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Shakti Chakra: The Energy Cycle

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DANCE THEATRE

SHAKTI CHAKRA - THE ENERGY CYCLE

February 16, 2013

In Partnership with Sri Annamacharya Project of North America (SAPNA)
Founders: Drs Sriram & Sarada Purna Sonty

GSU Center for Performing Arts
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First Midwest Bank
Shakti Chakra portrays the five activities of God according to Hindu Philosophy. Every activity is interpreted through expressional dance and is preceded by an abstract segment using pure dance movements to convey the idea.

I. Creation

By You this universe is born
By You this world is created
You, who are eternally the form of the whole world,
At creation You are the form of the creative force.

Lord Vishnu who is resting on a snake, creates Brahma who then creates the universe which is made up of the five elements: space, wind, fire, water and earth.

II. Sustenance

I am the Absolute.
From me has proceeded the world of substance
And of consciousness
The void and all phenomena.
I am bliss
And non-bliss.
I am the entire world.
I am the unknown.
Below and above and around
I am.

The Six Evils - Lust, Desire, Greed, Pride, Anger and Jealousy - are considered to be the cause of obstacles in the spiritual evolution of man. These evil qualities are consistently removed by God. An example of each evil quality is interpreted through expressional dance.

Lust - When Sage Gautama was away, Indra (disguised as the Sage) seduces Gautama's wife, Ahalya. Gautama returns to find them in his hut. He curses Indra by deforming himself and turning Ahalya into stone.

 Desire - Mantara, the maid, poisons Queen Kaikai's mind against her stepson, Rama, who was to be crowned king. Mantara kindles the desire to acquire power and wealth in Kaikai through her own son, Bharata becoming king. Queen Kaikai decides to ask her husband King Dasaratha for the two Boons: one for her son, Bharata, to be crowned king, and the other for Rama to be banished from the kingdom for 14 years. After hearing this, King Dasaratha dies.

Greed - Driven by greed for power and wealth, the demon Bhasmasura does severe penance to receive a boon from Lord Shiva. When Shiva appears, Bhasmasura asks for the boon to be that whatever he touches must turn to ashes. Shiva gives the boon. Bhasmasura proceeds to test the boon on Shiva himself who runs to Vishnu for help. Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful woman, Mohini, appears before Bhasmasura and mesmerizes him. Mohini engages him in a dance, during which she touches her head. Bhasmasura instantly turned to ashes.

Pride - The arrogant and rich Satyabhama humiliates Rukmini as she is making a garland with tulasi leaves for Lord Krishna. Sage Narada, the troublemaker, informs Satyabhama that Krishna has given Rukmini the celestial flower Parijata. Krishna encounters an angry Satyabhama and pacifies her by giving her the Parijata Tree. Sage Narada informs Satyabhama that all the flowers in her tree are falling into Rukmini's yard. Trouble follows and Krishna is town between Satyabhama and Rukmini. To settle the matter, Narada suggests that Krishna sit on a weighing scale, and that whomever can outweigh him with wealth would get to keep him. Satyabhama puts all of her gold on the scale and nothing happens. When Rukmini puts one leaf from the Tulsi plan, the scale tips over. Satyabhama realizing her fault asks for forgiveness.

Anger & Jealousy - Duryodhana, the jealous cousin of the five Pandava Princes, invites them for a game of dice as advised by Uncle Sakuni. The eldest of the Pandava Prince's, Dharma, gambles and loses his armies, his kingdom, himself, his brothers, and at last his wife Draupadi in the game. Draupadi is then humiliated as her sari is stripped off by Duryodhana's brother. She cries for help. Lord Krishna blesses her and the sari increases in length. Duryodhana's anger and jealousy knows no bounds. Draupadi takes an oath that she will not rest until she see Duryodhana dead.

III. Protection

Evil King Hiranyakasipu orders everyone in his kingdom to pray only to him and not to God. He is angered to find his own son, Prahalada, praying to Lord Vishnu. He tries to kill him by throwing him from a mountain. But Prahalada does not die. He then pushes him into a fire. Again, Prahalada remains unharmed. An angered Hiranyakasipu demands the whereabouts of Lord Vishnu. He kicks a nearby pillar and asks, “Does your God exist in this?” Instantly, Lord Vishnu assumes the form of half man and half lion, and tears Hiranyakasipu apart, thus protecting his devotee Prahalada.

