

A joint presentation by

KALANIDHI

FINE ARTS OF CANADA

Artistic Director Sudha Khandwani

and



**MENAKA THAKKAR
DANCE COMPANY**

Artistic Director Menaka Thakkar

Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance



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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
January 24–25, 2009 • Best Western Primrose Hotel

FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES
January 23–24 • Betty Oliphant Theatre
January 28–31 • Fleck Dance Theatre



Artistic Director Sudha Khandwani of Kalanidhi Fine Arts of Canada and Artistic Director Menaka Thakkar of Menaka Thakkar Dance Company (MTDC)

jointly present

Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance
International Conference and Festival
January 23–31, 2009

Best Western Primrose Hotel, Betty Oliphant Theatre at Canada's National Ballet School and Fleck Dance Theatre at Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, Canada



Honouring the Life and Art of Chandralekha

Greetings from the co-producers:

It is our great honour to present the jointly produced **Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance: International Conference and Festival**. We look upon this collaboration and the event that it has co-produced, as a significant new beginning that promises to be highly rewarding for all of us – dance artists, presenters, viewers – who are deeply interested in this artistic enterprise. From its inception in 1993, Kalanidhi Fine Arts of Canada has presented the best of both traditional and contemporary Indian dance works through eight international and one national dance festival-conferences.

On the other hand, as Canada's oldest Indian dance company, Menaka Thakkar Dance Company has built an outstanding history of creating original traditional and contemporary works; collaborating with diverse western choreographers and composers on large scale productions; and experimenting with new forms through its MTDC Dance Lab and MTDC Contemporary dance wing.

We now feel the time has come to integrate our own history with the creative history of other dancers and dance organizations who have been working in traditional and contemporary dance, by creating and offering a formal space to generate discussions and understanding of alternative visions, and creative efforts.

The conference (January 24–25) will focus on the questions and issues concerning currently evolving Indian contemporary dance both within and outside India. Although the specific context of discussion will relate to Indian dance, the basic

concerns that revolve around recognizing cultural diversity and differing histories in defining what is "contemporary" and what is "traditional," will be of relevance to other culturally diverse dance forms as well as western dance forms. Within a larger framework of cultural diversity as well as cultural inter-relatedness, and mindful of a short period of only one weekend that is available for the deliberations of the conference, we hope to discuss as many critical issues regarding the vision and practice of contemporary Indian dance as we possibly can. We will focus on questions of what is "contemporary" in relation to what is "traditional"; what happens when a classical art form modernizes; matters of new movement vocabularies; new approaches to choreography; new themes and modes of presentation; and meaning and interpretation.

A special event of the Conference and Festival will be a tribute to Chandralekha, one of the leading pioneers of contemporary Indian dance (who passed away in December 2006) leaving a large body of some of the most radical and deeply explored works of Indian dance.

German dancer-choreographer Susanne Linke, who was very close to Chandralekha and sometimes provided critical feedback on her works, will speak about Chandralekha's contribution to contemporary dance. Susanne Linke and Urs Dietrich will perform their North American premieres "Kaikou-Yin" and "Herz.Kammern" respectively on opening night, January 23. Also on opening night, Menaka Thakkar Dance Company will perform an acquired choreography of Chandralekha's work entitled "Shakti." Sadanand Menon, Chandralekha's collaborator, will speak on her life and art,

and approaches to choreography in the Saturday January 24 conference session in the afternoon, while in the evening, The Chandralekha Group from India will perform her last work "Sharira (Fire/Desire)" and further involve the audience in a post performance open dialogue.

As for the Festival performances that will continue in the evenings from January 28 through 31, we have invited the works of leading contemporary choreographers such as Aditi Mangaldas from India and several Canadian choreographers including Lata Pada, Hari Krishnan (with Anita Ratnam from India), Janak Khendry, Roger Sinha, Natasha Bakht, Nova Bhattacharya, Louis Laberge Côté, and Usha Gupta (with Madhu Nataraj from India).

