



Shishya School of Performing Arts

Presents

Bharathanatyam Arangetram

of

Slesha Reddy Erukonda & Srecha Reddy Erukonda

Disciples of

Guru "Kalashree" Sukanya Mahadevan

on Sunday, April 26th, 2026

at Allentown High School, 27 High Street, Allentown NJ 08501



BharathaNatyam Arangetram

Bharatanatyam is one of the most ancient classical dance traditions of India, expressed through three essential elements — Nritta (pure rhythmic movement), Nritya (expressive dance), and Natya (dramatic storytelling). The word of Bharatanatyam is derived by joining two words: 'Bharata' which is a mnemonic containing 'Bha' (bhava/emotions), 'ra' (raga/melody), and 'ta' (tala/rhythm) and 'natyam' meaning dance. Originating in South India, it is renowned for its grace, intricate rhythm, and sculptural poses. Arangetram is a graduation performance that is the part of the traditional format — the Margam (path). In Tamil, the word 'Arangetram' literally means climbing the raised stage.

The School and Guru

'Bharatanatyam', an ancient Indian dance form that dates back 2000 years ago is still thriving all over the world because of artists like guru Sukanya Mahadevan. Sukanya, a prominent performer, teacher and choreographer, is the founder and artistic director of Shishya School of Performing Arts in New Jersey and has won many awards and accolades in this field. The school under her leadership is in its 20th successful year of teaching and performing in the tristate area.

She has taught and performed at local Indian and American events and continues representing the Indian artist diaspora in local NJ events such as the ones for the TCNJ Arts Festival, the Dept of Transportation and Labor, US immigration offices and Mercer County Heritage Festival. Currently a visiting faculty at Rider University's world dance program, she has performed with her students on several world stages such as the Chennai dance festival, Carnegie Hall International dance festival, Rome International summer stages, the New York Fashion Week, Paris Disney performing Arts music festival and Trenton Thunder baseball game and Mercer Teen Arts Festival.

Besides conducting 'Arangetrams' (solo dance recitals for students), she has many unique choreographies under her belt such as the full-length dance drama based on Jungle Book, research and dance presentation of the five cosmic elements of Shiva, union of poetry and dance etc. Having won many visionary and humanitarian awards, including the 'Kalashree' title from Ganesa Natyalaya in New Delhi and 'Saraswati award' from Vipanchee Natyalaya in Chennai, she is a newly inducted Performing Arts Educators Fellow and the treasurer at the executive board of trustees at Dance New Jersey. Last year she was awarded the 'Outstanding Dance Studio Leadership Award' by NDEO. Shishya School is an NHSDA chapter here in the US and has partnered with NIICD in India to award diplomas to advance students. This spring advanced students will be performing at the very coveted Iyengar Yoga convention in Philadelphia and this summer, adult performers from the school will be led by Guru Sukanya to Portugal for yet another summer stages festival.

Her students are not only taught dance, but also to use their craft for social awareness and justice and follow the 'Art for Humanity' motto. A proud immigrant from India, a country of rich heritage and traditions, Sukanya has embraced being an American and a New-Jersey resident to the fullest by not only adopting American values but also through her art, celebrating the diversity in our country. Last year she and her students auditioned and got accepted to the following prestigious performances: Show up And Dance professional category; Montclair Dance Festival; Paris Disney Performing Arts





About The Shishyas Slesha Reddy Erukonda

Slesha began learning Bharatanatyam at age 8 under Guru “KalaShree” Sukanya Mahadevan at Shishya School of Performing Arts. Over the years, her training has deepened into a strong passion for this classical art, embracing its rhythm, expression, and storytelling.

She has had the privilege of performing at distinguished venues, including the Carnegie Hall International Dance Festival invitational program and the Paris Disney Performing Arts Music Festival, along with numerous local Indian cultural festivals and charitable events. Slesha is a student at West Windsor–Plainsboro High School North.

Swecha Reddy Erukonda

Swecha began her Bharatanatyam training at the age of 5 under Guru “KalaShree” Sukanya Mahadevan at Shishya School of Performing Arts. From a young age, she showed a natural sense of rhythm and expression, and her dedication has grown into a deep love for this classical art form.

She has performed at the Carnegie Hall International Dance Festival invitational program, the Paris Disney Performing Arts Music Festival, and numerous local cultural and charity events. Swecha is a student at West Windsor Community Middle School.



