

Music in Healing Discourses on Music -6 Prateeksha Sharma



Music appeals to the emotional side of the human nature. Music stirs, births, expresses, fires, harnesses, channelizes and tempers emotions. Music precedes the development of language as a form of expression. That is because music is present in nature even before the human is born as an individual or a species. In his bid to emulate the sounds of nature man becomes musical. And yet in amputating himself from this connection with nature, in the process of socialization and civilization the human loses touch with the lyre within, coming to a point of dis-ease or an absence of ease.

Man has instinctively known forever about the healing aspects of music. Speaking about this knowledge in context of Indian music, Alain Daniélou the late Director of the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation, Berlin, opines that "a general Sanskrit theory of music, termed *Gāndharva Veda*, was elaborated at a very early date." He continues saying that it seems that the *Gāndharva Veda* studied every use of musical sound, not only in different musical forms and systems but also in physics, medicine and magic. Music makes the human 'whole'- in harmony and in balance. Don Campbell says that bringing a body in to balance requires observing the orchestra in it's entirety, it's current condition and past experience, it's inherent

strengths, it's potential for improvement. And the real genius of healing lies in teaching the body, mind, and heart to discover and play their own music-not something that has been dictated by social norms. If one is to examine healing in terms of emotion, then the process of healing involves the transformation of one kind of emotion into another. The *Natyashastra* of Bharata mentions about nine primary emotions or *rasa-s*. *Rasa* is the Permanent Mood when it is revealed through enjoyment[i]. The nine[1] accepted *Rasa-s* are: the Erotic (*Sringara*), the Comic (*Hasya*), the Pathetic (*karuna*), the Furious (*Raudra*), the Heroic (*Vira*), the Fearful (*Bhayanaka*), the Odious (*Bibhatsa*), the Marvellous (*Adbhuta*) and the Tranquil (*Santa*). The catalytic process of music is aimed at transforming the dominant emotion into another emotion or reducing the severity of the emotional experience, in case the dominant emotion is a disease producing condition or itself an offshoot of the disease. For example sadness at one extreme becomes depression, which can in an extreme case also lead to a suicidal tendency. Music used appropriately with this emotion can aid in an expression that may not be spontaneously available to the individual due to disease related pathology.

It has been noticed that during conditions of illness, it is human tendency to revert to prayer, because of the impact faith has on the psyche, and the immune system. The greater is the patient's faith that they will get well and the more they silently pray, the lesser is their expectation from medical cures alone and also greater is the likelihood of them becoming well due to their own willpower. The reason is twofold: first, prayer takes the mind of the patient away from the disease and negative thoughts. Secondly, it gives a positive affirmation to the body's own immune system to fight the disease. Music unobtrusively becomes a catalyst in this process.

If one is to use music for therapeutic purposes, it is crucial

to understand two principles: Entrainment and Isoprinciple. Entrainment is simply the principle from physics that tells us that our biorhythms tend to synchronize with the rhythm, tempo, or pulse of the music. We instinctively choose slow music when we want to calm down and faster music when we want to energize ourselves. The isoprinciple states that in order to change a person's mood with music, one must first begin with music that reflects the state he/she is in to start with. If one is feeling depressed one cannot simply put on "happy" music to change the mood. It must be done slowly and carefully.

When we mention the term music therapy we need to remember that in therapy, music is specifically used to achieve non-musical goals. Music can both be used as an alternative, stand-alone therapy as well as a complementary therapy in addition to traditional medical procedures.

There are four levels of music therapy practice:

- Auxiliary level: All functional uses of music for non-therapeutic but related purposes;
- Augmented level: Music therapy used to enhance the efforts of other treatment modalities
- Intensive level: Induces significant changes in the client's current situation
- Primary level: Singular role in meeting the main therapeutic needs of the client.

Music therapy is an interpersonal process in which the therapist uses music and all its facets- physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic and spiritual- to help clients to improve or maintain help. The music used in therapy maybe specially created by the therapist or client or it maybe drawn from the existing literature in various styles and periods.[ii]

Music and Ritual Discourses on Music -5 by Prateeksha Sharma



Ritual is an innate part of the human life. Ritual whether in the form of an invocation, a sacrifice, a fast or a penance, a holy dip in a river, ringing the bells, a prayer or an *aarti* they all contribute to disciplining the mind to focus. Every spiritual and religious tradition uses music to help in focussing. Prayer brings the mind to a point of concentration, and in a one-pointed thought about the object of prayer. The object maybe the form of a diety or a formless entity, musical sounds help in making the mind still and gathering the thoughts from all the various directions the mind is usually scattered in. Therefore, spiritual music has its own special parametres and singers. When we go into a house of worship the sound of the music playing instantly snaps the chord from the noise of the world and introverts the senses.

