



**PROGRAM: NRITYAGRAM  
DANCE ENSEMBLE  
SEPTEMBER 26 / 7:30 PM  
BING CONCERT HALL**

**ARTISTS**

Nrityagram Dance Ensemble  
Bijayini Satpathy and  
Surupa Sen, *dancers*



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**PROGRAM**

**Samyoga**

Surupa Sen, *artistic director and choreographer*  
Pandit Raghunath Panigrahi, *music composer*  
Dhaneswar Swain and Surupa Sen, *rhythm composers*

Jateen Sahu, *lead vocal and harmonium*  
Rohan Dahale, *voice and mardala (percussion)*  
Siddhartha Sarkar, *violin*  
Manu Raj, *bamboo flute*

Surupa Sen, *off-stage announcement*

Bijayini Satpathy, *researcher and costume designer*  
Ghulam Rasool Tailor, *master tailor*

Lynne Fernandez, *executive producer, technical director, and lighting designer*

There will be one intermission.

**PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE.** Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind are not permitted. Thank you.

# PROGRAM: NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE

## SAMYOGA

In Sanskrit, *Samyoga* is a combination, union, synthesis or conjunction of two or more heavenly bodies.

In more ways than one, Surupa Sen and Bijayini Satpathy have formed a symbiotic combination quite unlike any in the artistic world. Living and working together for the past 20 years in Nrityagram, each brings her unique knowledge and qualities to the dance. They have aspired to create art that is deep as well as exciting—art sourced from within and outside of themselves.

*Samyoga* is the outcome of years expended in finding a balance. Of art and craft. Of strength and grace. Of technique and spirit. Of confidence and vulnerability. Of a male godhead and his essential feminine divine. In search of the essence of Odissi, they dance together—compliment each other and free themselves of enforced boundaries.

## ODISSI

For centuries, a temple has looked out at a turbulent sea, its walls dancing a prayer to the rising sun. Magnificent ruins like these, in Odisha in eastern India, confirm that Odissi was performed as far back as 200 BCE. Originally a sacred ritual dedicated to the gods, Odissi is one of the oldest dance traditions in the world. Its sinuous forms, languorous limbs, and rapt expressions frozen in stone tell of a past rich in dance, music, myth, and legend.

Odissi speaks of love and union between human and divine, transporting viewers to enchanted worlds of magic and spirituality. Its sensuousness and lyricism reflect both the motifs of Odisha temple sculpture as well as the poetry from the deep wellsprings of Oriya music.

## Abhinaya in Odissi

Abhinaya is a concept in Indian dance and drama derived from the *Nāṭyashāstra*, an ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts that encompasses theater, dance,

and music. It was written between 200 BCE and 200 CE and is traditionally attributed to the sage Bharata.

Although now the word has come to mean “the art of expression,” etymologically it derives from the Sanskrit *abh*, “toward,” and *nii*, “leading/guide,” so it literally means a leading toward (leading the audience toward a sentiment, a *rasa*).

Four kinds of abhinaya (acting or histrionics) are described, that by motions of a body part (*āṅgika*); by speech (*vāchika*); by costumes and makeup (*āhārya*); and, the highest mode, by means of internal emotions as expressed through minute movements of the lips, eyebrows, ear, and so on (*sāttvika*).

This performance is based on the concept of *eka āhārya* abhinaya, wherein a dancer (male or female) does not wear a different costume or makeup to express the gender of a character. A dancer must source the emotion of any character played, using the gestural language of the body and the face to bring alive the myriad underlying abstractions that Indian mythology and spiritual beliefs project. The pursuit of this aspect of abhinaya requires experience and a deep exploration of the human metaphor as part of the universal self that cannot be defined as male or female, real or illusion, true or false.

Thus, in Krishna’s song “*Prīyē Chārūsheelē*,” Satpathy plays the male role of Krishna pleading with his love, Radha, to forgive him for his wanton ways and come to him. At other times, both dancers must exchange roles and move between characters with every line or instance, switching quickly to create different states of interaction and emotion.



## THE DANCERS

**Surupa Sen** (artistic director, choreographer, and soloist) was the first student to graduate from Nrityagram. She began her odissi training with the late body-language genius and architect of odissi Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra. She also studied odissi with Protima Gauri and abhinaya (expressional dance) with Guru Kalanidhi Narayanan.

As a child, she studied *bharatanatyam*, to which she attributes her preoccupation with form and line. Attracted to choreography from her first exposure to Western makers of dances, she has worked with dancers and choreographers from across the world. Ms. Sen has performed, in solo recitals and with the ensemble, all over India and the world.