IV. Purification

The evolving soul on its way toward purification assumes the role of a mother, lover, and devotee. This expressional piece does not have an abstract segment.

V. Dissolution

By You it is consumed at the end.
At the time of the dissolution of the world.
You are the form of the Destructive Power.

In this abstract piece, the manifested material world is reabsorbed into the unmanifested spirit of God, on to manifest again by His spiritual energy, thus the cycle continues.
About Natya Dance Theatre

Natya Dance Theatre, under the artistic leadership of Hema Rajagopalan, is among the most critically acclaimed and culturally treasured dance companies in the United States. Founded in 1974 and based in Chicago, IL, the highly innovative work of Natya offers profound and subtle expressions of humanity’s deepest questions and values in the context of our present-day lives. Rooted in Bharata Natyam, one of the great classical dance theatre forms of India, Natya preserves and perpetuates Bharata Natyam in all its classical rigor, and moves the art form in innovative directions. Natya’s contemporary interpretations incorporate dynamic body movement, rhythmic footwork, hand gestures and facial expressions to convey meaning and emotion that create rasa, the aesthetic experience that transforms the audience. Natya believes that dance is a powerful means of cultural exchange. This is accomplished by multifaceted programming, including a professional touring company that performs throughout the country and internationally, a 39-year-old dance school, an outreach program, and a series of presentations featuring the finest Indian performing artists of various genres.

Hailed by The New York Times as, “Admirably precise... animated... sensual... exceptional... triumphant... daring,” audiences and critics worldwide have recognized the artistic excellence of the Natya Company. Recent performance highlights include: in 2011, the Natya Company premiered The Flowering Tree at Chicago’s Harris Theater for Music and Dance – acclaimed by Sid Smith of SeeChicagoDance, the production came close to selling out the 1,500-seat house; in 2008, the Company performed with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble before an audience of 13,000 in Chicago’s Millennium Park; in 2005, Natya was the first US company ever to appear at the prestigious World Music Institute in New York City; and in 2002, Natya was the only dance company selected to create an original work for performance at the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah. In 2003, Natya was the first Indian dance company to receive the prestigious Chicago Dance Award, and is a 2004 recipient of the Paul Berger Arts Entrepreneurship Award from Columbia College Chicago. Natya was featured in 2005 in The Chicago Dance Project, a 13-part series produced by PBS, and in 2006 in Arts Across Illinois CenterStage on WTTW Channel 11. The Natya Company has twice been given its own billing at Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago’s Millennium Park. Natya has been presented at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art, McNinch Arts Center at College of DuPage and nationally and internationally at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Ravinia Festival; the Smithsonian in Washington, DC; the Avignon Festival in France, and the Music and Dance Festival in Madras, India, among other major venues. Collaborations have included works with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lookingglass Theater Company, and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. Nationally, Natya has appeared at The Alley Civic Group Theater in New York.

About Bharata Natyam

Using both narrative and abstract elements, Bharata Natyam expresses the innermost emotions of the dancer, uplifts the audience and consistently relates to contemporary sensibilities. From the performer it demands rigorous attention to technique and wide knowledge of related art forms, especially music. A living and breathing dance theater tradition, Bharata Natyam explores both timeless human concerns and timely complexities of life. The dancer communicates through movements of the limbs, a language of gestures, rhythms executed by footwork, and abhinaya, which is the art of expressing emotions through facial and body language. Hands open out and become a flower, birds fly from the dancer’s hand gestures. Each muscle of the dancer’s face transforms into an expressive instrument. As the dancer expresses complex moods and emotions, she or he aspires to create a spiritual message.

Originating in southern India, Bharata Natyam is one of the most graceful, subtle and sophisticated styles of dance art. It is rooted in The Natyashastra, a treatise on dance, music and drama written by sage Bharata about 3,000 years ago. It is said that the Hindu scriptures or Vedas, because they were voluminous, were not being read by the common people. So the gods requested that Bharata create a way to communicate profound knowledge. This was the origin of The Natyashastra, which suggests the use of dance and drama to communicate and create rasa, an aesthetic experience that transforms the audience.
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Thillaana

- Grand Concert by Pt. Ravi Kiran on Chitra Veena
- Grand Vocal Concert by Malladi Brothers
- "Raga Pravaaham"
- Chicago Veena Artistes & Student Showcases

presented by Sri Annamacharya Project of North America (SAPNA)