



NRITYAGRAM

Electronic Press Kit



About the Company



"I dream of building a community of dancers in a forsaken place amidst nature.

A place where nothing exists, except dance.

A place where you breathe, eat, sleep, dream, talk, imagine - dance.

A place where all the five senses can be refined to perfection.

"A place called Nrityagram."

– Protima Gauri (October 12, 1948 - August 18, 1998)

One of the premier Indian Classical dance ensembles performing today, **Nrityagram Dance Ensemble** (pronounced NRI-thyuh-graam) has the unprecedented distinction of making The New York Times' "Best Dance of the Year" list two consecutive years in a row (2015, 2016). More than a dance company, Nrityagram was founded as a village devoted to dance. The all-female ensemble's daily life of intensive training and meditation brings to the stage compelling captivating performances that are at once sensual and lyrical.

Nrityagram (which means dance village) is located outside Bangalore, India. It was founded in 1990 by Odissi dancer **Protima Gauri**, who converted ten acres of farmland into a setting for the study, practice and teaching of dance.

Nrityagram is dedicated to creating excellence in Odissi through the traditional method of learning, the Guru-Shishya Parampara, a unique and sacred relationship between mentor and disciple, referred to as mentorship in modern times.

About the Company

Our dance pedagogy is inspired by the **Gurukula**, an ancient Indian residential teaching paradigm where students and teachers live together in an integrated environment of practice, theory and discipline. Learning is a way of life and students have a rare opportunity to imbibe the spirit of the Guru by living with them and observing them at work.

Conceived this way, for almost 30 years, Nrityagram imparts not only technique in dance but nurtures a philosophy of being that embraces holistic practice, mindful living and the pursuit of excellence. The daily schedule includes a unique, scientific body-conditioning and training programme that is sourced from Yoga, Natyashastra, Kalaripayattu, Western fitness methods and Odissi body-conditioning exercises. This training method is designed to increase the performance lifespan of a dancer and is sought-after by accomplished dance and movement professionals from different disciplines.

With a student strength of over 100, we provide an environment that fosters the artistic, intellectual and personal growth of our dancers and prepares them for successful and productive lives as artists and citizens, as well as to become leaders in their professions.

The aim is to prepare dancers for careers that combine performance with teaching, community outreach, and leadership. To enrich their practice, dancers are taught yoga, meditation, and martial arts along with Sanskrit and ancient dance scriptures. Choreographers, musicians, writers, and theatre practitioners from all over the world visit, to perform and conduct workshops and seminars in their area of practice.

This unique blend of traditional knowledge with contemporary understanding and application makes Nrityagram the only institution of its kind in the world and strengthens its position as a ground-breaking institution.



About the Company



The **Nrityagram Dance Ensemble** is regarded as one of the foremost dance companies of India. Led by Artistic Director **Surupa Sen**, the Ensemble has achieved worldwide critical acclaim, performing across the globe including an annual tour to the United States.

The Ensemble is devoted to bringing Odissi - one of the oldest dance traditions in the world - to audiences worldwide. Performed as far back as 200 BC as a sacred ritual dedicated to the gods, Odissi speaks of love and union, between human and divine, transporting viewers to enchanting worlds of magic and spirituality. Its lush lyricism reflects both the motifs of Odisha temple sculpture as well as the poetry from the deep wellsprings of Oriya music.

Although steeped in and dedicated to ancient practice, the Ensemble is also committed to carrying Indian dance into the twenty-first century. Enabled by grants from International Arts Funding organizations, Nrityagram's dancers not only explore creative expansions of tradition but are also able to commission fresh compositions from leading Indian classical musicians.

Nrityagram has presented seven full-length ensemble shows **Śrī: In Search of the Goddess** (2001), **Ansh** (2005), **Sacred Space** (2005), **Pratimā: Reflection** (2008), **Śriyaḥ** (2010), **Samhāra** (2012) and **Āhuti** (2019); two full-length duet shows **Samyoga** (2012) and **Songs of Love and Longing** (2013) and two full-length solo shows **Yadunandana** (2017) and **Vinati: Songs from the Gita Govinda** (2021). All choreographed by Surupa Sen.

Surupa Sen



SURUPA SEN (Artistic Director, choreographer) was the first student to graduate from Nrityagram.

She began her Odissi training with the architect of Odissi, Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra. She also studied Odissi with Guru Protima Gauri, and Abhinaya (expressional dance) with Guru Kalanidhi Narayanan.

For over two decades, Surupa has researched and expanded the dance vocabulary of Odissi, and developed an aesthetic style that distinguishes the dancers from the Nrityagram Gurukula (School).

Attracted to choreography from childhood, Surupa has focussed on making new dances using an expanded Odissi language, rooted in traditional Odissi and the Natyashastra. She has a keen interest in music and rhythm composition and has worked closely with Pt. Raghunath Panigrahi since 1999.

