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# Dance of the divine

*Acclaimed production brings to life the stories of Shiva and Parvati, as told by Nandi and Simha.*



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Ananda Shankar Jayant (top); scenes from the dance production (above)

**By Bhumika Popli**

**Express News Service**

Ananda Shankar Jayant's critically acclaimed production, *Tales from the Bull and the Tiger*, has garnered many accolades from viewers in the south. This riveting mythological story will be told to the residents of Delhi today. Bringing together Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dancers, the narrative promises to enthrall the audience with its depth. The Morning Standard speaks with the choreographer Ananda Shankar Jayant about the highlights of this tale, her fascination towards the classical arts and how the arts could be entwined in our lives.

### **Could you introduce us to *Tales from the Bull and the Tiger*?**

*Tales from the Bull and the Tiger* is an 82-minute dance production, which brings to life the stories of Shiva and Parvati, as told by their vahanas Nandi and Simha, or Bull and Tiger. The program is presented by an ensemble cast of 20 dancers of Shankarananda Kalakshetra and is choreographed by me. The context is perennial. And the stories are eternal. The retelling is as unique as the perspective – the storyteller, and to whom the story is told is fresh and new. The production is taut, and adheres to the highest production standards, and is aesthetic. Brilliant dancer Mithun Shyam from Bengaluru is a guest artist, in the lead along with me. We are very thankful to Padma Vibhushan Dr Sonal Mansingh for presenting this program in Delhi.

### **When did you start dancing?**

I started learning dance at the age of four. My earliest gurus were Guru Sharada Keshava Rao and Guru Pakkiriswamy Pillai. Later I was invited on a scholarship to study Bharatanatyam at Kalakshetra, Chennai. I studied at the institution for six years, from the age of 11 to 17, and received a diploma and post-graduate diploma in Bharatanatyam. I was very fortunate to study during the lifetime of my Guru Rukmini Devi Arundale. It was a beautiful and lovely time! Studying in the sylvan spaces of Kalakshetra is an experience of a lifetime. Learning from the most generous gurus, not just dance, but every aspect of life, has made me who I am today.

### **How do classical arts impact our lives?**

The classical arts, by their very nature, work on many levels, such as an art form, an educational tool, a spiritual journey, an aesthetic, visual and aural experience,

and something that the audience takes home, and that which may stay with them for a long time. The latter of course will depend on the artist and the audience. It is a collective journey, the artist being generous and the audience ready to receive and vice versa too.

**Could you enlist the major challenges a classical dancer is facing as of today?**

I think today, the biggest challenge for almost every classical dancer, is the meagre funding available for presentation of new productions. Somehow, today, both government and the private sector has turned to Bollywood dance in the name of popular entertainment. This is of deep concern, as the little funds available for performing arts are being spread thin. An already rich sector gets further support through funding and presentation venues while a sector that urgently requires support gets the cold shoulder. All this adversely impacts the propagation and sustenance of the classical arts.

**What can be done to address these issues?**

One needs to find mechanisms to make the art ecology worthwhile, and empower its many followers and practitioners. There are many things which can be done to facilitate this such as, an introduction of arts and arts appreciation in school education, nurturing arts, artists and audiences by creating a cultural network, investing in art-related world-class infrastructure, an increase in the budgets of culture ministries and harnessing technology to take art to everyone and so on.

AT: Kamani Auditorium, 1, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi

ON: December 16, 7:00 pm

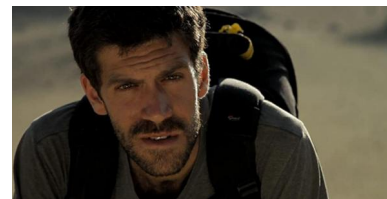
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