will miss Lakshmi very much and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

## Alumnae News:

### Engagements

Abhinaya is pleased to share recent wedding engagement news of our principal dancer, Rasika Kumar and alumnae Prasanna Ananth and Pallavi Parthasarathy. Congratulations and best wishes to them!

## Funding Organizations for 2008

Abhinaya is happy to announce that for the 2008 calendar year the following organizations have generously donated to the company in its pursuits towards new choreography, more original company productions and active participation in community arts events.

- Arts Council Silicon Valley
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Office of Cultural Affairs - City of San Jose
- NEA (National Endowment for the Arts)
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- California Arts Council
- Fund for Folk Culture

### 2008 Calendar of Events – Student and Company participation

January 1	Pongal Festival	Shiva Murugan Temple, Concord	Piya Mishra, Kaushika Vayyala, Nidhi Gandhi, Divya Patel, Priya Patel, Megha Ranganatha, Maya Sripadam, Lipika Sadaram, Shruti Thatikunta, Sitara Sriram, Rekha Nagarajan, Susmitha Bhat, Sameera Samant, Vrushaali Samant, Devaki Belwalkar
February 22	SJ Dance Co Choreo Project	Dance Theater at SJSU, San Jose	Rasika Kumar
February 23	SJ Dance Co Choreo Project	Dance Theater at SJSU, San Jose	Rasika Kumar
February 23	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	CET Theater , San Jose	Megha Ranganathan
March 2	Maha Sivarathri Dance Festival	Sanata Dharma Kendra, Sunnyvale	Rasika Kumar
March 15	Arts Express	Children's Discovery Museum, San Jose	Mythili Kumar,
March 30	Spring & Student Concert Mayil Adum Alagan	Mexican Heritage Theater, San Jose	Rasika Kumar, Madhav Vissa, Anjana Dasu, Sushma Umesh, Pooja Sohoni and others
April	National Dance Week	Downtown - San Jose	
April 25	Open House-Dance Technique	Saratoga School of Dance, Saratoga	Mythili Kumar
June – all weekends	Arc Light Rep Theatre-Shakspeare in the Park	Downtown San Jose	Eesha Khare, Soumya Khare, Rekha Nagarajan, Susmita Bhat, Lakshmi Venkatesan, Gayatri Venkatesan, Pooja Sohoni, Serena Chacko, Pooja Pandey, Gayatri Divekar
June 07, 08	Ethnic Dance Festival	Palace of Fine Arts – San Francisco	Mythili Kumar, Rasika Kumar, Malavika Kumar, Anjana Dasu, Anjali Thakkar, Sharada Sripadam, Vaibhavi Umesh, Anjali Thakkar, Sushma Umesh, Yatrika Ajaya, Neeraja Venkat, and Megha Ranganathan
June 14	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	Santa Clara convention Center for Performing Arts	Megha Koduri
June 28	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	McAfee Center- Saratoga HS	Nidhi Gandhi
July 26	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	McAfee Center- Saratoga HS	Lalitha Kristipati
August 2	Arangetram- Dance Debut	CET Theater – San Jose	Priya & Divya Patel
August 09	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	Mexican Heritage Theater, San Jose	Kavita Varadarajan
August 10	Yuva Bharati presents Kalpana	Mission City Center for the Performing Arts	Rasika Kumar, Malavika Kumar, Anjana Dasu, Neeraja Venkat, Yatrika Ajaya, Madhav Vissa, Preethi Vissa, and Pooja Sohoni
August 16	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	CET Theater, San Jose	Kaushika Vayyala
August 20 August 21	2008 West Wave Festival	Yerba Buena Center for the Arts San Francisco	Rasika Kumar
August 21	Performance	White Blossom Care Center	Gayatri Venketesan, Amrita Mohan, Chinmayi Aryasomayajula and Sindhura Ravichandran
September 6	Arangetram-Solo Dance Debut	Mexican Heritage Theater, San Jose	Pia Mishra
September 7	NBC 11 Kids Faire		Gayatri Venkatesan, Amritha Mohan, Chinmayi Aryasomayajula, Sindhura Ravichandran, Eesha Khare, Archana Bettadapur, Lipika Sadaram, Shruthi Thatikunta, Maya Sripadam and Maya Nandakumar
September 14	Fund Raiser – Shiva Murugan Temple, Concord	Cubberly Theater, Palo Alto	Rasika Kumar
October 11/12	Vijaya Dasami Celebrations	TBA	All students
November 15,16	Fall Concert Rivers-a mystical journey	San Jose	Company

**Abhinaya appreciates the support of the following families who are part of the Friends of Abhinaya ticket subscription group in 2008**

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