Surupa has choreographed seven full-length ensemble shows for Nrityagram, which are **Śrī: In Search of the Goddess** (2001), **Ansh** (2005), **Sacred Space** (2005), **Pratimā: Reflection** (2008), **Śriyah** (2010), **Samhāra** (2012) and **Āhuti** (2019); two full-length duet shows **Samyoga** (2012) and **Songs of Love and Longing** (2013) and two full-length solo shows **Yadunandana** (2017) and **Vinati: Songs from the Gita Govinda** (2021). She has also created two virtual shows - **Vinati**, a solo for World Music Institute's Dancing the Gods Festival and **Upadāna: An Offering** for the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Surupa received the Raza Foundation Award in 2006, the Yagnaraman Award from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai in 2008, the prestigious Nritya Choodamani from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai in 2011 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award 2018 - the highest honor for the Performing Arts in India. Surupa is Artistic Director and choreographer at Nrityagram.

Touring Program



KHAᅇKHAᅇ: the sound of dancing feet (2025)

Running Time: Approximately 105 minutes (including a 20 minute Intermission)

Featuring Nrityagram Dance Ensemble and musicians

Performed with live music.

Nrityagram, the land of red mud and birdsong, has been our home and muse. For over thirty years this land has nurtured us and we have poured our sweat, dreams and art to its' bountiful earth.

The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble, India's foremost Odissi dance company, invites audiences to journey with us across time to witness *KHAᅇKHAᅇ: the sound of dancing feet*. The program features highly acclaimed pieces created over the last three decades by choreographer and international renowned Odissi artist Surupa Sen, showcasing Sen's unique sensibility of thought and movement. Join us as we dance, celebrate and pay honor to the red earth of our land.

TOURING PERSONNEL

Performers: 5-6 dancers, 4 musicians

Production/Technical: 1

Total: 10-11

View *KHAᅇKHAᅇ* Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/917990856>

**“uniquely mysterious,
eternal, and beautiful”
- *The Times Colonist***

About Odissi



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.

Community Engagement Activities



Odissi Class © Dan Mirolli courtesy of Moss Arts Center

Introduction to Odissi Dance Class

This introductory class is an opportunity to learn the basic abstract movement phrases and body-training techniques specific to Odissi, as evolved and practiced at Nrityagram.

Odissi Workshop (Two Days or More)

An extended workshop is also offered where participants experience more in-depth instruction and create a short paragraph of abstract dance based on the phrases that have been taught.

Lecture-Demonstration

Based on Odissi dance from India, the Lecture-Demonstration is an Introduction to Odissi dance as evolved and practiced at Nrityagram. The presentation will begin with a brief lecture on the history and evolution of the dance form and a demonstration of its unique features including music, rhythms, basic body positions, basic movement vocabulary and nuances such as walks, spins and jumps. This is followed by a demonstration of hand gestures, facial expressions and stylized body language – techniques unique to Odissi, which are used to tell stories. Finally the technique and language of Odissi dance is brought to life through presentation of short dance sequences from *KHANKHANA*. The event culminates in a Q&A session with the company.

Community Engagement Activities



Schoolltime Matinee: Dance Village Odyssey

The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble transports students on a magical journey through time and space to Eastern India, the birthplace of Odissi – one of the world’s oldest dance forms. Geared specifically for young audiences, company members illustrate the breathtaking beauty of the dance, demonstrating how it reflects the motifs of ancient Odisha temple sculpture as well as the poetry from the deep wellsprings of Oriya music. This engaging lecture-demonstration which includes audience participation, will introduce the language of Odissi, from body positions and basic movement to the “Language of Expressional Dance” with hand gestures and facial expressions.

STUDY GUIDE

Artist Talks and Panel Discussions

Topics include but are not limited to classical Indian dance; *KHANKHANĀ* – featuring Odissi dance forms, sculpture, music and rhythms; the poetry of the Gita Govinda; religion and dance; temple architecture and dance; the Natyashastra; storytelling through dance; costumes; body conditioning and injury prevention; gender studies; and the Nrityagram dance village.

Post-show talks & tailored engagement activities are also possible. Contact Pentacle for details.

Virtual Offerings



Virtual Tour: Nrityagram Dance Village

Go on a virtual tour of the Nrityagram Dance Village. Located outside Bangalore in Southern India, this lush ten-acre dance village founded by Protima Gauri in 1990, has been home to the internationally renowned Nrityagram Dance Ensemble for 30 years.

A rare opportunity to visit the grounds of this exemplary company that has been visited by notable personalities including Mark Morris, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Mick Jagger. The tour may include a brief view of rehearsals-in-progress and/or footage of performance excerpts not available online.

Tailored virtual events are also possible. Contact Pentacle for details.

Press Quotes



"These are among the world's greatest dancers."

- The New York Times

"So beguiling, you resist blinking in case you miss a moment!"

- The Herald

"Nrityagram's mastery of movement and spiritual depth are profound. Excuse my insistence, but if you love dance, you must see this company in action."

- Mikhail Baryshnikov

"One of the most extraordinary dance events of the year... The only proper response to dancers this amazing is worship."

- The New York Times

"Nrityagram is still the most exciting Indian classical dance ensemble I have ever seen."

- Fjord Review

"...New York City dance history was made!"

- Ballet Review

Contact

BOOKING INQUIRIES & MARKETING MATERIALS

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