In India, with its unique tradition of community singing in *bhajans*, *satsangs* and *sankirtan* music is the predominant element that unifies the consciousness of the participants. Even if people are unable to sing, for not knowing the language or the lyrics, they usually join in the community act

with something as simple as clapping. Such community activities, which are a part of the life of a householder, especially in certain communities or the post-retirement phase of life, are a prescription to stall the modern day affliction of alienation among the elderly; which often leads to mental, physical and spiritual decay. This kind of community musico-religious programmes are also a mechanism for those who are involved to remain active, busy and involved in a meaningful social exchange- by not being solely dependent on their families at all times. The greater is the social and physical involvement of an individual the less likely is the person to fall prey to degenerative diseases.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

**GEETIKA AND MANTIKA – AN
ARANGETRAM TO REMEMBER A
Review by Suryakanthi
Tripathi (Former DG ICCR)**



A Perfect Pair

The two sisters, Geetika and Mantika Haryani, sixteen and thirteen years old respectively, had their Bharatanatyam Arangetram at the ISKON Auditorium in Delhi on 1st February 2009. For the young dancers, it was an evening to demonstrate how well they had learnt the classical dance over the past seven years.

Smt. Mala Murli of Nritya Geetanjali, who has distinguished herself as a Bharatanatyam guru, had instilled in both her students a level of confidence that allowed them to give of their best. Her own sensibility and individuality was also very evident in the dances performed by the two sisters.

The accompanying musicians enhanced the dance performance, particularly Shri K. Venkateshwaran, who had a rich voice and proved to be an able and versatile singer for the recital.

The recital followed the traditional order beginning with the Alarippu, followed by a Jatiswaram, Shabdam, Varnam, Padams

and finally the Tillana.

The Varnam, as expected, was the piece-de-resistance of the evening. The dance, set to the Sanskrit composition of Maharaja Swati Tirunal and describing the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, required skill in abhinaya, tala and in the execution of intricate adavu jatis. With their graceful movements, neat footwork and good coordination, the dancers drew the spontaneous applause of the audience more than once.

Their recital concluded with a fast-paced Tillana, in Ragam Hindolam set to Adi Talam, in which the sisters performed the complicated adavus and tirmanam with joyful élan.

The Arangetram came together in all aspects – the guru, the dancers, the musicians and the dances. The dedicated enthusiasm of both the teacher and her talented disciples was very evident that Sunday evening. Their debut on stage is something both Geetika and Mantika can justifiably be proud of. If they continue to train and practice with the same degree of commitment, we will have, in the coming years, two very fine exponents of this great dance form.

**Music Education Discourses on
Music -4 By: Prateeksha
Sharma**



Republic Day Parade- A School Band

There are two aspects of music education- music in education and music as education. Training in music from an early age for the purpose of disciplining the mind and making a career out of some aspect of music constitutes music education. When a child begins to train in music in a systematic manner a number of changes occur in the personality of the child- from disciplining to becoming methodical, refinement of senses, time management (as the child also is involved with academic pursuits due to that age). It is a boost to the self-confidence of the individual as his/her musical ability sets them apart from their peers and the artiste is a source of attraction for everyone around. Since music tends to be a performing art, the necessary exposure to the stage automatically makes the child confident and able to deal with issues related to shyness, introversion, and fear of public speaking. After the training phase, the next phase of the musician is to contribute to the social fabric in the same capacity- a role which maybe performed as a teacher, an entertainer, a healer, in the industry or attached to a spiritual organisation.

