

Friday, March 28, 2012

Press Release

Colorful Dances, Graceful expressions, impeccable movements

- ***Missouri's only International Indian Dance Festival***

By Seema Kasthuri and Shubha Baskar

Irish, Scots, Welsh, Cornish—they came to Missouri and planted their traditions. Also came, the East Indians from Asia finding hope in this land of opportunity. There is now a sizeable population of Asian Indians settled in the St. Louis area, who have made their American dream come true. The sounds of their dance & music through the St. Louis International Indian Dance Festival on April 20, 21, 22, 2012 shall rock the Clayton High School Auditorium. This dance festival provides a single platform to enjoy the authentic performing arts from India, which are deep rooted in their 4000 years of history. India is one of the ancient civilizations; whose vast and deep intellect has yielded many perplexing yet beautiful dance forms. It is home to one of the oldest yet authoritative treatise on performing arts, the *Natya Shastra* (2nd Century BC), whose inspiration is seen in all walks of an Indian dancer. The Indian community of St. Louis shares their beautiful dances with everyone in St. Louis. One can see an array of dedicated, skillful dancers who have perfected the classical Indian dances and risen to levels of professionalism, unparalleled elsewhere. Also one could see an effort to collaborate with other dance forms of USA. The festival is hosting several artists from India, Canada and many other cities of USA.

The fourth International Indian Dance festival brings different Indian Classical Dance forms such as Bharathanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Mohini Attam. It is the brain child of Guru Prasanna Kasthuri, artistic director of Soorya Performing Arts, who is a distinguished performer, teacher and choreographer of two Indian Classical Dance styles – Bharathanatyam and Kathak. He points out, that this festival is an artistic infrastructure for the promotion of Indian performing arts, carved out to provide opportunities for Indian classical dancers mainly living in USA and Canada. He goes on to add that this festival brings out the major elements of an Indian dance such as *Nritta* (Pure movements), *Nritya* (Movements with expressions) and *Natya* (Dance Dramas).

This year's festival will feature leading exponents: Savitha Sastry whom the SAN FRANCISCO VOICE raved as "...breathhtaking...moves like a temple sculpture come to life"; Ramya Ramnarayan (New Jersey), winner of the prestigious Artist Fellowship Award for Choreography by the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation; Enakshi Sinha (Canada) whose dance was described by the PULSE, London as "...Captivating..."; Viji Rao (Philadelphia) who has worked with top choreographers and dancers in productions by Indian, American, Canadian and British dance and theatre companies and is a grant recipient of the prestigious Leeway Foundation and Dancer-Choreographer Sushma Mohan from Los Angeles who will present her successful production "SRICHAKRA" on the mystic Hindu triangle that was raved by the Indian press as ..."electrifying.....marvelous production..."

The chief choreographer of PAMPA dance academy of San Jose, Nirmala Madhava, returns this year with novel captivating group recitals. She will be presenting “Aaradhanam’ (prayer or worship) in both Kathak and Bharatha Natyam style of dance.

The festival is a kaleidoscope of dances representing all classical dance styles of India. Other than *Bharathanatyam* (the south Indian dance form) the other dance forms that will be presented will be the sprightly *Kathak* of North India by Prashant Shah (India), was quoted as “.....one of my favorites, was tall and debonair, the Fred Astaire of Kathak – when he smiled, you did too” by RACHEL HOWARD, in San Francisco Chronicle.

The festival features Odissi dancer – Shipra Avantica Mehrotra (from Houston, TX) whom “The New York Times” recently described her performance at the 2010 Erasing Borders dance festival in New York as “wholly poetic” and “the truest revelation of dance itself”. The traditional art of story-telling & dancing - Kuchipudi, the South Indian dance from Andhra Pradesh, India - will be performed by **Natyanjali Kuchipudi Dance School’s** artistic director **Srilatha Suri**, who is presenting famous dance drama – “Krishna Parijatham”. Audiences will be treated to a fusion of two elegant dance forms - Mohini Attam and Bharathanatyam by Anu Samrat (St. Louis) and Vinod Menon (Chicago).

Borders are getting erased in this festival, where Indian classical dances are getting performed with world poetry. **Soorya Performing Arts, St. Louis**, will present its collaborative production “Poetical Bharathanatyam”, based on the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, William Shakespeare and Maya Angelou. It has taken the civil liberty movement of American history into the main flow Indian classical dance

The Festival is inviting young and talented dancers from India - **Rachana Madhav Rao** (Mangalore, India) and **Anwesa Das** (Bhubaneswar, India) will perform Bharathanatyam; **Radhika Prabhu** (Bangalore, India) will be presenting modern Kannada (an Indian language) poems through Bharathanatyam; **Vidya Venkatram** (Bangalore, India) will present the 12th century poems of Sanskrit poet, Jayadeva; **Anita Babu** (New Delhi, India) & **Yudhishtira Nayak** (Cuttack, India) will present traditional dances from the state of Orissa, India.

New to this year’s three-day festival are the morning discussion sessions and seminars. Senior dance Gurus of St. Louis - Asha Prem and Smitha Rajan along with dancers and presenters of the festival will present papers on topics ranging from “Teaching methodology in Indian dance” to “Certification in Indian dance”.

This year’s Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to Senior Guru and dancer, Kamala Lakshmi Narayanan who is recognized world over as the foremost proponent of Bharathanatyam. She has thousands of performances to her credit all over the world, many of which have been in the presence of World dignitaries, including Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of her coronation in 1953 and former U.S. President Eisenhower during his state visit to India in 1959. She was recently awarded the lifetime honors by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Program schedule for the festival and ticketing information are available online at www.sooryadance.com and www.sulekha.com/StLouis.