

Wiley Hausam, Director
Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts



PRESENTS

NRITYAGRAM

DANCE ENSEMBLE

KHANKHANĀ

THE SOUND OF
DANCING FEET



Thursday, October 9, 2025, 7:30 PM

Alexander Kasser Theater

MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

Staff and Creative Team

Choreography and Sound Design **Surupa Sen**

Music Composition **Pt. Raghunath Panigrahi**, **Pt. Bhubaneswar Mishra** (Pashyati), **Surupa Sen** (SmritiRāngā)

Rhythm Composition **Dhaneswar Swain**, **Surupa Sen**, **Rohan Dahale** (SmritiRāngā)

Dancers **Surupa Sen**, **Pavithra Reddy**, **Anoushka Rahman**, **Daquil Miriyala**, **Namaha Mazoomdar**

Musicians

Jatin Sahu Lead Vocal & Harmonium

Rohan Dahale Chants & Mardala (Percussion)

Parshuram Das Bamboo Flute

Siba Nayak Violin

Surupa Sen Manjira

Technical Director/Lighting Designer **Lynne Fernandez**

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Nrityagram www.nrityagram.org | lynne@nrityagram.org

Running Time: 115 minutes including one 20-minute intermission.



Program

“Sankirtanam (a prayer)”

Dancers **Anoushka Rahman**, **Pavithra Reddy**, **Namaha Mazoomdar**, **Daquil Miriyala**, **Surupa Sen**

“Pashyatī Dishī Dishī”

Dancer **Surupa Sen**

“Aakritī”

Dancers **Pavithra Reddy**, **Anoushka Rahman**, **Daquil Miriyala**, **Namaha Mazoomdar**

Intermission

“Śrīdevī”

Dancers **Pavithra Reddy**, **Anoushka Rahman**, **Daquil Miriyala**, **Namaha Mazoomdar**

“SmritiRāngā”

Dancers **Pavithra Reddy**, **Anoushka Rahman**, **Daquil Miriyala**, **Surupa Sen**

Program Notes

Nrityagram—land of red earth and birdsong—is both our home and our muse. For more than three decades, this soil has sustained us, even as we have offered it our labor, our dreams, and our art.

Khakhhaṇā is an invitation to journey with us through time, to listen to the pulse of dancing feet.

Featuring acclaimed works by choreographer Surupa Sen—both new and familiar—this performance celebrates movement, memory, and a shared hope for our world.

ABOUT THE DANCES

“Sankirtanam (a prayer)”:

Wandering minstrels sing and dance in praise of Lord Krishna...
The lotus-eyed lord
with the flute in his hands
and a peacock feather in his hair.
The eternal lover,
the yogi,
the last refuge.
Protector of the universe,
he is the purest of all beings.
The only truth.

“Pashyatī Dishī Dishī”:

A poem from the Gita Govinda is interpreted through facial expressions (bhava) and gestures (mudra). Written in Sanskrit in the 12th century by the poet saint Jayadeva, the Gita Govinda is a romantic ballad about the immortal love of Radha and Krishna. It is a song of love and longing that reflects the Vaishnava belief that all humankind is feminine energy (Radha) constantly seeking union with the one male godhead (Krishna).

The Sakhi says to Krishna, who is intoxicated with love for Radha
“Oh Hari! Lord of the world!
Without you, Radha suffers.
She has braved her family
and the darkness of night,
to hasten through the forest to your secret retreat.

She searches longingly for you
and calls out your name.
Incessantly sobbing
‘Why won’t he come? Why won’t he come?’

In her haste to unite with you,
she stumbles and falls,
making thoughtless turns.

She has decorated herself for you
and prepared a bed of love.
Obsessed with thoughts of passion,
her body bristling with longing,
she waits to taste the nectar from your lips.

She has lost all sense of shame,
as she asks her friends again and again,
when will he come?

Oh Krishna!
You who come to the aid
of every devotee,
do not make her suffer —
she who loves you the most.
Hasten to her,
Radha awaits you.
All sense of shame undone.”

“Aakritī”:

A submission to the inherently lyrical form of Odissi, this dance explores the various dimensions of its abstract, and geometric vocabulary.