Her first evening-length choreographic work, *Śrī: In Search of the Goddess* (2000), consisted of both a nontraditional suite (“Night,” “Fire,” and “Dialogue with Death”) and a reworking of traditional dance (“*Śrīmatī*,” “*Śrīmayī*,” and “*Śrīdevī*”). Her next show, *Ansh* (2004), was a reworking of a typical odissi recital, which toured extensively in India and the United States, including a run at the Joyce Theater in New York. *Sacred Space* (2006), a show based on temple architecture and its relationship to dance, used an expanded traditional odissi vocabulary and toured the United States for six months, including a week’s run at the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival and Spoleto Festival USA. *Pratimā: Reflection* (2008), an evening-length work that explores the relationship between the dancer and her dance, was commissioned by the Joyce Theater’s Stephen and Cathy

Weinroth Fund for New Work and premiered in February of 2008 at the Joyce Theater. “*Vibhakta*,” from *Pratimā: Reflection*, was listed as one of the 10 best dance performances of 2008 by the *New Yorker*.

Ms. Sen’s newest ensemble work, *Samhāra* (2012), was Nrityagram’s first international collaboration. Nrityagram and Sri Lanka’s Chitrasena Dance Company explore the meeting point between the sensuousness of Nrityagram’s odissi and the masculine dynamism of the Chitrasena’s *kandyan* dance. *Samhāra* was premiered in Bangalore, India, in February 2012; toured the United States in 2012 and 2013; and was performed extensively in India, Sri Lanka, and other parts of Asia. She has also choreographed two full-length duet shows, *Samyoga* (2012) and *Songs of Love and Longing* (2013).

Ms. Sen received the Raza Foundation Award in 2006; the Yagnaraman Award of Excellence in 2008; and the prestigious Nritya Choodamani award from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha in Chennai, India, in 2011. She is the artistic director and choreographer at Nrityagram.



**Bijayini Satpathy** (director of dance education and soloist) made Nrityagram her home in 1993. Her initial odissi training was in Odisha from the age of 7 until she moved to Nrityagram. She has worked with Surupa Sen ever since.

Ms. Satpathy’s research on the moving body in all its possibilities has resulted in a scientific body-training program for Nrityagram,

sourced from yoga, *natyashastra*, *kalaripayattu*, Western fitness methods, and odissi body-conditioning exercises. This makes the practice of dance injury-proof and increases the performance life span of a dancer. She has also developed and expanded a systematic and accessible training program for odissi dancers, which is equally valuable for beginners, advanced learners, performers, and teachers.

Ms. Satpathy has performed alone and with the ensemble all over the world and has received national and international recognition, including the 2003 Mahari Award given to the best odissi dancer of the year, the Sanskriti Award in 2007, and Sangeet Natak Akademi’s Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in 2007. In 2011, she received the prestigious Nritya Choodamani award from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha in Chennai, India.

#### **NRITYAGRAM DANCE VILLAGE**

The Nrityagram dance village is located outside Bangalore, India. It was founded in 1990 by Odissi dancer Protima Gauri, who converted 10 acres of farmland into a setting for the study, practice, and teaching of dance. At Nrityagram, dance is a way of life. Reminiscent of ancient ashrams where gurus imparted not only technique but also a philosophy of being, this is a creative space where dancers, musicians, and choreographers live together, sharing their skills and developing their art. To enrich their practice, dancers are also taught yoga and martial arts along with Sanskrit and classical literature. As knowledge passes from guru to disciple, the continuity of the classical arts is ensured.

For almost two decades, Sen and Satpathy have researched and expanded the dance vocabulary of Odissi dance and have developed a style that distinguishes the dancers of the Nrityagram school. A unique blend of traditional knowledge with contemporary understanding and application makes Nrityagram the only institution of its kind in the world.

The outside world, too, is an integral part of Nrityagram. Choreographers, movement specialists, sculptors, painters, writers, musicians, and theater practitioners from all over the world frequently visit the village to perform and conduct workshops and seminars in their areas of practice.

Vasantahabba, Nrityagram’s annual dusk to dawn festival of music and dance, has a roster that includes some of the greatest names in India. It is attended by over 40,000 enthusiastic spectators streaming in from surrounding villages and beyond.

While Vasantahabba is Nrityagram’s most public interface, everyday artistic practice connects with the larger world through initiatives like Kula, which is both a conceptual and a physical space for artistic collaboration, synergy, and conversation. In order to nurture the sustained cross-pollination of artistic work and dialogue among artists, it offers a self-contained residential facility on the Nrityagram campus. Since November 2010, Kula has already hosted almost 200 writers, musicians, dancers, actors, and other artists.

The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble, Nrityagram’s repertory company, is regarded as one of the foremost dance companies of India, performing all over the world, including an annual tour to the United States.

Although steeped in and dedicated to ancient practice, the ensemble is also committed to carrying Indian dance into the 21st century. Enabled by grants from the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, and more recently from The Joyce Theater in New York, Nrityagram’s dancers not only explore creative expansions of tradition but also are able to commission fresh compositions from leading Indian classical musicians.

Nrityagram is a project of the Odissi Dance Centre Trust, a not-for-profit arts organization. Donations are exempt from tax to the fullest extent allowed by law. For information, email [nrityagram@gmail.com](mailto:nrityagram@gmail.com). ❁