



Om Shri Ganeshaya Namaha



Kuchipudi Rangapravesham
by
Sahaj Sagiraju

September 10, 2023 | The Perkinson Arts Center



About Today's Presentation

Kuchipudi dance derives its name after its village of birth in Andhra Pradesh, India. Kuchipudi evolved from a drama tradition, and its solo repertoire features two strands of embodied history. Daruvus, excerpts from the dance-dramas historically presented by male dancers who played both male and female roles to enact stories, have entered the Kuchipudi solo repertoire as standalone pieces. Kuchipudi also shares repertoire with the hereditary women dancers of the region, as well as with Bharatanatyam's solo tradition – jatiswarams, śabdams, varṇams, padams, jāvalīs, sankīrtanas, and tillānas are performed in the distinctive kuluku of Kuchipudi, characterized by its scintillating rhythm, quicksilver movements, and eloquent sensitive expressions.

Rangapraveśam, which means “ascending the stage” in Sanskrit, is a full-length solo dance performance. It marks the transition of the artiste from a student to a blossoming dancer. Accompanied by a live orchestra, this performance demands that the dancer exhibit an understanding of the many aspects of Kuchipudi, from sensitive expressions to intricate rhythm, blending grace and vigor.

About Sri Sai Dance Academy

Sri Sai Dance Academy is an institution dedicated to learning, understanding and fostering interest in the classical art form of Kuchipudi. It was founded by Smt. J. Sarada, a patient and dedicated teacher with over two decades of teaching experience. Sarada focuses on developing technical perfection, theoretical understanding and, most importantly, passion for the art form.

The dynamic class environment allows for both individual attention and learning in groups. Additionally, the class's informal mentorship system encourages students to hone their own skills and learn from each other, as well as forge strong relationships. As a SAMPADA-affiliated institution, it prepares students to earn their certificates, diplomas, and other higher studies in Kuchipudi, as well as to develop their artistic presence. SSSA students have been recognized for completing their SAMPADA certificates with distinction.

Sarada's students have performed not only in the Richmond area, but also in India with Kuchipudi Kalakshetra's troupe. They have also toured across major cities in the United States as part of Sri Hari Rama Murthy's dance drama Mohini Bhasmasura. Two students have taught basics of Kuchipudi and choreographed theater courses at the College of William and Mary.

About Gurus

Smt. Sarada Jammi, founder of Sri Sai Dance Academy, began her Kuchipudi dance training at the Kuchipudi Art Academy, Chennai, under Padmabhushan Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam. She has also trained at Kuchipudi Kalakshetra, Visakhapatnam. Sarada has performed widely in Singapore, India and the United States.

Sarada has taught in Richmond since 2002, formally founding Sri Sai Dance Academy in 2013. During the nineties, Sarada taught at the Nrithyalaya Aesthetics Society and worked for the Singaporean Ministry of Education, teaching at the Si Ling, North View, and Yishun primary schools.

Sarada is a prolific choreographer whose works are characterized by rhythmic interplay and evocative imagery. She uses the language of Kuchipudi to explore philosophical themes, as well as to introduce young dancers to stories from Hindu mythology.

As a founding member of ICAPS Richmond, she organizes intimate concerts to encourage young students of Indian classical arts and to invite experienced performers to share their art with the Richmond community. She also serves as the chairperson of Sri Sai Narayana Organization.

Ameya King is a Kuchipudi dancer, dance educator, writer, and podcaster based in Richmond, Va. She began learning Kuchipudi at the Kuchipudi Kalakshetra in 2000. Since then, she has been under the tutelage of her mother, Smt. J. Sarada, as well as Sri Hari Rama Murthy and Smt. N. N. V. Satyabhanu. Ameya earned her Masters in Kuchipudi Dance at the University of SiliconAndhra in 2020.

As a dance educator, Ameya uses a meticulous and analytical approach to hone the technical skills of dance students. Ameya brings together her love of dance, keen interest in research, and a touch of humor to delve into Indian classical dance forms as part of An Off the Beat Dance Podcast with Ameya and Kiran.

Ameya has been awarded the titles “Natya Pratibha” and “Natya Bharati” by Visakhapatnam Arts and Dance Association for her captivating performances. Ameya has also had her academic research on Kuchipudi at University of Silicon Andhra and Andhra University. She is a founding member of the Indian Classical Arts Performance Series at Sri Sai Narayana Organization and has also served on the Board of Directors for IDEA.

