

**Welcome:** Dr. Elizabeth Kurien, Mohna Manihar & Umesh Muchhal

**Masters of Ceremony:** Aakansha Maheshwari and Malini Taneja

*Arangetram* literally means “ascending the stage,” in the South Indian language of Tamil. It represents years of rigorous training and marks the first full-length solo debut performance of the student, presented before the community and the Guru.

### **Pushpanjali (Sanskrit)**

Ragam: Natta

Talam: Adi

Choreographed by: The Dhananjayans

Pushpanjali in Sanskrit means “the offering of flowers”. In this invocatory piece, the dancer pays her obeisance to God, her respects to her teacher, and welcomes the audience. The dancer invokes Ganesha, the divine remover of obstacles. “Ganesha, your vehicle is a tiny mouse, and you love the modaka sweet which you hold in your hand. You dance with elephant ears and the thread of celibacy. Small in form and the son of Maheshwara, you remove all obstacles!”

### **Jatiswaram**

Ragam: Vasanta

Talam: Rupakam

Composed by: Tanjore Quartet

Choreographed by: Rukmini Devi Arundale

In this pure dance (*nritya*) piece, movement patterns are arranged harmoniously to musical notes called *swaras*. The piece begins with a jati where a movement arrangement is accompanied by the recitation of mnemonic syllables. This is followed by korvais dealing with the execution of movement patterns set to these swaras.

### **Shabdham (Tamil)**

Ragam: Kambhoji

Talam: Misra Chapu

Composed by: Tanjore Quartet

In the *Shabdham* (“word” in Sanskrit), the element of *nritya* or expressive dance is introduced through simple lyrics for the first time in the repertoire. This *shabdham* describes the mellifluous music that emanates from Lord Krishna’s flute. With curly hair swaying in the wind, the beautiful lotus-eyed Krishna plays magic on his flute. Neither his mother, nor his father, know that Krishna, who steals butter from the cowherds, also stole the hearts of the *gopis*, or milk maids. As a little boy, his tiny fingers caressed the flute and his coral lips breathed magic through it. As a young cowherd, Krishna, who lifted Mount Giridhar and danced on the poisonous snake, Kaliya, plays magic on his flute.

### **Varnam (Telugu)**

Ragam: Todi

Talam: Adi

Composer: Muthuswamy Dikshitar

Choreography: Rukminidevi Arundale

The central piece in a Bharatanatyam repertoire, the *varnam* challenges the stamina, memory, and skill of a dancer by weaving seamlessly all three aspects of dance—*nritya*, *nritya* and *natya*. The varnam has three main parts in its structure. It begins with complex rhythmic movements called *jatis* in three speeds, followed by lyrics intermingling with jatis for each line. The middle part, called *muktai swara*, bridges the two halves with lyrics and rhythmic footwork. The third part, called *charanam*, (fast paced lyrics) is accompanied by swaras and footwork for each lyrical line. In this varnam, the *nayika* is enamored by the beauty and might of Lord Shiva. She implores him to take away her sorrows and not be so indifferent towards her.

### **Intermission: Refreshment Break (30 Min.)**

### **Bhajan - Pag Ghungroo (Hindi)**

Talam: Chaturasra Eka

Lyrics: Meerabai

Choreography: Dr. Elizabeth Kurien

This hymn, attributed to Meerabai (Bhakti poetess from 16th-century India) celebrates her deep love for Lord Krishna. Born a Rajput princess, Meera defied the divisions of caste and class by singing praises of her Lord along with the commoners. Meera says, “I tie my dancing bells and dance for you, my Krishna.” Seeing Meera’s complete devotion to Krishna, her husband’s family begins to doubt her commitment to their family and her father-in-law attempts to poison her. But Meera’s Lord turns the poison to nectar which Meera drinks and dances in bliss. People say, “Meera has lost her mind.” Her family says, “she is a dishonor to us.” Meera says, “He is my Lord, the one who lifted Mt. Giridhar to save people from the floods. Come to me, oh indestructible one.” This hymn was popularized by eminent Carnatic singer, the late MS Subbalakshmi, recipient of the Bharat Ratna (highest Indian govt. civilian award.)

