

She's Auspicious

Work-In-Progress Showing

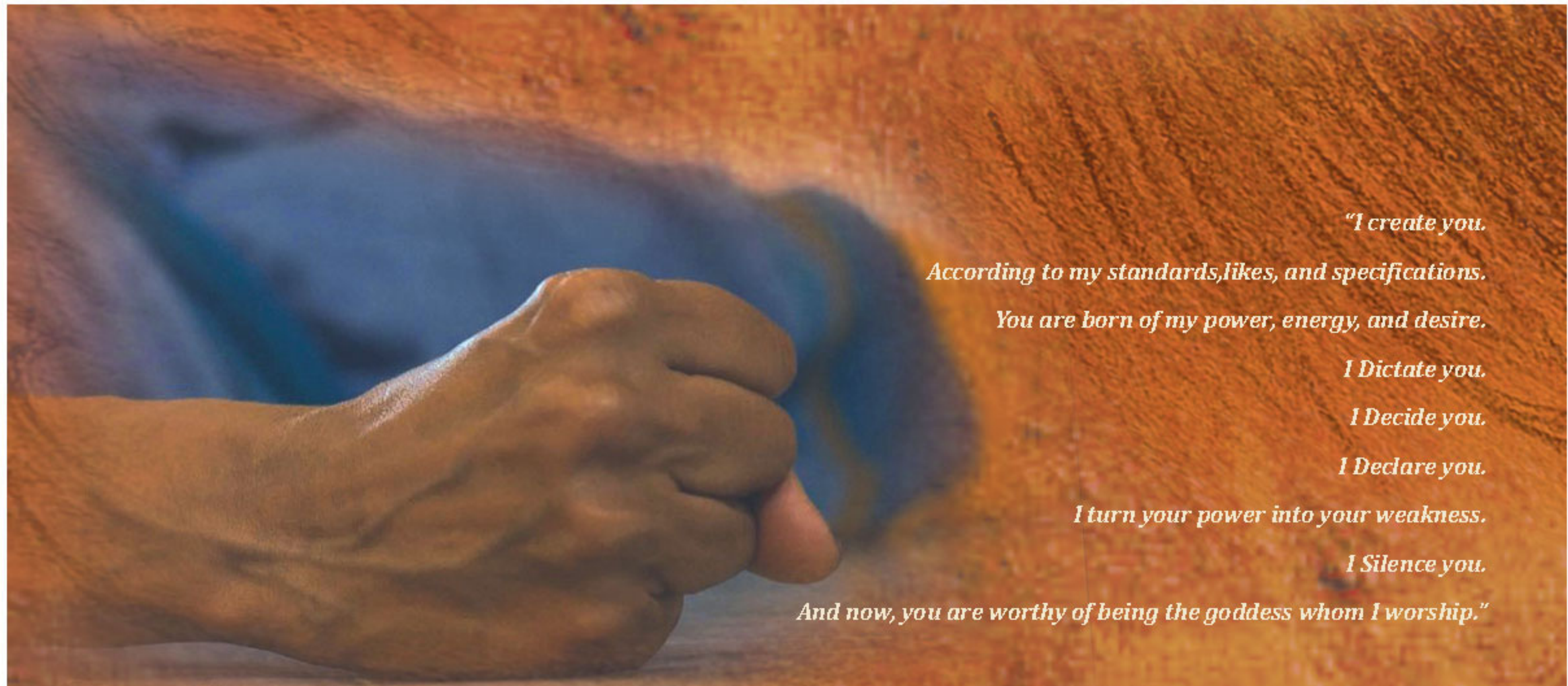
Presented by

Kalapriya Foundation
Center for Indian Performing Arts

Saturday, Oct. 23, 2021 | 4:00 PM

Northeastern Illinois University | Auditorium Building E

5500 N. Saint Louis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625



*"I create you.
According to my standards, likes, and specifications.
You are born of my power, energy, and desire.
I Dictate you.
I Decide you.
I Declare you.
I turn your power into your weakness.
I Silence you.
And now, you are worthy of being the goddess whom I worship."*

CONCEPT

She's Auspicious examines notions of "femininity" and "purity" through the paradox of the Hindu Goddess who is worshipped as powerful and auspicious, in contrast to the woman who is objectified and marginalized in society. This solo Bharatanatyam work blurs the lines between Woman and Goddess, re-imagining popular mythical [Aryan] narratives of the Goddess *Devi* as the mother, homemaker, iconic temple deity, and demon-slayer. In doing so, the piece probes at the performative constructs of the form, particularly the expectations of the female body which center around a particular aesthetic of beauty and refinement.