Music in education is a somewhat different application of music, in which music is utilised to improve the educational output of students. The main impact of music here is felt due

to its ability to let students involve themselves in group musical experiences, which allow an expression of emotion in a medium other than speech. These experiences could be ranging from singing, playing musical instruments together, writing lyrics and setting them to music to making musical plays and productions and so forth. A competitive, performance oriented production with such activities has been seen to bring about both behavioural and academic improvements in healthy school going children as well as those suffering from mental handicaps, hearing handicaps and various other neurological and/or developmental disabilities. Such musical experiences not only foster socialisation, but also bring about group cohesiveness, enhancement of interpersonal skills, learning due to imitative behaviour and more adapted socially cooperative mannerisms.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

Chakras and Sound Discourses on Music -3 By: Prateeksha Sharma



In addition to our visible, gross body we also have the subtle body in the form of an energy field around it. The physical body contains the most dense and therefore visible energy. This energy continues forming layers of energy fields around the body which are not usually visible to the naked eye. This magnetic field energy that surrounds the body is called

“aura”. The aura is created by the energy of the *chakras*- the psychic, whirling energy processing centres of the body. According to yogic theory, there are approximately 72,000 *nadis*, astral nerve tubes, the most important of which is the *sushumna*, the astral body counterpart to the spinal cord. On either side of it are two *nadis* known as *ida* and *pingala*, which correspond to the left and right sympathetic cords in the physical body[i]. There are six points in the body where these three *nadis* intersect and these points also correspond in location to the major nerve ganglia (cervical plexus, solar plexus, sacral plexus and so forth) located along the spine in the physical body. In healthy people, the *chakras* are vibrant and spin with vigour, while in those who are not well the chakra petals are dull and spin sluggishly, says the American Hindu priest Thomas Ashley-Farrand[ii]. Interestingly, these *chakras* respond to the sound of Sanskrit, a fact which was noticed by ancient Indian mystics with “second sight”, the ability to see clearly in the subtle realm. These outcomes were carefully written down and can be found in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. It took time before the sages arrived at the mechanism behind the impact of Sanskrit on the *chakras*. And they concluded that the total number of petals or spokes composing those six *chakras* is fifty. Similarly, the Sanskrit alphabet consists of fifty letters, with each one corresponding to a particular petal of a *chakra*. When a *mantra* built from the language is chanted, our *chakras* vibrate in tune with the Sanskrit sounds because Sanskrit is ... “an energy-based language first and a meaning-based language second”. Not all the words of the Sanskrit *mantras* have meanings. It is the energy coming from the subtle body that provides the key to the effectiveness of the *mantra* chanting. Each *chakra* has a corresponding *Bija mantra* or sound vibration. Irrespective of who chants the *mantra*, at the sound of the *Bija mantra*, the *chakras* spin with greater energy and vigour, giving corresponding strength to the body. It is also said that the *chakras* correspond to the musical scale with

each *chakra* representing one *swara* of the octave.

Human society uses music in various ways. Some of it is used in education for those who become musicians or those who endeavour to develop a fine aesthetic appreciation of life, in particular the arts, around them. It is utilized in religious ceremonies and rituals, as a means of entertainment and in imparting health to the body. Each of these applications of music is explained briefly.

Form Grace Poise

Form Grace Poise

Preminder Singh
reviews a dancer's performance



Bindu Juneja

There was a breath of fresh air in the dance world at The Habitat centre auditorium on 30th july. Bindu Juneja breezed in with a quality performance after an absence of more than 12 years from any stage in

Delhi. A student of Madhavi Mudgal for more than 10 years, she married and didn't just settle down in Bhopal. She continued to dance and teach at her own dance academy '*Parn*'. She studied the Kathakali style of movement from maestro Margi Vijay Kumar. This is the style par excellence of theatre, of facial expression, of *abhinaya*. Leila Samson in her book '*Rhythm in Joy*' says 'the Kathakali dancer can, through facial expression alone, show the fall of a flower as it wanders downwards from the heavens. With his eyes alone he can measure its progress towards him. He smells its fragrance...his eyes, nose and senses are activated to reflect a myriad reactions.'

It is this that reflected in Bindu's performance and choice of pieces. Of 6 she did only one *Pallavi* (in *Raag Jait Kalyan*) and chose 3 *abhinaya* pieces to show the range and depth of her art.

The first '*Priye Charushile*' an *Ashtapadi* from the Geeta Govinda shows Krishna cajoling an angry Radha with a lot of flattery. Bindu did this with an easy grace and consummate skill and avoided the overacting that younger dancers are prone to in this *ashtapadi*.