Intermission

“Śrīdevī”:

A dance in praise of the Mother Goddess—As we brave new journeys,
we ask the divine presence of the Mother Goddess to light our path.

“Oh mother! Supreme power of the universe,
grant us the vision
to behold you within.
From you comes all life
and into you we must all return.
At your feet
we offer our dance.”

“SmritīRāngā”

An abstract exploration of a feeling perfectly encapsulated in the Welsh word “Hiraeth,” which embodies a profound, innate longing for a home, person, or time that is forever lost. At its essence, it is an awareness of the presence of absence, kindling a feeling in which pain and joy are braided together too tightly to untangle. Hiraeth is a link with your long-forgotten past, the language of the soul, a call from your inner self. Half forgotten—fraction remembered. It is always there. Hiraeth is the yearning of the soul to come home.

Memories are just songs
that like feelings,
have no definite path.

Colored and hued
from moments they lived in
and the people they touched.
Twisting and turning
they swirl deep inside us,
like the water we played in,
immersing us now and again
as we rise gasping for air,
or in ethereal moments
of love, freedom, and ancestry.

We yearn for those moments,
in inconsolable longing,
desperately seeking
that which once was known
and can never again be.

A feather fleeting down the spine,
urging an awareness
of a longing,
for something, someone, somewhere.

SmritiRāngā
Dancing again in moments we want to live in.

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 Odia music.

About the Company

Nrityagram, meaning *Dance Village*, is a one-of-a-kind community where dance is not just practiced but lived. Founded by the visionary Protima Gauri, it is a cultural landmark dedicated to keeping alive India's rich traditions while reimagining them for the future.

Here, the ancient *gurukula* way of life is at the heart of learning. Students and teachers live together in an environment where discipline, creativity, and philosophy intertwine. More than a training ground, Nrityagram nurtures artists who embody mindful living, holistic practice, and a deep pursuit of excellence.

For over three decades, our village has been home to an Open School, an internationally renowned Dance Ensemble, and vibrant outreach programs. Together, they form a living ecosystem of art, community, and innovation.

The Nrityagram Dance Ensemble, led by artistic director **Surupa Sen**, is acclaimed as one of India's foremost dance companies. With performances in 25 countries across five continents, it has won global recognition, including the rare distinction of featuring twice in the *New York Times*' "Best Dance of the Year" list.

At Nrityagram, dance is more than art—it is a way of life.

About the Artists

Surupa Sen (Choreographer, Sound Designer, Soloist), described by the *New York Times* as "among the world's greatest dancers," is the artistic director, choreographer, and principal soloist of Nrityagram. She trained in Odissi under Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and Guru Protima Gauri, studied Abhinaya with Guru Kalanidhi Narayanan, and the Natyashastra with Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam.

For more than two decades, Sen has shaped a distinctive aesthetic for Nrityagram that is both rooted in tradition and boldly innovative. Passionate about choreography and rhythm, she has created an acclaimed repertoire of works, including eight full-length ensemble shows for Nrityagram: *Śrī: In Search of the Goddess* (2001), *Ansh* (2005), *Sacred Space* (2005), *Pratimā: Reflection* (2008), *Śriyah* (2010), *Samhāra* (2012), *Āhuti* (2019), and *Āhuti Relived* (2022); three full-length duet shows: *Samyoga* (2012), *Songs of Love and Longing* (2013), and *Aṅgahārah* (2025); three full-length solo shows: *Yadunandana* (2017),

Vinati: Songs from the Gita Govinda (2021), and *Madhuragati* (2024); 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; and numerous dance pieces. Her artistry has earned her some of India's highest honors, including the Raza Foundation Award (2006), Nritya Choodamani from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai (2011), and India's highest honor for the performing arts, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Odissi (2018).

Pavithra Reddy (Dancer) began her association with Nrityagram in 1990 when she joined its rural outreach program while living on a nearby farm. She went on to become the first student to graduate from the program, marking the beginning of a lifelong journey in Odissi.

Trained under the guidance of Surupa Sen and enriched by collaborations with dancers and movement specialists from around the world, Reddy joined the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble in 1993. Since then, she has performed both as a soloist and with the Ensemble on some of the most prestigious stages in India and internationally. Alongside being a full-time performer, Reddy plays a vital role as director of outreach activities, teaching in Nrityagram's residential school and in its community programs, ensuring that dance continues to reach and inspire new generations.