Sahaj has attended Kuchipudi summer camps and workshops conducted by **Sri Hari Rama Murthy**, principal of Kuchipudi Kalakshetra, and **Smt. N. N. V. Satyabhanu**, director of Sri Siddhendra Yogi Kala Nilayam.

New Jersey-based Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer **Sri Kiran Rajagopalan** also supported Sahaj as a part of his rangapravesam training.





Program

Prārdhana

A traditional prayer invoking Goddess Bālātripurasundari, the presiding deity of Kuchipudi village and seeking her blessings for a successful performance.

Puṣpānjali

Rāgamālika | Tālamālika
Musical Arrangement by Sri.
Vignesh Nurani Subramanian
Choreographer: Smt. Sarada
Jammi

With verses from the Nāṭyaśāstra and Abhinaya Darpaṇa, this piece propitiates Lord Siva, the Guru, and the Sabha. It closes with an homage to Lord Ganapati, the elephant-headed deity who removes obstacles with the gītam Hari Hari Vinuta.

Kālikā Stuti

Rāgamālika | Tālam: Rūpakam
Composer: Sri SatyagopalTumuluri
Choreographer: Smt. Sarada Jammi

In this beautiful piece on Goddess Kali, the dancer seeks her blessings and asks her to come immediately to help her cross this worldly ocean.





Tarangam

Rāgamālīka | Tālam: Ādi

Composer: Sri NaryanaTheerta

Choreographer: Padmabhushan Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam

An excerpt from Sri Narayana Theerta's Śrī Kṛṣṇa Līla Tarangiṇī, this piece depicts the childhood pranks of Sri Krishna. The main piece of the recital, it culminates with the dancer dancing while balancing on the rims of a brass plate.

Ānanda Tāṇḍavam

Rāgamālīka | Tālam: Ādi

Composer: Sri C. Narayana Reddy

Choreography: Padmabhushan Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam

This Exhilarating piece depicts Lord Siva performing a dance of bliss as his consort parvati smiles and the river Ganga bounds from his locks and the universe watches, mesmerized.



Jāvalī

Rāgam: Kharaharapriya | Tālam: Ādi

Composer: Sri Karur Sivaramayya

The nāyaka tries to appease and cajole his angry lover and win her over.



Annamācārya Kṛti

Rāgam: Aṭhāna | Tālam: Ādi

Composer: Saint Annamacharya

Choreographer: Sri Hari Rama Murthy

This vibrant piece describes the ferocity and splendour of Lord Narasimha, half-man and half-lion when he emerges from a pillar to save young Prahlada from the wrath of his father, demon-king Hiranyakasipu.



Hanumān Cālisa

Rāgamālīka | Tālam: Ādi

Composer: Saint Tulsidas

Choreographer: Smt. J. Sarada

One of the masterpieces of poet Tulsidas, this bhajan calls for mokṣa, liberation of the human sou. The dancer depicts various episodes of Hanuman serving Lord Rama and concludes by asking Hanuman to dwell in his heart forever, with Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita.

Mangalaṃ

Rāgam: Saurāstra | Tālam: Ādi

Composer: Saint Tyāgarāja

This traditional Mangalam is dedicated to Lord Rama, at whose lotus feet Hanuman sits, and calls for auspiciousness and glory to the Lord.



About the Orchestra

Nattuvangam: Smt. Sarada Jammi and Smt. Ameya King

Vocal: Sri Vignesh Nurani Subramanian had his initial vocal training under the guidance of Smt. Geetha Venugopalan, Sri. Meenakshi Sundaram and his school teachers Smt. Bhavani Ganesan and Smt. Seetha Kannan. Following this, he pursued his advanced training in Chennai from Sri V. Sundaresan, a disciple of Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri D.K. Jayaraman. Currently residing in Germantown, MD, Vignesh has performed in Chennai and has also performed at several places in and around NJ, MD and VA. Besides concerts, he has provided vocal support for his Guru Sri V.Sundaresan and has participated in several performances of Tyagaraja's Pancharatnas and Mudduswamy Dikshithar's Navaavarna and Navagraha Krithis, as well as provided vocal support for various dance institutions through the mid-Atlantic area.