This was followed by an *abhinaya* '*Katana Bedana Mohi Desi Madana*' a composition of the 14th century Maithili poet, Vidyapati. The love lyrics describing the sensuous love story of Radha and Krishna and the poetry and prayers dedicated to Lord Shiva form a rich tradition of folk songs still sung in the region of Mithila in Bihar. They are also ideally suited to the Odissi style where the lyricism of the poetry is reflected in the sensuousness of the dance.

Bindu confirmed her mastery of expression of the Nayika separated from her beloved as well as her understated and confident exposition of the curvilinear movements of the dance.

The penultimate piece before the Moksha showed her dramatic skills in '*Ramashtakam*' depicting the various episodes from Lord Rama's life as a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a king and as both friend and foe. Bindu's skill in the theatrical aspect of the dance owes a lot to Dr. Kanak Rele the Mohiniattam veteran, but to combine in one seamless performance the quiet elegance of her guru Madhavi, the

passionate expressions of Margi Vijay and the abhinaya learnt from Dr. Rele we can safely say that we have another potentially great dancer in our midst who deserves much more than one performance in Delhi every twelve years..

Choreography was by Bindu and the excellent music was by Meera Rao.

Me, Kash & Cruise

**Me, Kash & Cruise – A Competent and Cleverly Crafted
Production of Significance
A Review by Manohar Khushalani**



(Left) Rajit Kapoor as many faces of “Bombay” (Right) Amit Mistry & Neil Bhoopalam

As a finale to his earlier plays: **Class of 84** and **Pune Highway**, Matrix Presented Rahul Da Cunha’s last one of the trilogy, **Me, Kash and Cruise** at India HabitatCenter. For me personally it was a watershed of memories. The play opens with a backdrop of 1984 Bombay Riots. It was in 1984 when our street theatre group, **Theatre Union**, disembarked at Mumbai’s Churchgate Station to participate in the Natya Jatra, a festival of Street plays performed by Theatre Workers and activists from all over India. It was at the railway platform itself that we learnt that Indira Gandhi had been assassinated by her Sikh

Bodyguards. We arrived at Rabindra Rangshala, the venue of performance to learn that all the shows had been cancelled. Not to be deterred we proceeded to Flora Fountain for our first impromptu performance. Despite the tragedy my sense of humour about the irony of the situation had not abated as I showered my jokes on my hapless colleagues in the local train to the venue of the show. Apparently a pick pocket was not amused or maybe he decided to have the last laugh as he slickly dispossessed me of my purse, which contained all my finances. But the show must go on and perform we did to an appreciative audience.

In the next ten days we were all stuck at Rabindra Rangshala as the trains were not moving and all the theatre groups performed for each other. Just as a singer is requested for an encore, our rendition of Sadat Hasan Manto's **Toba Tek Singh** was most popular, and we performed it repeatedly for other groups. No. One is not going on a tangent. I am coming to the point.

Amongst the performers was a troupe led by Gursharan Singh, A famous Sikh playwright director from Punjab who performed courageously against militancy in Punjab. Throughout our incarceration we continued to hear all kinds of rumours about how Sikhs were being butchered in the communal riots in Delhi. There were also rumours about protection money given by them to the Underworld for remaining safe in Mumbai. One had also heard about how Shiv Sena in Mumbai and RSS in Delhi had offered protection to the Sikhs. In an environment of fear and fervour – with and without veracity – rumours abounded. **It is this atmosphere that Rahul Da Cunha's play captured with authenticity, that one can vouch for, from personal experience.**

Set in Bombay, the play covers a twenty four year time horizon – 1984 to 2008. Bombay has been a city that encompasses every emotion – from nostalgia to frustration. And joy to fear. **Me, Kash and Cruise** is the roller coaster story of three Bombayites and their attempts to deal with the city's ever changing social, civic and political landscape – with mostly hilarious, and sometimes tragic consequences. The play opens with the death of Indira Gandhi, while the three protagonists – Pooja Thomas (unabashed Bombay lover), Rajesh Kashyap (true blue South

Bombayite) and Cruise (A Delhiite, and named after the Hollywood star) traverse their way through the 1992 riots, the 1993 bomb blasts, the Moral Police and Bollywood mania, as well as the age of marketing and hype – among other dramatic events that have shaken and influenced our city. Including man made disasters such as dug up roads and festival band *baaja*. And of course, Himesh Reshammiya !!