Male poets, whose hymns are popularly sung and danced, eulogize: *"SHE is the Sacred Feminine! Mother, Daughter, Sister, and Wife; The Embodiment of Auspiciousness; Queen of the Universe; Fierce Warrior; The Creative Womb; The Fountain of Fertility!"* The facts remain unsung: In vitro gender detection is illegal throughout India. Wage gaps, street harassment, gaslighting, menstrual stigma, adoption of the male last name, sexual violence against women....

And while some traditions like Sati (live widow burning) and female infanticide are no longer as widely practiced, have the ideals of "purity" really changed?

What does it mean when the Mother Goddess we celebrate as the "creative womb" is described as *Ayonija* – not born of a womb, and has not birthed either of her male children?

What does it mean when the Warrior Goddess who destroyed the Demon in battle, was created by *Male* Gods, programmed with *their* weapons, and generated with *their* energy?

Does the residual stigma of those horrific older traditions still exist and permeate our myth and our consciousness across time and class?

CHOREOGRAPHER'S NOTE

What does it mean to dance these stories? The stories I have danced since childhood....

In the desire to preserve and pass on cultural traditions, do we also perpetuate a culture of objectification, deification, and infiltration, masquerading as reverence? Does naming the hypocrisy disrespect the tradition? Do we lose the past by re-interpreting it for the present?

What does it mean when the voices re-interpreting these stories in dance belong to the voice of the privileged, who practice a dance form that was appropriated by an upper-caste elite, taken from its hereditary artistic community of performers, and "revived" into its present day form?

What does it mean when that voice of privilege is mine?

What does it mean that this form was one of the first things I ever knew and loved, and defines me, and gives me purpose.... and yet the very questions I pose of ownership and infiltration implicate me?

How do I grapple with this hypocrisy?

How do I negotiate the simultaneous beauty and violence of the form I love?

How do I negotiate that my existence as a dancer has played a role in invisibilizing the artistic community of the form that I call my own?

What does it mean to find the negotiation of that through my female dancing body, at once privileged *and* infiltrated?

ARTIST BIOS

Mythili Prakash

Concept, Choreography, Sound Design, Dance

A second generation Indian and American artist, Mythili has positioned herself as a global and cosmopolitan artist, whose repertoire is an embodiment of narratives of the many worlds that shape her.

Trained by her mother dance exponent Viji Prakash, Mythili began her performing career with her solo debut in India at the age of eight and has since performed and toured her own productions extensively worldwide.

She is the recipient of numerous accolades in India as well as Grants in the USA from Irvine Dance Foundation, Center for Cultural Innocation, and New England Foundation for the Arts.

She is mentored by India's acclaimed Bharatanatyam artist, Malavika Sarukkai and celebrated British/Bangladeshi dancer/choreographer Akram Khan.

Nominated by Khan as "choreographer of the future" for UK-based Dance Umbrella's "Four by four commissions," Mythili premiered her solo work "HERE and NOW" at their 2019 Festival. She is currently touring as a principal dancer in Akram Khan Company's "Outwitting the Devil."

Aditya Prakash

Sound Design, Music Production

Aditya Prakash, an award-winning vocalist known for his powerful and emotive voice, is one of the foremost young virtuosos of Karnatik music, the traditional classical style of South India. At sixteen he toured with sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, accompanying him at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Hollywood Bowl and Disney Concert Hall. Aditya has collaborated with leading innovators and artists, including Anoushka Shankar, Tigran Hamasyan, Karsh Kale, Mythili Prakash and currently touring with Akram Khan in Xenos. In 2010, he formed the Aditya Prakash Ensemble, a well-recognized group, that centers its musical dialogue around Karnatik music and jazz.