Anoushka Rahman (Dancer) first encountered Nrityagram in 2018, when she came from Kolkata to attend a Summer Workshop. What began as a brief visit soon became her path, as she returned to pursue advanced training with Surupa Sen and Pavithra Reddy after starting Odissi under Smt. Dona Ganguly.

Recognized for her dedication with the Virendra Kumar Laroia Fellowship, she has performed with the Ensemble across India, the US, Canada, and Sri Lanka, and made her solo debut in 2024. With a postgraduate degree in Mathematics and a Sangeet Bhaskar in Odissi, Rahman now dances full-time with the Ensemble, bringing together rigor, artistry, and imagination.

Daquil Miriyala (Dancer) entered Nrityagram's world in 2010 through its Village Outreach Program. The following year she became a residential student, balancing her academic studies with immersive dance training under Surupa Sen and Pavithra Reddy.

In 2021, her journey came full circle as she joined the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble. Since then, she has performed across India, the US, Canada, and Sri Lanka, carrying forward the vision of Nrityagram from its classrooms to the global stage.

Namaha Mazoomdar (Dancer) is a dancer, trainer, theater director, and storyteller whose artistic journey bridges multiple disciplines. She began her Odissi training in Mumbai under Guru Daksha Mashruwala, and since 2013 has worked as a freelance dancer with companies in India and Singapore, performing across India, Singapore, Australia, and Indonesia.

A qualified actor with a diploma from the Intercultural Theatre Institute, Singapore, Mazoomdar brings the depth of theater into her dance practice. In 2022, she began advanced training with Surupa Sen and Pavithra Reddy, and in 2024 she joined the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble, bringing her diverse artistic experience into its fold.

Jatin Sahu (Lead Vocal, Harmonium) learned Odissi singing under the tutelage of Guru Ramahari Das at the Music College, Odisha. He lives in Mumbai and has worked with Nrityagram since 2008. He is also a concert singer.

Rohan Dahale (Mardala, Percussion) began his training with Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra and has continued to learn from Guru Banamali Maharana for the past 12 years. He lives in Mumbai and accompanies Odissi dancers from the region. At present, he is percussionist at the dance village and travels and performs with the Ensemble.

Parshuram Das (Bamboo Flute) is a disciple of Pt. Mohini Mohan Pattnaik. He graduated from the Music College, Odisha, and in addition to freelancing as a music accompanist, he teaches at Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar. He has been with the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble since 2002.

Siba Nayak (Violin) has a postgraduate degree in Hindustani violin from the Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar. He freelances as a music accompanist and has worked with the Nrityagram Dance Ensemble since 2018.

Lynne Fernandez (Lighting Designer, Technical Director) is one of India's pioneering professional lighting designers, having collaborated with leading directors such as Barry John, Joy Michael, Ranjit Kapoor, and Lillete Dubey. Her theater work has been showcased internationally, from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to London's West End and New York's Off-Broadway.

She joined Nrityagram in 1993 as production and technical consultant to the newly founded Ensemble, later becoming its technical director. In 1997, she was appointed executive director of Nrityagram Village, School, and Ensemble—a role she continues to hold.

Since then, she has been at the heart of Nrityagram's growth: shaping its administration, securing its future, and guiding its projects. She has overseen the Ensemble's emergence on the world stage while also dreaming up new spaces for artists to create. Recent initiatives include Kula, a residence for arts practitioners, and plans for a Performing Arts Centre with a theater, exhibition space, and rehearsal studios.

For Fernandez, Nrityagram is not just an institution but a living community—one she has helped nurture into a place where dance, creativity, and mindful living come together.

Special Thanks

Special Thanks to Surupa Sen and Uttara Asha Coorlawala. Surupa Sen is the artistic director of Nrityagram Dance Ensemble and training institute based in Hessaraghatta, Karnataka. Uttara Asha Coorlawala is a professor of dance at Barnard College and the curator of the Erasing Borders festival of Indian Dance in New York City.



We also gratefully acknowledge our partner, the **Indian Heritage & Cultural Association of New Jersey**, for their generous support and collaboration.



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