### **Shivstuti: Bho Shambho (Sanskrit)**

Ragam: Revathi

Talam: Adi

Composer: Dayanand Saraswathi

Choreographed by: Dr. Elizabeth Kurien

This hymn envisions the eternal dance of the formless Shiva. “You are self-created and carry the Ganga River in your matted locks. You are merciful and enable one to cross the cycles of birth and death. You are infinite, timeless, and beyond description. You are eternal, joyous, and wondrous. Oh supreme one who dances to the beat of the two-headed

damaru, you are worshipped by the sage Matanga. The sky forms your endless clothing. You are unseen in form, forever dancing, lord of the stage and spotless in nature. The 19th-century composer of this hymn (founder of Arya Samaj) was also a writer and educator who promoted equal rights for women in late 19th-century India, including the right to education and reading of vedic scriptures.

### **Padam: Indendu Vachithivira (Telugu)**

Ragam: Suruti

Misra Chapu (7 beats)

Composer: Kshetrayya

Dance conceived by: Priyadarshini Govind

Padams are compositions that highlight the relationship between a lover and her beloved. This padam portrays an angry heroine (khandita nayika). She spots her lord (Lord Venkateswara) visiting another woman’s house and he has now come knocking at her door. She opens the door and the entire conversation, brimming with anger and sarcasm, happens right at the doorstep of her house. “Why did you come here? This is not the way to her house. Please, go away. Aren’t you the might man who lifted the Mandara mountains? But when you are with that “beautiful” woman, you forgot. On that moonlit evening, you couldn’t even see the way to my house? With one glance from her, you were love-struck. Her love is all fake; she only wants your money and jewelry. But I’m not like that. Just get out.”

### **Tillana**

Ragam: Paras

Talam: Adi

Composed by: Pooci Srinivasa Iyengar

Choreographed by: Rukmini Devi Arundale

Tillana is the concluding piece in a Bharatanatyam recital. The outstretched arms, leg extensions, the brahmaris or pirouettes, all together give tillana a certain dynamic quality. A predominantly rhythm-based composition, the Tillana enables the dance recital to end on a lively note. It concludes with a verse in praise of the Goddess Rajeshwari, the protector of Ramanathapuram village, which today is a bustling city in Tamil Nadu, India.

### **Sarva Mangalam (Sanskrit)**

Movement arranged by: Dr. Elizabeth Kurien

An auspicious blessing to all the elements of the universe, this mangalam invokes a peaceful and harmonious interdependence of all aspects of life. The five elements – earth, water, fire, air, sky; the heavenly elements – sun, moon, and planet; the individual elements – life, body, mind, and soul; may they all be peaceful and blessed.

### **Guest Speakers & Thank You Note - Ishika Muchhal**

## Musical Ensemble

**Percussion (Mridangam): Sri Ramesh Babu** is an accomplished percussionist from Chennai who trained under his father, Shri K. P. Bhaskar, Shri Puthokode S. Krishnan, Guru Shri Karaikudi R. Mani, and Kalamandalam Chandrika. An A grade All India Radio artist and Cultural Department of India scholarship recipient, he has accompanied some of the finest dancers and musicians of India, working as a dance accompanist for the Dhananjayans at *Bharata Kalanjali* for 16 years. Ramesh Sir has many compositions to his credit, earning praise on an international scale including India, Australia, Singapore, United States, and Kuwait.

**Flute: Sri Sujith S Naik**, recognized as one of the most promising flautists in Carnatic music, has been playing for 18 years. Starting at age 5, he has trained under Sri O K Subramaniam, late Padmasree Dr. N Ramani, and Kalaimamani T Sashidhar (Kalakshetra Institution.) He has a Masters in Music (University of Madras) and is an AIR graded artist, a recipient of a scholarship from Mrudani School of Fine Arts. Performing abroad including Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, Middle East, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, United State of America, he has collaborated with legends in Hindustani and Western music.

