BHAKTI PATHA
Path of Devotion
A presentation of
Soorya Performing Arts
A not for profit organization devoted to
Indian Classical Dance, Music and Theater

This is a dance-drama– music production by 6 artist group travelling in Aug-Sept-Oct 2012 from India and from USA. Its main aim is to spread the essence of Bhakti through simple songs, dances and story telling in English through Bharathanatyam, Kathak, Carnatic Music and Hari Katha.
"Having already given up dharmas, as a means to attain moksha; surrender yourself fully to Me. I will free you, from all the sins; do not grieve." - Bhagavadgita
Bhakti Patha
An experience of Navavidha Bhakti (nine kinds of devotion) through music and dance

Guru Prasanna Kasthuri – Artistic Director of Soorya Performing Arts, St. Louis, MO presents Bhakti Patha with his wife Vidushi Seema Kasthuri on Vocal; accompanied by Guru Pulikeshi Kasthuri on Nattuvangam; Vidwan Ganesh Kumar Bangalore on Violin; Vidwan Ramesh Ramalingappa on Mrudangam and Vidwan Jayaprakash Kannur on Flute. In a special appearance, Kum. Samanvita Kasthuri will be accompanying her parents in this beautiful production.

Bhakti is defined as an intense love for the GOD. It is a genuine understanding and knowledge of His greatness. Bhakti or intense love-devotion gives an everlasting happiness and peace, provides an understanding of relationship of human and the nature through which one can link the God. Bhakti Patha literally means a path of devotion and this presents the nine kinds of Bhakti as mentioned in Srimad Bhagavatha.

Sravana means hearing of Lord's Lilas. Sravana includes hearing of God's virtues, glories, sports and stories connected with His divine Name and Form. Harikatha tradition is built on this kind of Bhakti. Multiple stories from our rich mythological and cultural heritage will be presented in an interesting story telling. Stories such as Gaja Gowri Vratha, Sri Krishna Gaarudi and many others will be chosen to present as part of Sravana. This beautiful stories preach the moral values such as humility, devotion, righteousness and a respect for elders, especially to parents.

Keeratana is singing the glory of the Lord. Simple, yet divine song is chosen. “Om Namo Bhagavathe Vaasudevaya” will be recited. Audience will be involved with the artists to taste the beauty of Keertana. Keertana will bring out the carnatic and Hindustani music elements with devotion.

Smaranam is remembrance of Lord’s name and presence. We will be reciting the holy names of supreme gods in chants with dance and music to reach divinity within ourselves. The audience will be joining the performing artists with Smaranam of lord’s names.

Padasevana (service of Lord's feet) – Showing devotion by serving one's feet is one way, devotion could be shown. It is seen in the past great devotees and saints thought of holy feet of different deities. One can reason, that touching the feet would lead to salvation. There are many stories in Bhagavatha and in Puranas. The story of Guha is chosen in this context. Lord Rama, who is incarnation of Lord Vishnu was on his way to forest, comes across River Ganga. Rama requests boatman-Guha to cross the river. Guha, who knew about Lord Rama, aspired to serve Lord Rama by washing his feet. Since Rama was a prince, it was difficult to touch his feet. So, he refrains to allow Rama on his boat mentioning that, it might turn into a lady, as it happened with Ahalya. He imposes a condition- “Please allow me to do your Paada Seva and allow me to remove the dust from your feet”. Rama smiles and obliges. The song is in Gujarati language written by legendary poet Narsi Mehta. The tune is set by Guru Prasanna Kasthuri himself.

Archana (Offerings to God) – One can show his love and devotion by offering mind and materials as a way to worship. There are many instances, such archanas were denied by evil forces, only to be subdued by Dharmik forces. Once such event is of Saint Kanakadasa, who wishes to see the lord and would like to offer his prayers. This was denied by the temple, because of his low caste. Simi-
larly, although a prince, Prahlada was denied offering flowers and forbidden chanting the names of Lord Vishnu by his father, Hiranya Kashipu. We have taken the famous song – “Bagilanu Teredu” of Saint Kanaka Dasa. Although both these Bhaktas were prohibited from devarchana, yet stood the test of time and reached the lord through Archana.