Da Cunha's assembled and portable set design is a labyrinth of multi level cat walks with interconnecting stairs – almost a reflection of the intertwining relationships of the three main characters torn apart by their own complexities and yet thrown together by circumstances and similar interests – primarily theatre, Pooja Thomas and Rajesh Kashyap are well grounded bombayites. Cruise a typical "struggler" from Delhi 6 – the place in Delhi which has contributed maximum actors to Delhi Theatre. Since Cruise is trying to 'make it' while the other two are established in the city there is bound to be a difference in their priorities. While Pooja is attracted by; the entrepreneur spirit of Cruise, Kashyap disapproves of his lack of commitment to theatre. Da Cunha script comes to terms with these realities in an objective manner. He also sketches out how their relationships and lives change with the external influences of the traumatic political events that rock the city. How people cannot remain unaffected islands and how the social upheavals suck people into their vortex. The director is very original in the way the blocking has been done. People can be interacting with each other directly, but from different levels. Even the classic 'asides' can be belted out from different spaces. The division of the stage is not the typical horizontally segmented 'upstage' and 'downstage' but more literally – vertically – up down and middle levels.

The performances of the three actors Yamini Namjoshi, Amit Mistry and Neil Bhoopalam are fluid and flawless. The well known actor Rajit Kapoor does many roles of the other characters. He is the fourth character, mysteriously named BOMBAY winds away through the play, donning many guises and avatars – Gateway photographer, police havaladar, marketing executive etc.

Cast : Yamini Namjoshi, Amit Mistry, Neil Bhoopalam and Rajit Kapur

Written & Directed by Rahul da Cunha

A Rage Production

Sponsor Matrix

Arunima – a dancer who educates as she performs



I first saw Arunima dance before a TV camera in Lodhi Gardens. The effortless ease with which she glided through her steps almost simulated levitation. She is one of the India's most versatile leading young Kuchipudi dancers. The senior most disciple of the renowned dancing duo, **Padamashree Guru JayaRama Rao and Vanasree Rao**, she started learning Kuchipudi at the age of seven.

As a young girl of 9, Arunima acted in the ballet "Amrapali". The Kuchipudi Dance Academy formally launched her in 1995 where she performed her 'Arangetram' at the **Triveni Kala Sangam**, New Delhi. Since then there has been no stopping her

as she pursued her art with relentless devotion to achieve soaring heights in the field of classical dance.

Her dance is different from the way most others perform. It is interactive. She assumes that her audience doesn't necessarily understand the significance of bhavas and mudras. At a recent performance in the Malvia Durbar hall of Banaras Hindu University she endeared the audience not only with her performance but also with the way she conducted it like a *lec-dem* (Lecture Demonstration). She had been invited by the Sanskrit Akademi and she chose to perform the 'Nala Damyanti' story from the Mahabharata.

Nala was a valorous, handsome, and popular king. He heard about the beauty of Damayanthi – the princess of Kundinapuram in Vidarbha, and decided to make her his consort. It so happened that when Narada visited Nala he spoke glowingly of Damayanthi and also told him that she would make an ideal match for our now besotted king .

The lovelorn King tries to distract himself by composing music and loitering in the royal garden. Suddenly one day he sees a beautiful, golden swan by the lake. Nala creeps upto the sleeping bird to capture the swan. The swan is released after persuading Nala that he will play cupid and win Damyanthi over for the King –

The cupid swan proceeds to Kundinam, and is amused to find that Damayanthi was also pathetically lovelorn. Obviously she too had heard of Nala's fame. He attracts her attention, lures her away from her companions- and eventually pretends to have come into her clasp – he teases her about her childishness. This scene was rendered in a charming fashion – the swan consoles Damayanthi, narrates Nala's goodness and eligibility and promises to help them. One can easily gather that there was a lot of scope for *abhinay* and the dancer exploited the theme to perfection. As Arunima quips in her eloquent style; **"dancing is like dreaming with your feet"**