Sushma Soma

Sound Design, Vocal

Sushma Soma is a Karnatik Vocalist based in Singapore and India. She most recently won the Young Artist Award in 2020 - the highest recognition given to young arts practitioners in Singapore. She's passionate about raising awareness about environment and sustainability. Her upcoming album, titled Home, will marry her Karnatik sensibilities with her drive to raise awareness for the environment.

Seah Johnson

Lighting Design

Seah Johnson is a freelance lighting designer based out of Seattle, WA. Prior to the pandemic, she was the resident lighting designer at the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, where she toured for almost 15 years, both in the US and internationally, designing and presenting works by some of the world's best contemporary ballet choreographers. She holds a BFA in theatrical design and production from the University of Colorado.

Ananya Ashok

Vina, Vocal

Ananya Ashok is an award-winning vocalist and Veena artist. She has performed in various prestigious venues in India and worldwide over the last 10 years. Based in Bay Area, California, USA, she is an active performer and educator of the Indian classical arts.

Shubha Chandramouli

Mridangam, Kanjira

Shubha Chandramouli, a disciple of Sri. Poovalur Srinivasan, is a highly sought-after mridangist in Southern California. Shubha is also versed in Karnatik Vocal Music and Bharatanatyam, having trained with reputed Gurus and performed with the Arpana Dance Company. Shubha balances her musical career with her work in Strategic Planning & Finance.

Julian-Quán Việt Lê

Sound Engineer

Julian Le (Lejkeys) is a Vietnamese/Chinese producer, composer, and audio engineer. His main hobby is learning about all sounds and their amazing ability to tell stories, evoke feelings/emotions, and connect people. He also loves to swim, cook, and befriend giant sea creatures such as turtles, manta rays, and whale sharks.

Kasi Aysola

Rehearsal Director

Kasi Aysola is a performer, choreographer and nattuvangam artist. His foundational training in Bharata Natyam was under celebrated Guru Viji Prakash and Mythili Prakash, and in Kuchipudi under late Guru Vempati Ravi Shankar and Yamini Saripalli. Recently appointed Associate Artistic Director of Kalanidhi Dance in Maryland, Kasi looks forward to expanding the boundaries of Kuchipudi in pursuit of excellence in Indian art.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank you for being witness to this rehearsal, which marks the culmination of the "creation period" of this piece. Having worked separately (in different parts of the world!) for the last several months, the company has spent the past 5 days in Residency in Chicago, preparing for the premiere at the Reflektor festival in Hamburg on November 6, 2021.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Kalapriya, NEIU, and particularly Mridu Sekhar for making this Residency happen. We are so deeply privileged and grateful to have had the presence and guidance of Akram Khan in the last few days of development of this work.

For those who are attending this dress/technical rehearsal in person, we welcome you to join us in a conversation following the run of the piece. For those who are joining virtually, we would love to hear your thoughts and/or questions via email - mythiliprakashdance@gmail.com.

Thank you,

Mythili Prakash

CREDITS

Dance Concept &
Choreography
Mythili Prakash

Music Composition
and Sound design
Aditya Prakash
Mythili Prakash
Sushma Soma

Music Production
Aditya Prakash

Lighting Design
Seah Johnson

Sound
Julian Lê

Rehearsal Director
Kasi Aysola

Costume
K.R. Dressers

LIVE PERFORMANCE CREDITS

Vocal
Sushma Soma

Vina, Vocal
Ananya Ashok

Mridangam, Kanjira
Shubha Chandramouli

RECORDING CREDITS

Vocal
Sushma Soma

Vocal, Percussion
Mythili Prakash

Mridangam
Sumesh Narayanan

Vocal, Mridangam, Kanjira,
Percussion
Aditya Prakash

Vina, Vocal
Ananya Ashok

Artwork
Uma Kadekodi

SOUND SAMPLE CREDITS

“DHUNUCHI NACHH”
Sagar Keluskar

“TEMPLE BELL AND
SHANKH NAAD”
Sangeeta Ghosh

“SRINGARAM MALLARI”
Lalgudi G. Jayaraman

Brochure Design
Denise Billups



KALAPRIYA

CENTER FOR INDIAN PERFORMING ARTS

Residency Partner

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