Vandana (prostration to Lord)- There are many instances where a devotee feels happy by just doing a simple prostration. One such story is the “prostration of Akroora”. Akroora, a Royal messenger of evil King Kansa, was summoned to bring Krishna and Balarama to Mathura. Although, Akroora knew Kansa’s intent, he still went to get Lord Krishna, as he knew Krishna was able to tackle Kansa’s threat. But on the way, his mind will be filled with joy of devotion. He will be yearning to do his prostration to lord. As soon as he sees lord Krishna he prostrates and enjoys the moments of Vandana Bhakti. This poem is written by Guru Prasanna Kasthuri and music is also set by him.

Dasya (becoming a servant of God) – Love without expectation is pure. That’s what Dasya is with respect to God, where Bhakta just serves him without a reward. An absolute serving leads to an eternal happiness as it did to Purandara dasa and to Hanuman. This is showcased with an Ugabhoga and then followed by a song on Lord Hanuman. The song praises the Dasya Bhava of Hanuman and admires his selflessness. Hanuman, who could have become materially rich by asking for a marriage (during the incident of Mathsyaa Anjeneya) or for wealth (by the incident of Sanjeeva Parvata) or kingdom from Rama (during coronation - Pattabhisheka). But, he chose to stay and serve with unbounded devotion of Lord Rama, representing the Dasya Bhava.

Sakhyaa and Atma Nivedana (cultivation of the friend & complete surrender) – One can become a friend with Lord himself, like the warrior prince Arjuna. Lord Krishna stood firmly with his friends Arjuna and Pandavas who followed Dharma (righteousness) even in their most difficult times. When Arjuna crumbles down with emotions in the middle of warfield - Kurukshetra, as friend and Guru he shows the paths of life and enlightens him with truths of universe. Krishna also speaks the value of total surrendering through which one can achieve union with God himself.
Almost three decades of service to dance field in India and in abroad, Guru Prasanna Kasthuri has selflessly worked hard to preserve, preach and promote ndian performing arts across the world. As a performer he has presented several artistic pieces such as “Beral ge Koral” – a play by Rashtra Kavi Kuvempu in Bharathanatyam; “Gokula Nirgamana” – first time Indian Opera of USA based on the poems of Pu. Ti. Narasimha-char, in which all the dancers sang and performed. He has also brought the poems of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, through collaboration with Grammy awardee Vishwa Mohan Bhat, to present “Rainbow-2”. He has created new Kathak pieces through Tulsi Ramayan. His artistic leadership has created many fruitful events such as “Shanthala Nrithyothsava” for rural Karnataka and an International festival such as “St. Louis Indian Dance Festival”, which provided opportunity to more than 500 artists in USA. This has impressed several contemporaries to create unique events, which in turn has promoted Indian performing Arts abroad.

At present, Guru Prasanna works as Artistic Director of Soorya Performing Arts, St. Louis, MO and promotes, presents Indian classical dance, music and theater to a greater Midwest audience of United States of America. He headed many great projects co-sponsored by the prestigious Regional Arts Council of St. Louis and Missouri Arts Council. He was invited to International Tap festivals held in Oklahoma and St. Louis and performed in Asian Festivals in Columbus, Ohio. Prasanna was invited to present “Anubhava Mantapa” – a production based on Sharana literature in North American Veerashaiva Sammelana and in North American Indian Classical Dance Festival which was held in University of Texas in San Antonio by Arathi School. Through Bhakti Patha, Guru Prasanna Kasthuri is trying to bring the essential Vachika Abhinaya, to enhance the communication of the themes and get a better exposure for the techniques of pure dance forms such as Bharathanatyam and Kathak.

Bhakti Patha will be presented with live music only.

Presented in USA by
Soorya Performing Arts
India Contact:
www.sooryadance.com / info@sooryadance.com /
314-397-5278 / (636) 227-9366

Presented in India by
Shanthala Arts Trust
India Contact:
www.natyashanthala.org / krv_pulikeshi@yahoo.com /
94480-74748 / (080) 23374758