Arunima has performed widely across the nation both as a solo artiste and as part of her gurus' team at various dance festivals, prestigious venues and lecture demonstrations including the **Andhra Day Celebrations in Hyderabad 1993**, **Hyderabad Arts Festival 1994**, **India International Centre**, **Andhra Bhawan**, **the India Habitat Centre**, **Ayappa Temple**, **Triveni Kala Sangam**, **Trade Fair 1999**, **2002**, **2003**, **2006 SOPAN festival by Sahitya Kala Parishad**, **Delhi Tourism Festival at Santushti 2003**, **the Bharat Yatra Festival in Lucknow 2001**, **Shringaramani Festival in Mumbai 2001**, **Kuchipudi dance festival in Kuchipudi Village**, **Chitrangada Ballet – National Choreography Festival at Habitat Centre 2003**, **Qutab Festival in 2003**, **Young Dancers Festival at Kolkata** sponsored by Sangeet Natak Academy in 2004, **Legends of India Festival in 2004**, **2007**, **Kalidasa Festival at Nagpur in 2004**, **Habitat World in September 2005**, **Virasat Festival at Dehradun in 2005**, **the Mardol Classical Dance Festival at Goa**, **the Goa International Centre in 2006**, **Nehru Center in Mumbai in 2006**, **Biotech Conference in Hyderabad in 2006**, **Ugaadi (AP Bhawan) Celebrations in 2006**, **Jhansi Mahotsav in 2006** and **Chamba festival in 2006**, **Mahabalipuram festival in Chennai in 2007**, **Jugalbandi with Kathak**, choreographed by Pdt. Birju Maharaj at **Holi Ke Rang Mahotsav (sponsored by Kalashram) at Habitat Centre in March 2007**, **Budh Mahotsav in Patna, May 2007** (where she performed the dance ballet **Vasavadatta** on Rabindra Sangeet Choreographed by her gurus), **Jaya Smriti in Mumbai in June 2007** organised by Hema Malini, **Radha Asthami in Barsana, September 2007**, **Indo-European Conference organized by ICCR, September 2007**, **Fusion concert with Band Advaita, September 2007**, **Sahitya Kala Parishad young dancer's Festival, September 2007**, **Neemrana Fort Palace in Oct 2007**, **SAARC Band festival November 2007**, **JNU Delhi November 2007**, **HCL Concert Series at Habitat Center December 2007**, **Haridas Sammelan in Mumbai December 2008**, **Delhi International Arts Festival December 2007**, **Brahma Gana Sabha in Chennai January 2008**, **Nungambakkam Cultural Academy in Chennai, January 2008**, **Bhavbhuti Festival – Gwalior, February 2008.**, **Ustad Allaiddin Khan**

Samaoroh – Maihar, Gwalior February 2008.

She was also invited to perform for the Honorable President of India at Rashtrapati Bhawan in June 2006.

Arunima has displayed her art in prestigious international dance festivals – **EXPO 1998, Lisbon, Portugal, India's 50th year of Independence held in Bonn, Germany, EXPO 2000 in Hanover, Germany, IC.C.R. tour in 2003, Ministry of External Affairs of India, in prestigious venues in Australia, including Canberra Festival, Sydney Opera House, Melbourne, Brisbane, Fiji, Thailand, Malaysia & Indonesia, India Week Celebrations at Buremburg and Frankfurt, Tagore International Center in Berlin in 2005, Nehru Centre in London, 2005, Asian Arts Festival in Manila , Philippines 2007.**

Recognition has also come to Arunima in the form of the State Government of **India Sahitya Kala Parishad Scholarship** for Dance in 998 and the **Shringarmani title by Sur Shringar Samsad**. Besides being empanelled as an Established artiste at the I.C.C.R., Arunima is also an A grade artiste of the **All India Radio and Doordarshan**. Her appreciative reviews and dynamic profile have been featured in all leading television and radio channels (Doordarshan, Sony, Aaj Tak, Star News etc) and newspapers including **Hindustan Times, Times of India, Indian Express, Business Standard, India Today etc.**, She also featured in the **London School of Economics Newsletter** for her outstanding performance. In an endeavor to share the joy of being closely involved with India's rich cultural heritage, she has also worked for SPIC MACAY, a voluntary cultural organization as its Planning and Finance coordinator. She is also a member of a *GATI*, a young dancers' art forum.