We hope to see you at the conference and festival performances.

Sudha Khandwani
Artistic Director
Kalanidhi Fine Arts of Canada

Menaka Thakkar
Artistic Director
Menaka Thakkar Dance Company

Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance

Friday, January 23, 2009 @ 8 p.m. – Betty Oliphant Theatre

Saturday, January 24, 2009 @ 8 p.m. – Betty Oliphant Theatre

Wednesday, January 28, 2009 @ 8 p.m. – Fleck Dance



Menaka Thakkar Dance Company (MTDC) (Toronto) (30 min.) **Chandralekha's "Shakti"**

Menaka Thakkar Dance Company pays tribute to Chandralekha by presenting the premiere performance of an acquired choreographic work

of the renowned contemporary Indian dance choreographer. Shakti is part of a larger feminist modern classic Sri that Chandralekha created in 1991. Creatively integrating movement vocabularies of Bharatanatyam, Yoga and Kalarippayattu, the work develops the theme of women's transformation from enslavement to empowerment.



The Chandralekha Group (India) (65 min.) **Sharira (Fire/Desire)**

Choreographed by the legendary contemporary Indian dance choreographer Chandralekha, Sharira celebrates the living body in which sexuality, sensuality and spirituality co-exist – to acknowledging no limits, no borders, no boundaries.

With movement and sound following a parallel course of tense, hypnotic balance and complex inside-outside synergy spiralling through the work like a self-generating double-helix, Sharira with its stark, pared down minimalism, has been hailed as among Chandralekha's best work.

Performance featuring Shaji K. John and Tishani Doshi and supported by live music by the internationally renowned team of Gundecha Brothers from Bhopal, India.



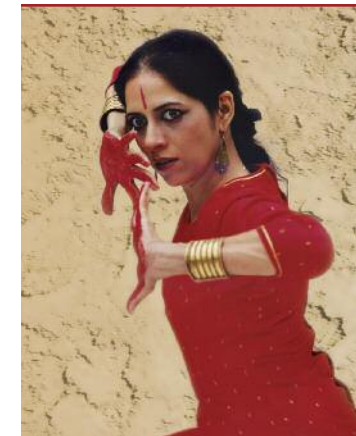
Urs Dietrich (Germany) (20 min.) **Herz.Kammern (Heart Chambers)** North American Premiere

Award-winning modern dancer Urs Dietrich performs his most recent choreography in this North American Premiere.



Susanne Linke (Germany) (20 min.) **Kaikou-Yin (Transmigration)** North American Premiere

Kaikou-Yin is a startling new work by world-renowned modern dancer Susanne Linke which speaks to the animalistic element of human beings and the human part of animals. Kaikou-Yin had its world premiere in July 2008 at the Teatro Romano di Fiesole.



Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company – The Drishtikon Dance Foundation (India) (70 min.) **Timeless** North American Premiere

Featuring: Seven modern Kathak dancers with live music. In the words of Seng-ts'an "This is where words fail, for it is not of the past, future or present". 'Timeless' is not an answer, not a statement, not an opinion nor a

single perspective. It is a question, in fact many questions. It is an attempt to see, to feel, to experience, to hear, to touch this intangible, wonder filled thing called TIME, maybe one sees it as time related to space, maybe one hears it as an eternal flow, maybe one perceives it as totally still... maybe?

Sinha Danse (Montreal) (18 min.) **Quebasian Rhapsody**

In Quebasian Rhapsody (a word play on Quebec and Asian) choreographer Roger Sinha has taken excerpts from his numerous choreographies such as Thok, Loha, Apricots & Thread that have emphasized a duo vocabulary particularly with Bharat Natyam vocabulary. This duet will be performed with long-time Sinha Danse dancer Magdalena Nowecka. (Natasha Bakht was co-choreographer with some of the works in this piece including Loha).



Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance

Thursday, January 29, 2009 – Fleck Dance Theatre



Madhu Nataraj (India) (25 min.) **BINDU: The Womb of Brilliance**

Fearlessness, fecundity, empowerment are seen as facets of brilliance and femininity. These are woven through a philosophical narrative, seen through the eyes of Kali (Abhaya), Gauri (resplendence and fertility), and Durga

(equilibrium) to celebrate the eternal mystic of the feminine divine.

MTDC (Toronto) (30 min.) **Chandralekha's "Shakti"**

Menaka Thakkar Dance Company pays tribute to Chandralekha by presenting the premiere performance of an acquired choreographic work of the renowned contemporary Indian dance choreographer. Shakti is part of a larger feminist modern classic Sri that Chandralekha created in 1991. Creatively integrating movement vocabularies of Bharatanatyam, Yoga and Kalarippayattu, the work develops the theme of women's transformation from enslavement to empowerment.



Janak Khendry Dance Company (Toronto) (25 min.) **Dream of a Drunken God**

Life and the world are the dream of a drunken god, who steals away from the banquet of the gods and falls asleep on a solitary star, unaware that he creates what he dreams of.



Friday, January 30, 2009 – Fleck Dance Theatre



Usha Dance Entourage (India and Edmonton) (45 min.) **Nari, Nari, Nari...My Love**

A meditation on the three stages of love in a woman's life: as a maiden, as a wife and mother, and as a mature woman. Featuring Madhu Nataraj and Tamara Bliss. Live music.

Natasha Bakht (Ottawa) (20 min.) **White Space**

A new contemporary choreography from one of Canada's foremost Indian contemporary dancer/choreographer Natasha Bakht. White Space a mortal coil... spiraling... of the colonial religious and political history lodged in walls and dreams.



Ipsita Nova Dance Projects (Toronto) (20 min.) **Unspoken and Two Doors Down**

Unspoken is a solo of rhythmic and gestural complexity that bristles with razor precision and emotional intensity. Two Doors Down is a glimpse into Bhattacharya and Laberge-Côté's newest creation. Celebrating the

power and beauty of abstraction and the transformative experience they have undergone in their creative relationship of seven years. Two Doors Down embraces the creators' commitment to universality through individuality and gives voice to the powerful shared artistic vision of this unique duo.

Saturday, January 31, 2009 – Fleck Dance Theatre



Sampradaya Dance Creations – Lata Pada (Mississauga) (60 min.) **shunya**

From a young age, I

have been fascinated with the riddle of shunya, drawn to the paradox of it being both zero and infinity at the same time. My great grandfather, who was a mathematician at the court of Mysore in South India explained to me how the concept of shunya originated in India and influenced world thought, travelling to distant lands such as China and Persia. He urged me to imagine it as an abyss of emptiness as well as an infinite fullness of space. How could I have known then, that this motif would recur in my life and indeed in a new dance work? Two classical dance forms – bharatanatyam and kathak are the languages where these ideas are expressed within their individual dynamics and aesthetics. My dancers have imprinted their personal stories in this work; each gesture, each breath, each step of theirs has painted the canvas of the stage; collectively, we have shared and searched for a common universal truth – shunya.

inDANCE – Hari Krishnan (India and Toronto) (40 min.) **Bollywood Hopscotch and 7 Graces**

Bollywood Hopscotch, choreographed by artistic director Hari Krishnan, is a light-hearted, whimsical and subversive take on Bollywood retro-culture as seen through the eyes of the Bollywood Diva who is simultaneously coy, vivacious, shy, tragic, melancholic, romantic, yet eternally happy. Seven dancers create snapshot vignettes from the Diva's many lives.

7 Graces, performed by Anita Ratnam and co-choreographed by Anita Ratnam and Hari Krishnan, is a solo multi-media dance work which references the Buddhist Goddess Tara in a modern context, offering a journey to aesthetic eternities, exploring the aura and grace of the feminine transcendental.