Margam

Pushpanjali - "Jhaim Jhaim"

Since Indian dance was traditionally performed in temples, it is customary to begin with an offering of flowers to the divine, hence the name Pushpanjali, meaning "offering of flowers."

In this invocation piece, the dancer offers prayers to the Gods and seeks forgiveness from Mother Earth for dancing upon her. In this piece, the dancer combines vigorous movements with eloquent descriptions of the Gods she is invoking blessings from. The offering of prayers to the different Gods symbolizes the offering of the body, mind and soul to God's presence.

Raagam and Taalam : RaagaTaalamaalika
Composer : Dr. M. BalaMuraliKrishna

Alarippu

Alar is a Dravidian word meaning "to blossom." Alarippu literally means "flowering," symbolizing the opening of the body and limbs in preparation for more complex pieces. Traditionally performed at the beginning of a Bharatanatyam repertoire, Alarippu serves as a warm-up, preparing the dancer's body and mind for the rigor of the recital. The piece builds gradually from eye and neck movements to rhythmic footwork, increasing in speed toward the end. This item was a special choreography by Guru Sukanya for first Rome and then the Paris programming. Part of the choreography is by Sandhya Mahadevan. It is a unique composition by the famous MS Sukhi and the alarippu has a background vocal of the famous Shankar Mahadevan lyrics on Ganesha - 'Ekadantaya Vakratundaya'.

Raagam : Revathi
Taalam : Eka Thalam
Composer : Shankar Mahadevan and MS Sukhi

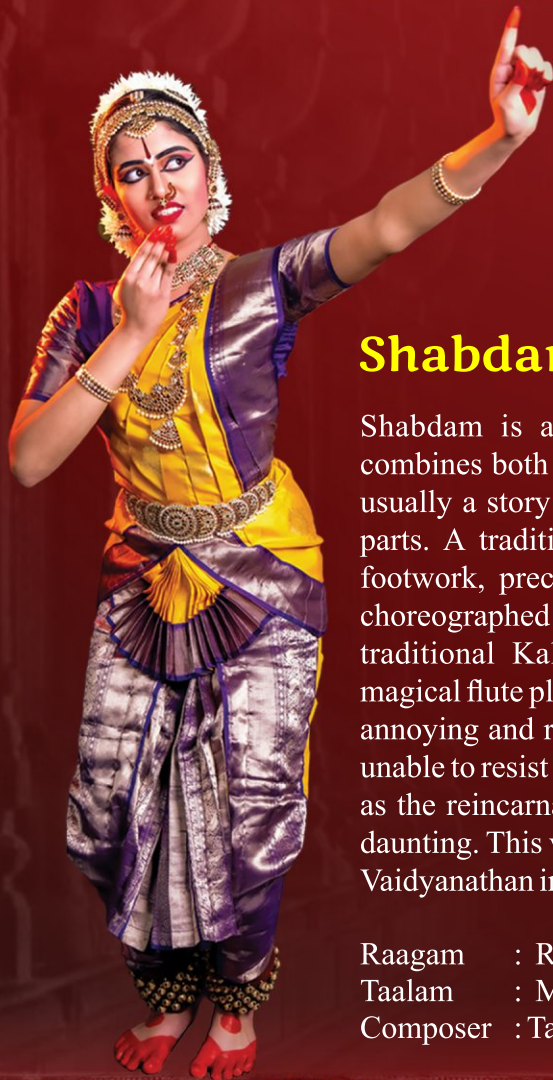




Jatiswaram

Jatiswaram is a more difficult item of pure dance (nritya) which has the adavus set to the Jatis (rhythmic syllables) and the Swara patterns set in a particular Raaga and Taala. This is set to ragam Husseini and Roopaka Taalam.