Besides Dance, Arunima has also excelled in academics. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from India's prestigious **St. Stephen's College** and then studied **MSc in Accounting and Finance from the London School of Economics**. Her outstanding performance led her to **teach** at the LSE summer

school in 2002. After completing her teaching assignment, she returned to India to continue with her dance. Until recently, she was managing a career in management consulting at a leading US based firm. She is now focusing to build her own arts foundation to promote performing arts across the globe. Arunima has also successfully ventured into dance choreography and research to explore different creative aspects of the performing arts

She is also a **keen Pistol shooter** and has won several medals in State and National Championships, including a Gold Medal in national Championship in 1999. She was also, the Captain of the Rifle Shooting Club in her college and received College Colors for her outstanding performance in Shooting. She is also the recipient of the **Government of India Sports Talent Search Scholarship (1991-1992)**. She is also keenly interested **in dramatics** and has performed in several radio and TV programs (Yog Yatra on Star news etc), music videos and commercials.

However Kuchipudi continues to be her abiding passion, which she pursues with relentless devotion.

Endowed with “a pair of large eyes, a mobile visage and attractive stage presence”. Arunima is a devoted dancer with a promising career ahead....

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A Young Dancer's First Solo

A Young Dancer's First Solo

-Manohar Khushalani

An *Arangetram* in dance is like an airplane pilots first solo flight – an announcement to the world that you have arrived and can now go it alone. Shruti Gurudanti is still in school, in class twelve, she had her *Bharatanatyam Arangetram* this Sunday after having practised dance since the age of eight. The debut performance was also the dancer's personal saga of courage – despite a knee operation last November, she chose to go ahead with the show. Shruti's performance was technically flawless. Credit would also go to her Guru, Vasanthi Sridhar, who was able to inspire her to work so hard for her performance.

Gurudanti's rendition started with *Pushpanjali* in Raga *Tala Malika*. An offering of flowers to the audience, with brisk and agile light footed movements which built up to a crescendo of the pulsating beat of percussion. This was followed by *Khanda Allaripu* set to *Khanda Jati*. This is a short and crisp item symbolising the flowering or opening up of the body as a warm up for the more difficult pieces that follow. Shruti used fluid movements of the shoulder with neck and eye rolls to embellish this dance sequence. In *Jatiswaram*, which is a combination of *jati* (rhythmic syllables) and *swara*, the dancer used side stepping with symmetrical and circular movements of the arms. She gave an inspired performance of pure *Nritya*, drawing repeated applause of the audience.



Above: *Shruti Gurudanti*

Not many of the celebrated Gurus these days create worthy disciples, for fear of creating competition for themselves. An insecurity that Guru Sridhar does not suffer from. Under the aegis of Prashanti Natya Nilayam, she has conjured up a number of collective Arangetramn's and Dance Drama's to introduce her young disciples to the real world.



Above: (L) *Guru Vasnathi Shridhar*
(R) *Shruti Gurudanti*

Varnam was the *piece de resistance* of the show. Through *abhinay* the danseuse described the naughty Krishna and how he enchants the Gopis with his pranks. The vanishing trick is used by him while playing hide and seek with the Gopis, and the audience is bemused by the intriguing confusion he creates in their mind by insisting that he was always there. The transformation of this prankster to a full fledged artist by melodiously playing the flute along with the accompanying instruments to placate the agitated gopis is a popular sequence in Bharatanatyam. The nayika is so much in love with Krishna that she has lost consciousness of her own existence.



Shruti displayed a range of expressions as she recreated the Draupadi *cheer haran* sequence playing the wily Duryodhan and the anguished Draupadi alternatively. The sequence included the sight of the little Krishna dancing on the poisonous snake Kaaliya *Varnam* was set in Ragam "Mohanam", Talam "Adi".

Padam "Padari" set to Ragam "Kamboji" Talam "Roopakam", is a

endearing interplay between the nayika who has recently fallen in love and her sakhi who is her confidante. The sakhi pretends not to care or bother about what she was being told. She only appears to admire her own self and strut about without a care in the world. The nayika ultimately pleads to her sakhi to go fetch her lord for her. Shruti concluded her recital with the *Tillana*. in Ragam “*Kadanakuduralam*” and Talam “*Adi*”. The young danseuse displayed a great promise, provided she applied herself and internalised the moods of abhinay. Something that will follow with age and practice.

The Owl and the Pussy Cat – Art review by Seema Bawa



Director: Satyajit Sharma



Actors: Kavita Dang
and Kumud Mishra

“The Owl and the pussy cat went to sea in a beautiful pea green boat...”