**Violin: Sri Rijesh Cheruvila** started learning violin and vocal under the tutelage of his father Gopalakrishnan Cheruvila at the age of 4. He started performing at the age of 8, simultaneously learning tabla under Haris Bhai. He moved to Chennai and received his diploma from the Kalakshetra Foundation. Rijesh has performed or the last 20 years with venues such as the Konark Festival, Soorya festival, and Khajuraho festival in many countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and United States.

**Vocal: Sri Binu Venu Gopal** is an accomplished vocalist who began learning Carnatic vocal at age 5 under the tutelage of his grandfather, Sri Malabar Sukumaran Bhagavathar. He is a graduate in MA Music and a first rank holder from Calicut University. He is the 2012 winner of the prestigious YUVA LAYAM competitions. He has performed in Switzerland, Middle East, Japan, and United States. His associations with artists like The Dhananjayans, Mythili Prakash, Priyadarshini Govind, Urmila Satyanarayanan, and Shobana have won him many accolades.

**Nattuvangam: Dr. Elizabeth Kurien** (see Brochure) plays the nattuvangam for Ishika's Arangetram. Nattuvangam is a set of brass cymbals played by the dance teacher to guide the footwork of the dancer and enhance the sound made by the dancer's feet. It is accompanied by voicing rhythmic patterns (jatis) that shape the pace and flow of dance. An integral member of a Bharatanatyam orchestra, the nattuvanar (one who plays the Nattuvangam) aids in conducting the dance and music components of the recital.

## Guest Speakers

**Katie Gundersen-Watson** began dancing at age 6, learning ballet, tap, acrobatics, modeling, instrumental music, singing, conducting, Country Western, Swing, and Ballroom dance. She and her husband, John, became competition dancers, making the Sizzlin Country team South West Regional Champions. They both compete and teach today.

**Dr. Choi Chatterjee** is a Professor of History at California State University, Los Angeles. She is the author of several books and edited volumes on Russian and Soviet History. In 2014 she received the Outstanding Professor Award at California State University, Los Angeles. She recently received a grant from the is a La Kretz Foundation grant recipient to build a sustainable garden at her campus.

**Natalie Harrison** just started her 20th year at Monrovia High School in the Social Science Department, where she teaches AP European History, Government, and Economics. For her, the best part about her career is getting to know her students and seeing them grow. She has two children, loves to learn new things, and has a passion for musicals!

## Masters of Ceremonies

**Aakansha Maheshwari** has learned Bharatanatyam for 20 years under Srimati Geeta Chandran in Delhi and now under Srimati Viji Prakash. Since 2013, she has been teaching dance fitness in SoCal through her school, BollyPop.

**Malini Taneja** has been learning Bharatanatyam from Srimati Viji Prakash for almost 15 years She is a member of the *KIRTANIYAS* where she expresses her devotion to Krishna with dance and song to international audiences.

**Malini and Aakansha** now tour with the Festival of Colors and teach Indian dance and culture to thousands of non-Indian crowds. Their most recent artistic project, DESERT FIRE, shares the Kalbelia Gypsy Folk Dance and Rajasthan music through choreography and workshops.

## Credits

**Lighting & Sound: Angelo Collado & Sabrina Knebel, assisted by Damini Sayeed,**

**Spotlight - Yana Verma and Rolando Zerimar**

**Makeup: Tharini Shanmugarajah**

**Brochure & Photo Editing: Mohna Manihar**

**Program: Ishika Muchhal**

**Printing: Ford Printing**

**Event and Food Coordination: Arvind and Monica Jain**

**Decoration: FRIE-MILY!**

**Videography: Serg - Perfect Video**

**Photography: Surendra Prakash- Photomagicroom**

**Venue Coordinator: Patrick Garcia & MUSD**

**We appreciate your presence on this milestone occasion!**



presents the

**Bharatanatyam Arangetram**

of

**Ishika Muchhal**



**PROGRAM**  
August 18th, 2018