

Lincoln Center's

white light festival

October 16–November 16, 2016

Friday, October 28, 2016 at 7:30 pm

Sunday, October 30, 2016 at 5:00 pm

*Pre-concert lecture by Lakshmi Vishwanathan on Friday, October 28 at 6:15 pm
in the Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery, John Jay College*

Sounds of India

Curated by Mark Morris

Kerala Kalamandalam Kathakali Troupe

Dussasana Vadhom ("The Killing of Dussasana"), from the *Mahabharata*

This performance is approximately 60 minutes long and will be performed without intermission.

Please join the artists for a White Light Lounge immediately following the performance.

The White Light Festival presentation of *Sounds of India* is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

These performances are made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College

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UPCOMING WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL EVENTS:

Sounds of India

Saturday, October 29; Thursday, November 3; and Saturday, November 5 at 7:30 pm

Mark Morris Dance Group

Mark Morris, choreographer

MMDG Music Ensemble

O Rangasayee

Serenade

The "Tamil Film Songs in Stereo" Pas de Deux

Pure Dance Items (World premiere)

Pre-performance discussion with Mark Morris on

November 5 at 6:15 pm

Sounds of India

Tuesday, November 1 at 7:30 pm in the Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College

V. Selvaganesh, hybrid drums and khanjira

Vikku Vinayakram, chatur ghatam

V. Uma Shankar, ghatam and konnakol

Swaminathan, khanjira and konnakol

A. Ganesan, morsing and konnakol

Pre-performance artist discussion at 6:15 pm

Sounds of India

Wednesday, November 2 and Friday, November 4 at 7:30 pm in the Gerald W. Lynch Theater

Nrityagram Dance Ensemble

Surupa Sen, choreographer

Nrityagram Music Ensemble

Śrīyāḥ: Sankirtanam; Panchtaal Pallavi; Lalita

Lavanga; Aali; Sridevi

Post-performance artist discussion on November 2

in the Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery

A Little Night Music

Thursday, November 3 at 10:00 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Nrityagram Music Ensemble

Jateen Sahu, vocals and harmonium

Rohan Dahale, voice and mardala (percussion)

Sanjib Kunda, violin

Manu Raj, bamboo flute

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit WhiteLightFestival.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a White Light Festival brochure.

Visit WhiteLightFestival.org for full festival listings.

Join the conversation: #LCWhiteLight

We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

Synopsis

By Lakshmi Vishwanathan

“The Killing of Dussasana” is an episode from the *Mahabharata*, an epic tale of war and retribution between the five Pandavas and their hundred cousins, the Kauravas. The main characters are Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava brothers (Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula, and Sahadeva) and Krishna, their friend and mentor. The Kauravas are led by the two eldest brothers, Duryodhana and Dussasana.

Introduction: In a game of dice, the Pandavas lose their kingdom, land, and everything to the Kauravas. In the end, the victors demand that the Pandavas pawn their wife, Draupadi. When Draupadi is dragged to the arena and humiliated by Dussasana, she vows to take revenge.

Scene 1: Krishna and Draupadi

Krishna is seated as Draupadi approaches him. Distressed and agitated by the humiliation to which she had been subjected, she falls at the feet of Krishna. She demands justice and insists that war is the only means of avenging her suffering at the hands of the evil Dussasana, who not only tried to disrobe her, but also attempted to violate her chastity.

Scene 2: A dialogue between Krishna, Duryodhana, and Dussasana

Krishna tries to persuade Duryodhana to give half the kingdom to the landless Pandavas. An angry Duryodhana refuses and orders the capture of Krishna. Dussasana comes to enslave Krishna and tie him up with a rope. As Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu, the powerful Lord of the universe, he assumes his cosmic form, and

renders Duryodhana and Dussasana unconscious. He then vanishes from the court.

Scene 3: Krishna preaches the Gita (Bhagavad Gita) to Arjuna

The Kauravas and Pandavas are positioned on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Arjuna leads the Pandavas to war with Krishna as his charioteer. A reluctant and despondent Arjuna asks Krishna: “Why should I kill my Gurus and my relatives? What does this war mean to me?” Krishna responds with an awe-inspiring sermon on the duties and responsibilities of a true warrior. He convinces Arjuna about the importance of doing his duty, by extolling the virtue of truthfulness. Krishna then displays his magnificent cosmic form to Arjuna, who sheds his dejection and prepares to take on his enemies.

Scene 4: The angry Bhima and Dussasana

Bhima, filled with wild rage, meets Dussasana on the battlefield. He prays to Lord Vishnu and assumes the ferocity of one of Vishnu’s incarnations, which is half lion and half human. Dussasana is vanquished in the battle that follows, and Bhima, the fearful creature, tears into his belly and bathes in his blood. Draupadi arrives on the scene. Bhima rushes towards her, smears her hair with blood and binds it with Dussasana’s entrails. Draupadi is happy that she has been avenged. Krishna appears, and soon Bhima’s fearsome rage abates. He seeks Krishna’s blessings.