Although the Canadian incarnation of this organization took place in 1991, its origin lay 50 years ago in Bombay when Sudha Khandwani founded it simply as **Kala Nidhi**. It moved with her to Canada and changed its orientation under her artistic direction, from

teaching, creation and performance of Indian dance to its nurturing and promotion in North America. Although it maintains a distinct cultural identity, it also seeks to cross borders and share, collaborate and cooperate widely. It thus functions in Indian dance in its widest sense, positioning it in the context of other non-Indian dance systems of Canada. Although Canada is the primary geographical area of its activities, it, in fact, functions internationally and keeps close contact with India, England, USA, Australia, South and Southeast Asia.

Kalanidhi's mandate is to nurture the art form (Indian dance) in both its traditional as well as contemporary settings, support the dance artists in their creative as well as performing activities, develop and educate audiences to appreciate it at all levels of its wide range, and integrate creative and performing with critical and educational processes. Indian dance must be positioned in a mutually sharing and supportive inter-relationship with other dance cultures of Canada. Its major activities fall into categories:

International Festival and Conference – Kalanidhi Fine Arts of Canada presents a week-long international dance festival and conference every second year that creates a highly concentrated and heavily charged dance experience for both artists and audiences. It is the only major presenter of International festivals of Indian dance in North America. The festival and conference brings together performing companies, solo dancers, choreographers and teachers, from across Canada, USA, India, and the Indian diaspora around the world in general. The unique feature of these events is that the evenings' public performances are

combined with the day-time workshops, panel discussions, master classes, invited dance talks and scholarly papers in order to bring a greater understanding of the art form. We thus integrate creative and performing with critical and intellectual processes expressions. Kala Nidhi has taken a pioneering role in presenting the contemporary face of Indian dance while embracing its traditions; and has inspired a number of choreographers to try new approaches. Since 1993, Kala Nidhi has produced eight major international festivals and two festivals showcasing emerging artists from Canada, India and the U.S.

Promoting Dancers and the Dance form – support the dance artists in their creative as well as performing activities, by presenting their public performances and by engaging in a variety of developmental activities and creating exploratory environments through choreographic labs, workshops, training residencies and symposia; with a special emphasis on promoting young artists.

Audience Development and Community Presentation of Dance Performances

Resource Centre on Indian Dance –The objective is to create, acquire and maintain dance resources such as books, DVDs, films etc to support research and preserve the legacy of great artists.

Danceadvance – Jointly organized with MTDC, is a two-week Summer Residency for Professional Development: This two-week training residency, is meant for all established and emerging dancers of all genres, Indian and non-Indian, whose twin objectives are to create more versatile dancers who can perform varied choreographic works of different choreographers and who can contribute to the development of the contemporary face of Indian dance.

Sudha Khandwani – Artistic Director Kalanidhi Fine Arts of Canada



Menaka Thakkar Dance Company, Canada's oldest Indian dance company was founded in 1978 as a performing wing for Menaka's dance school, Nrtyakala, and later separately incorporated in 1993 as an independent performing company. The central artistic mandate embodies the vision of the Company's functioning over a whole range of Indian dance, traditional and contemporary, involving creation

of new works, presenting home seasons and touring. Besides the usual wing of new creation, the company has recently developed two special units of dance creation: one for contemporary choreography and the other for creating works for young audiences. The company also aims to emphasize and sustain its dancers' training process, both within and beyond the Indian dance traditions in which they are primarily rooted, so that they can effectively function in the shared domain with other dance traditions.

MTDC Dance Lab is dedicated to nurturing the art form in a variety of ways involving imaginative initiatives and bold experiments. The company's lecture and demonstration series, Inside/Outside Series, invites artists working in diverse art forms to examine and understand the nature of creative processes in interrelated disciplines. The company also nurtures the dancers by presenting them in an intimate performance space of our studio through MTDC Studio Series.