Mridangam: Sri Vijay Ganesh, a seasoned mridangist, learnt this divine art from the age of 6. He had his tutelage under great and illustrious master, Vidwan Late Sri. Kumbakonam Rajappa Iyer. Vijay Ganesh has over the years established himself as a Mridangam player, performed extensively in music and dance festivals in India and USA and have played over 150 dance arangetrams. He has accompanied many eminent Carnatic musicians, vocalists and players of instruments. He has won several awards from Madras Music Academy, Sri Krishna Ganasabha and other organization for his excellence in mridangam. He started a percussion school called KMR School of Mridangam in 2010, to promote classical music by inviting artists from india, helping them to get visa, sponsoring and organizing Carnatic concert tours across various cities in US and Canada.

Veena: Vidhushi Smt. Villianur G Lalitha, veena artist, is an accomplished Carnatic Musician from Northern Virginia, USA. She is an All-India Radio artist from Pondicherry. She had her initial training under Srirangam R. Ranganathan in Vocal and Karukurichi Narayana Iyer in Veena. Smt. Lalitha has received several awards including the prestigious Veena Dhanammal Memorial Award given by The Madras Music Academy. She holds a Bachelors's degree in Music from the University of Madras. She has performed in December music season at various sabhas throughout India and USA. Smt. Lalitha has been regularly performing Vocal and Veena for various fund-raising events along with her students to support local nonprofit organizations.

Violin: Dr. Saritha Gomadam is a Carnatic violinist in Richmond, Virginia. She is training under the guidance of Smt. Rajarajeshwari Srinivasan, faculty of Vidhya Subramaniam Academy. She has played violin for several Bharatnatyam dance arangetrams in the Richmond area and Kuchipudi dance performances. She is also a Kuchipudi disciple of Smt. Sarada Jammi at the Sai Dance Academy. Dr Gomadam is a practicing physician in Infectious Diseases and also serves as the Medical Director for Infectious Disease for the Richmond market, Bon Secours Mercy Health.

Flute: Sri N. Vishweshwar is an A-grade Carnatic flautist from Chennai who holds the distinction of being one of the youngest flutists to receive this grading from All India Radio. He currently resides in New Jersey. Since the age of nine, he has performed around 1,200 concerts at reputed venues and weddings in both the US and India over the past 17 years. Visveshwar is a disciple of his maternal grandfather, Singanallur Ramaraja. At the age of 14, Visveshwar was awarded the "Best Instrumentalist Prize" by The Madras Music Academy. He has also received several other titles and awards, including "Venu Gana Rathna", "VenuUllamamani", "Vamshi Kaladhara", and "Bala Kala Rathna", in addition to being a recipient of an Indian government cultural scholarship. After completing his studies at Cornell University, Visveshwar currently works as a cloud product manager



About the Artiste

Sahaj Sagiraju is a senior at Varina High School in the Center for Communications and Media Relations. Following in his mother and sister's footsteps, Sahaj began formally learning Kuchipudi under Smt. Sarada Jammiat the age of 5. Additionally, he has attended summer camps and workshops conducted by Sri Hari Rama Murthy (principal of Kuchipudi Kalakshetra) and Smt. N. N. V. Satyabhanu (founder and director of Sri Siddhendra Yogi Kala Nilayam). Over the course of his training, Sahaj also earned his Kuchipudi certificate with Distinction after completing four years of Kuchipudi practical and theoretical study and testing with Silicon Andhra's SAMPADA, which is affiliated with PottiSreeramulu Telugu University.

Sahaj has performed at various cultural events across the Greater Richmond area, including the Richmond Peace Festival, ISKCON Krishna Janmashtami, SangeethaNatyaMahotsavam, and RPEC's Generation Dream. Beyond Richmond, he has also performed as part of the Sri Siva Vishnu Temple's Mahasivaratri, the Cleveland Siddhendra Aradhana, and Narayana Theertha Jayanti Celebrations. Sahaj has also presented solo performances as part of Sri Sai Narayana Organization's Indian Classical Arts Performance Series.

"Sahaj has also been a dedicated student teacher, helping younger students with both theoretical and practical aspects of the dance form."

Credits

- Brochure : **Hari Venkatesan,
Lasting Impressions**
- Videography : **Hari Venkatesan,
Lasting Impressions**
- Photography : **Stephen Salpukas**
- Makeup & Hair : **Kasi Aysola**
- Costumes : **Nagaiah Dance Tailors**