Dhanasi: the finale

In a traditional dance sequence, the actor who plays Krishna bows to the Almighty and the audience.

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Note on the Program

By Lakshmi Vishwanathan

Kathakali translates literally as “story-play.” This genre of theater-art traces its geographical roots to what the tourism industry has famously promoted as “God’s own country”—the state of Kerala in the south-west of India. Like other classical performances in India, Kathakali has a long and complex history with origins in the *Natya Sastra*, a treatise on dramatic arts of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. In ancient Sanskrit theater, *Nataka*, or drama, is an amalgam of *Nritta* (dance), *Gita* (vocal music), *Vadya* (instrumental music), and *Abhinaya* (histri- onics). The last includes *Mudras* (hand ges- tures). Kathakali evolved its own technique of producing plays, using texts in Sanskrit and Malayalam (the language of Kerala) by respected writers. In this drama, the dia- logues are not spoken but sung by two expert singers who narrate the story and sit- uations. The actors play their roles using elaborate hand gestures (as many as 700), stylized facial expressions, and a typical earthy body language. Often the acting is accompanied by rhythms played on the drums. The elaborate narration is punctu- ated with pure rhythmic dance with calcu- lated moves called *kalasam*.

Kathakali evolved from earlier theatrical performances known as Krishnattam and Ramattam, both part of temple rituals in the ancient royal kingdoms of Kerala. Dedicated training and full-time involve- ment in the art became possible under the patronage of kings, particularly two power- ful kingdoms in Kerala. The superior schol- arship of patrons well versed in the *Natya Sastra* also produced many plays and brought innovations. Chief among them was the poetic aspect and the evolution of negative but powerful characters like Ravana in the *Ramayana*. The anti-hero of Kathakali is admired as much as heroes like Krishna and Arjuna.

The physical training for Kathakali begins at a young age. It lasts a minimum of five years, with flexibility in movement helped by regular Ayurvedic body massages. Every part of the facial muscles requires training too, and actors emote using their eyebrows, eyes, cheeks, and lips. The ges- tures known as *hastha mudra* (symbols pro- duced by the hands) take years to master. *Nritta*, or pure dance, is performed to the rhythms played by the drums, with a partic- ular stance and positioning of the feet. It is believed that tapping the earth with the soles of the feet is not sacred; therefore the feet are tilted to the sides when they strike the floor. Unlike other dancers, Kathakali dancers wear their bells just below their knees and not around their ankles.

In its present form, Kathakali is highly visi- ble and is an easily identifiable perfor- mance tradition that has been kept alive by a few committed institutions, with some government support. On the stage in India and abroad, we see a spectacular show with the most colorful and somewhat intimidating costuming. It is accompanied by music that is a mix of poetry and prose narrating a story, usually from the Indian Sanskrit epics like the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* and underlining the triumph of good over evil. The drama sizzles, not because of the spoken word but by a series of suggestive gestures and dynamic movements illustrating the accompanying text, which is sung in a particular style based on the *raga* system of Carnatic music. Within a space less than 15 feet square, the actors dance, gesticulate, and emote with their faces covered by heavy make-up, and their heads decorated with formidable hand-crafted crowns.

Special make-up artists are employed to give each character an identity. Hours of meditative silence envelop the dressing room. The color scheme is symbolic: For example, Krishna wears green with a

white ribbon outlining the face. His eyes and eyebrows are exaggerated with black kohl. His mouth is extended and painted a bright red. His crown has a crest of peacock feathers. All noble characters are made up with shades of this green color. Fierce characters wear more elaborate make-up, with intricate white lines on the face, a red margin around the nose, and a white ball on the tip of the nose. This is called *Katti* (knife). A wicked character like Dussasana has this pattern on his face, with a dark patch around the eyes, a pair of protruding canine teeth, and a fiery red beard (*chokkanadi*). Another type is called *Kari* (black), a grotesque face with a black and white basket-like crown, and black beard. Shiva as a fierce hunter is seen in such a get-up. In contrast, the gentle female characters (played by men) have faces painted in a golden yellow, with shiny decorative white spots.

The costume of the male characters consists of a tight fitting jacket with several strands of gold beads covering the chest, a series of scarves with knotted ends, and a multilayered billowing white skirt. Every performance has a ritual start, with the preliminaries performed behind a curtain held by two men. The play culminates in a climactic scene, most often played as dawn breaks after an all-night show. In some plays, long fights reach a crescendo in a frenzy of passion and bloodshed. The audience is a silent witness to fierce scenes where convention and realism meet. There is a special mode

of acting such a scene called “display of blood.” The air resounds with loud shrieks let out by possessed characters like Bhima. Such horrific scenes are enacted only by experienced actors.