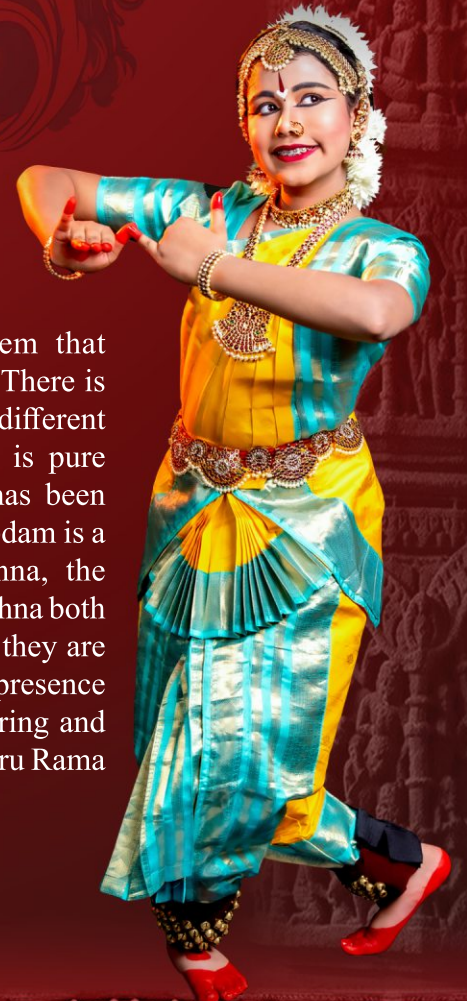
Raagam : Husseini
Taalam : Roopakam
Composer : Guru Lalitha
(Saraswati Gana Nilayam)



Shabdham

Shabdham is a traditional Bharathanatyam item that combines both footwork and facial expressions. There is usually a story to be told, which is broken into different parts. A traditional section called Jathi, which is pure footwork, precedes each part. This Shabdham has been choreographed to a beat of 7. This particular shabdham is a traditional Kalakshetra piece, based on Krishna, the magical flute player. The alluring qualities of Krishna both annoying and romantic, attract all the gopis and they are unable to resist him. Ultimately Krishna's divine presence as the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu is both alluring and daunting. This vintage shabdham was taught by guru Rama Vaidyanathan in a Shishya curated workshop.

Raagam : Ragamaalika
Taalam : Misra chapu
Composer : Tanjore Quartet





Varnam -“Sakhiye..”

Varnam is the most enthralling, interesting and a challenging item in a Bharathanatyam recital. It is a piece-de-resistance where in the expertise of the dancer is known. There is a perfect synchronization of Bhava, Raaga and Taala, thus giving the dancer abundant scope for displaying her rhythmic talents along with rich and variegated abhinaya. It is also a measure of one of the 'Dashapraanas' (the 10 vital characteristics of a good dancer), that is 'ashrama'(endurance), since it is the longest and the most demanding item where in the dancer uses her feet dancing to the Adavu-Jatis, the hands and the hastaas indicating the meaning of the song, while the feeling (inner emotion) is portrayed by the saatvika abhinaya through subtle facial expressions.

Varnam is the most elaborate and the most beautiful and important piece in BharathaNatyam . It is a combination of all aspects of BharathaNatyam such as NRITTA, NRITYA and BHAVA, interwoven with complex rhythmic patterns and rich melody of the music. In this item, the dancer praises the glory of Lord Vishnu and requests her friend to bring him to her. The first half shows her complaining about his absence and the effect it has on her life and heart and the despair she feels in his desire. The second half shows her describing him and praising his qualities through the many stories told about him.. Here the primary diety is Lord Vishnu and Krishna and Raama are his Avatars depicted in the stories and 'Sanchari Bhaava'. This item is a true test of the dancer's ability as a dancer as it challenges her on all levels. Choreographed to Shree Muralidharan's version of this varnam, this is a special choreography by Guru Sukanya to show the special bond between sisters who are also friends.

Raagam : Sankarabharanam
Talam : Aadi
Composer : Dandayudhapani Pillai



Padams and Krithis

Padams and Krithis are abhinaya items, usually love lyrics or devotion to God, and are rendered in a slower tempo. The various moods and emotions of the Naayikaa are executed by the dancer giving immense scope for the expression of variegated sentiments and shades of emotions.

Shiva Padam - 'Ardhanreeswara Ashtakam'

This beautiful stotram by the great Aadi Shankarachya depicts the totality in the duality of Shiva and shakthi. His stoicness complements her elegance, his open unruly tresses complement her beautiful locks. They compliment each other in not only external appearances but in their internal qualities as well. She is the creator of beautiful creatures and he is the destroyer of all things evil. This is a special choreography by guru Rama Vaidyanathan that the girls learnt in a Shishya School curated workshop and will be delivered as a duet featuring Shiva and Shakthi.