Menaka Thakkar – Artistic Director Menaka Thakkar Dance Company

Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance Conference at a Glance

International Conference Best Western Primrose Hotel

Contemporary Choreography in India and Canada

Saturday, January 24, 2009

9:00 a.m.	Registration and Coffee
9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Welcome and Inauguration
	Mapping the Domain: Vision and objective of the Conference
	Chandralekha: A tribute to Chandralekha, one of the leading pioneers of Contemporary Indian dance, featuring talks and discussion on her life and art, her approach to choreography, experiences of working with her and acquiring her choreography.
	Four Contemporary Choreographers of India

Sunday January 25, 2004

9:00 a.m.	Registration and Coffee
9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Contested Space: What is “Contemporary?”
	“Traditional” in Indian dance? How does this compare with other dance cultures?
	Contemporary Dance: A Matter of Movement?
	Contemporary Dance: A Matter of Choreography?
	Contemporary Dance: New Themes and Modes of Presentation
	Contemporary Dance: Meaning and communication
	When a Tradition Modernizes

International Conference Sessions: January 24–25, 2009

Best Western Primrose Hotel

111 Carlton Street, Toronto

Nearest Subway: College Street.

Located two blocks east of the College Street subway station (Yonge line) on Carlton St. at Jarvis

Festival at a Glance

International Festival Performances Betty Oliphant Theatre

January 23, 2009

MTDC, Urs Dietrich, Susanne Linke

January 24, 2009

The Chandralekha Group

International Festival Performances: January 23–24, 2009

Betty Oliphant Theatre

Canada's National Ballet School

400 Jarvis Street, Toronto

Nearest Subway: Wellesley

Located two blocks east of the Wellesley Street subway station (Yonge line), one block north of Carlton Street.

International Festival Performances Fleck Dance Theatre

January 28, 2009

Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company, Sinha Danse

January 29, 2009

Madhu Nataraj, MTDC, Janak Khendry Dance Company

January 30, 2009

Usha Dance Entourage, Natasha Bakht,
Ipsita Nova Dance Projects

January 31, 2009

Sampradaya Dance Creations, inDANCE

International Festival Performances: January 28–31, 2009

Fleck Dance Theatre

Harbourfront Centre

207 Queen's Quay West, Toronto

Nearest Subway: Union Station

Located by the lake at the foot of York Street

Ticket Information

All the performances are at 8 p.m.

All Tickets for the Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance International Conference and Festival are sold through the Harbourfront Box Office.

Tickets	Conference Sessions: \$25 (two-day pass); \$20 Students/Seniors/Artists
	Betty Oliphant Festival Performances: \$35; \$28 Students/Seniors/Artists
	Fleck Dance Theatre Festival Performances: \$30; \$25 Students/Seniors/Artists Nextsteps (Harbourfront Centre): \$24; \$20 Students/Seniors/Artists
	Packages: All Six Festival Performances: \$120; \$100 Students/Seniors/Artists Conference Pack: \$75 Two Shows (January 23 and 24) + Two-day Conference Pass

You can Purchase tickets in the following ways:

- In Person: York Quay Centre Box Office 235 Queens Quay West, 1:00 to 6:00 p.m., Tuesday to Saturday
- By phone: 416-973-4000, 1:00 to 6:00 p.m. – Tuesday to Saturday
- By mail: Harbourfront Centre, 235 Queens Quay West, Toronto ON M5J 2G8
- Online: harbourfrontcentre.com
- By fax: 416-954-0366
- Tickets purchased by phone, mail, internet, fax or special order are subject to a per ticket service charge.

The box office at Fleck Dance Theatre opens two hours prior to curtain on performance days and closes one half hour after the event has started.

The onsite box office for the Betty Oliphant Theatre will open one hour prior to events and closes one half hour after the event has started. All available tickets for these events will only be available at the door on the day of the event.

The onsite registration table for the Best Western Primrose Hotel will open at 9 a.m. on both conference days and shall remain open throughout the days. All available tickets for the conference will only be available at the door on the days of the events.