Thrown together in a low-rent bachelor’s flat instead of a ‘pea-green boat’, the odd couple in this highly amusing **Bill Manhoff comedy**, is certainly not at sea! ‘The Owl’, Felix played by **Kumud Misra**, a highly accomplished actor, is a self-styled intellectual author – while ‘the Pussycat’ played by **Kanika Dang**, is a wannabe actress and model – however, to pay the bills she entertains gentleman callers, a prostitute but not promiscuous.

Having noticed the stream of gentlemen caller at her apartment through his binoculars, the peeping owl does his ‘civic’ duty by informing the superintendent of the building. The pussycat with nowhere to spend the night seeks revenge by imposing on the owl for a bed. And then, through a battle of wits, words, and wisdoms they both start to ‘educate’ each other as well as the audience in ways they never knew they could.

The current production by Dotted Line Productions has wisely kept it simple and has not endeavored to create convoluted and over intellectualized caricatures of the protagonists. The director, **Satyajit Sharma**, an NSD Alumni with several outstanding acting and directorial performances to his credit, takes two great actors who handle some good old fashioned repartee rather well; coupled with adept handling of a witty

script to put together an eminently watchable show.

The play focuses on two people who get to know each other, have sex, and eventually fall in love. As in most romantic comedies, one-liners abound and the protagonists are shown falling from their own self constructed identities. The fight in Felix's apartment after Doris barges in at the beginning is hilarious. She gets upset by his use of big words, but eventually buys her own guide to extending one's vocabulary. He is horrified by her "filthy" animal existence exemplified in his use of words like gutter slime and filth for her, but delights in the new experiences she has to offer. The two show each other new ways of looking at things and which is why Doris and Felix's chemistry works for the audience. It's is akin to what *happens* in real life. Their romance is played for laughs, but it's also sweet and touching. Felix, like most men, has to have a near nervous breakdown before deciding Doris is the one for him through a bitter-sweet dream sequence that evokes meta-theatre. As each displays their softer selves, the audience realizes they have more in common than they think. The two are in transition; looking for that obscure goal of success; he in writing, she in acting. This shared ground draws them together and reflects to the audience a very real struggle that we all experience in relationships.

Odd couples, whether of the same or different sexes have been a comedy formula for decades. The play enthralls with its at times salty language. Most importantly, Kumud and Kanika have a very definite chemistry. Though Kanika's is better delineated and in intrinsically is the more outrageous and attractive character (being the underdog) in the script, it does not steal the focus. Kumud interprets the inherent wimpyness and prissyness of the character with a paradoxical male strength and libido. This makes for a powerful performance that converts the essentially mono-dimensionality of the character into a rather complex and conflicted one. The interlude when the wimpy Felix transforms briefly to a randy

'baby' is remarkably executed with Kumud performing from each pore of his being. Kanika has put in a lot of effort into building her character but while she is able to bring to fore the tartness of Doris, the vulnerability written into the character does not come out as well as it may have. Though this prostitute has a heart and it shows. While the play per se is not deep enough to allow for great acting, it does give scope to the two protagonists to demonstrate impressive technical finesse; the director who is apparently debuting for the group needs to be complemented for this.

In order to be memorable theater, the discovery by Felix and Doris that they are good for each other need not be revelatory in the vein of a metaphysical revelation, but should be funny. The director and his cast achieve this with ease. The humor in "The Owl and The Pussycat," depends largely on sarcasm, insult and the sort of logic that has Doris announce: "I may be a prostitute, but I'm not promiscuous." A lot of the humor of the play depends on language and the "play" thereon. Much is made of the fact that Doris doesn't understand words like despicable, aesthetic, assimilate and intrinsic while Felix who seeks to define himself through words or concepts finds them completely incapable of addressing his feelings for Doris. A comedy based largely on language and timing is always a difficult ask and the current production delivers in aces.

Directorial skill is amply demonstrated in terms of technique, stage craft and spatial usage. The fundamentals of good stagecraft such as blocking, body language and use of space have a refreshing rehearsed certainty and professionalism fast disappearing from current productions. Interludes of well chosen music pieces and the intermittent use of gaps during the play deserve to be commended. This despite the somewhat inadequate lighting arrangement around the proscenium of the LTG auditorium