Raagam : Megh
Talam : Aadi
Composer : Aadi Shankarachya



Abhang - "Bhaktha Jana Vatsale"

"Come O Vitthal, for the love of your devotee! Filled with mercy, O Panduranga, dark as a rain cloud and clad in yellow, grant us salvation, O King Keshava." Thus prays Saint Namdev in this beautiful Abhang.

Born in 1270 AD in Maharashtra, Namdev showed deep devotion to Vitthala from childhood, seeing Him as friend and companion. Of the 2500 Abhangas he composed, 61 are included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Vitthala, an incarnation of Vishnu or Krishna, is worshipped with Rakhumai, an incarnation of Lakshmi. This choreography celebrates their unity, expressing that Lakshmi and Vishnu are one and inseparable. This will be presented as a solo by Swecha.

Raagam : Brindavana Saranga
Taalam : Ekam
Composer : Sant Namdev



Raama Padam - "Thyagaraja Krithi "Saamaja Varagamanaa"

This beautiful Thyagaraja krithi is a special choreography by Sukanya's own Guru Padmabhusan Dr. Saroja Vaidyanathan. The great cornerstone of Carnatic music, saint Thyagaraja compares the gait of the Lord, here shown as Raama to that of a majestic elephant. He uses Krishna and Raama as two sides to the same coin. Krishna who transcends time and protects his devotees produces nectar like music. This yadava is who covets Thyagaraja's heart. This will be presented as a solo by Slesha.

Raagam : Hindolam
Taalam : Aadi
Composer : Saint Thyagaraja



Tillana

Tillana is a vibrant nritha item showcasing graceful pure dance steps, sculpturesque poses, and intricate movement patterns. Each adavu is performed in Vilambit (slow), Madhya (medium), and Dhrut (fast) kaala, culminating in dazzling teermanams that captivate the audience. Composed in a specific raaga and taala, a tillana includes pallavi, anupallavi, and sahitya in praise of the divine.

The Kalinga Narthana Tillana depicts young Krishna dancing on the serpent Kaliya. Oothukadu Venkata Kavi's composition features rhythmic syllables, lyrical passages, and shifts in tempo, even mimicking the serpent's hiss. This version is specially choreographed by Guru Sukanya as a duet, presenting Krishna and Kalinga in a dynamic dancing duel.

Raagam : Gambheera Nattai
Taalam : Aadi
Composer : Oothukadu Venkata Subaiyer



Mangalam - "Brahmam Okate"

As the saying goes, "All is well that ends well." This Mangalam brings the recital to an auspicious close with a prayer of gratitude to the divine, the Guru, and all who made the evening possible. It also honors the Panchabhutas, the five cosmic elements, seeking harmony and blessings.

"Brahmam Okate," composed by Annamacharya, affirms that the spirit is one, despite differences in status, wealth, or way of life. It reminds us that sleep, day and night, earth, air, and sunlight are the same for all. Srihari, the Supreme Spirit, dwells equally in every being. Through this message of unity and oneness, the recital concludes with peace, gratitude, and universal harmony.

Raagam : Bowli
Taalam : Aadi (Tisra gathii)
Composer : Annamacharya



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Choreography:

Late Padmabhushan' Dr.Guru Saroja Vaidyanathan

Late 'Kalaimamani' Saraswati Sundaresan

Kalashree' Guru Sukanya Mahadevan

Kalaimamani' Guru Rama Vaidyanathan

Sandhya Mahadevan

Orchestra:

Nattuvangam : Guru 'Kalashree' Sukanya Mahadevan

Vocal : Smt. Soumya Balaji

Mridangam : Shri Karthik Subramanian

Rhythm pads : Shri Sandip Iyer

Violin : Smt. Nirmala Rajesh

Flute : Shri Visveshwar Nagarajan



Master of Ceremony : Chaitanya Attaluri

Makeup Artist : Padma Shree

Photography and Videography : Karthick Ram

Light and Sound Co-ordinators : Vicki Quintero Agrawal, Raja Natarajan

Auditorium and Facilities : Ms. Wendy High, Allentown High School technicians and staff members

Snacks and Dinner : Bhog Restaurant

Special Thanks:

Ms. Cecilia Smitha Jackson,
Youth Leadership and Development Program (www.yldp.org)

Thanks to our family and friends
for all the blessings, encouragement and support!