This is one drama where the power of acting is enigmatic, yet so dynamic that even the negative characters are played by expert lead actors who are held in high esteem. The spiritual connotation of the triumph of good over evil common to all Indian mythological tales makes Kathakali also a sacred performance. Actors pray in earnestness before each performance, not only for the success of the play, but for divine grace to protect them while they portray superhuman characters both good and evil. Intellectuals have described Kathakali as the “theater of the mind.” It has the power to communicate a plethora of emotions without speaking to the audience, kindling their imagination to visualize another time, another world.

Lakshmi Vishwanathan is an award-winning exponent of Bharatanatyam, a style of Indian classical dance. As a researcher and writer, she has contributed articles to leading newspapers, academic journals, and arts portals. She has authored four acclaimed books on dance, music, and the cultural heritage of South India.

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For an interview with Mark Morris on curating Sounds of India, please turn to page 60.



By Rabindranath Tagore

My soul is alight with your infinitude of stars. Your world has
broken upon me like a flood.

The flowers of your garden blossom in my body. The joy of life
that is everywhere burns like an incense in my heart. And the
breath of all things plays on my life as on a pipe of reeds.

*For poetry comments and suggestions, please write
to programming@LincolnCenter.org.*

Meet the Artists

Kerala Kalamandalam

The dawn of the 20th century saw a cultural renaissance throughout India. In the south Indian state of Kerala, the poet Vallathol Narayana Menon realized that the traditional performing arts had to be taken public in order to survive. He set out to preserve Kathakali and other stylized art forms. Kakkad Karanavappad, an eminent scholar, and Manakkulam Mukundaraja, a cultural activist, were a source of inspiration to Vallathol in the establishment of Kerala Kalamandalam along the banks of the Bharathapuzha River in 1934. This was the first step in the cultural history of Kerala to institutionalize the classical performing arts that were, until then, left to the patronage of provincial rulers and landlords.

With the establishment of Kalamandalam, the social and cultural emancipation of traditional artists became a reality. Major Kathakali artists were invited to live at Kalamandalam, where they performed and taught talented students. The late Pattikamthoti Ravunni Menon, the doyen of the North School of Kathakali, headed the faculty for nearly 15 years. He groomed great artists such as Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, Ramankutty Nair, and Padmanabhan Nair, who brought global fame and recognition to their alma mater. Kalamandalam celebrated its silver, golden, and diamond jubilees in full grandeur, with the prime ministers of India at the time inaugurating the nearly weeklong celebrations.

Kalamandalam, a premier public institution that harmonizes the practical and theoretical areas of the traditional arts, offers high-school education to its students and degree courses in 14 art disciplines. In 2006 Kalamandalam was declared a Deemed University for Art and Culture. Since then, post-graduate programs in Kathakali, Kutiyattam, and Mohiniyattam have been introduced. Kalamandalam now

functions across two campuses in south-western India.

Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College

John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, an international leader in educating for justice, offers a rich liberal arts and professional studies curriculum to upwards of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 135 nations. In teaching, scholarship and research, the college approaches justice as an applied art and science in service to society and as an ongoing conversation about fundamental human desires for fairness, equality, and the rule of law.

Since opening its doors in 1988, the Gerald W. Lynch Theater has been an invaluable cultural resource for John Jay College and the larger New York City community. The theater is dedicated to the creation and presentation of performing arts programming of all disciplines with a special focus on how the artistic imagination can shed light on the many perceptions of justice in our society. The theater is also a member of CUNY Stages, a consortium of 16 performing arts centers located on CUNY campuses across New York City.

The Gerald W. Lynch Theater has hosted events in the Lincoln Center Festival since its first season in 1996, as well as performances by the Lincoln Center's Great Performers series, New York City Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Metropolitan Opera Guild, and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater/Ailey II. The theater has also been the site of many television and film specials, including A&E's *Live by Request*, Comedy Central's *Premium Blend* and *Robert Klein in Concert*, and VH1's *Soundtrack Live*.

White Light Festival

I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear;

this prism could be the spirit of the listener. —Arvo Pärt. Now in its seventh year, the White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. International in scope, the multidisciplinary festival offers a broad spectrum of the world's leading instrumentalists, vocalists, ensembles, choreographers, dance companies, and directors complemented by conversations with artists and scholars and post-performance White Light Lounges.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader

in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

Kerala Kalamandalam Kathakali Troupe

Kalamandalam Krishnakumar, *Actor and Troupe Leader*

Kalamandalam Ravikumar, *Actor*

Kalamandalam Soorianarayanan, *Actor*

Kalamandalam Mukundan, *Actor*

Kalamandalam Vijayakrishnan, *Percussion (Chenda)*

Kalamandalam Ramadas, *Percussion (Maddalam)*

Kalamandalam Sreeraj, *Percussion (Chenda)*

Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan, *Percussion (Maddalam)*

Kalamandalam Harish Kumar, *Vocalist*

Kalamandalam Ajesh Prabhakar, *Vocalist*

Kalamandalam Sivadas, *Make-up (Head)*

Kalamandalam Sreejith, *Make-up Assistant*

Arun, *Green Room Assistant*

Gopikrishnan R., *Official and Troupe Manager*

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