

Capstone Honor's Thesis

Abstract

Bharatanatyam is a classical Southern style of Indian dance originating from Tamil Nadu, and is now practiced all over the world. During my stay in India, I learned from Dr. Joshi, Nupur Bharatnattiyam Nrityalaya. According to my teacher, this specific dance style is designed to accompany songs that honor and/or describe a God's story. The dance can vary according to the song and its specific meaning or intent. In my Honors Capstone Project, I composed a fusion choreography using original Bharatnattiyam movements performed to Eastern European Slavic Music (artist: Kitka). Every hand, eye, foot, and body movement has a meaning and was incorporated into this choreography. The choreography was then taught to the local dance troupe, Cold Fusion, and performed at Tundra Caravan's showcase, featuring Suzanne DelVecchio. The performance of this choreography was well received and performed at many other local events. My Capstone Project helped lead the way for more Indian dance to be taught in Fairbanks, AK, as well as further expand my own knowledge.



Acknowledgments

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- Ana Richards and Maya Salganek- Mentors
- Dr. Gary Laursen – Honors Advisor
- Jill Shipman, Susan Chapa, Mickela Lamb, Rachel Heilman and Cole Crockett-
- Anna Goropashnaya- Translation

Background

- Eight main classical forms of Indian dance and hundreds, if not thousands, of folkloric Indian dance forms.
- Bharatanatyam is one of the oldest styles of Indian dance and can be traced back to the Kaisiki style.
- Bharatanatyam is a classical Southern style of Indian dance originating from Tamil Nadu.
- This specific dance style is designed to accompany songs that honor and/or describe a God's story.
- Bharatanatyam can be performed as a group, however it is traditionally performed by solo dancers, either male or female. Only until most recently have males been performing this dance style.
- The dance is now being performed outside it in a non-sacred or religious setting and seen in Bollywood films and across the globe.
- Bharatanatyam, along with the other classical Indian dances share 108 Karanas, or "key transitional movements and poses".
- For Nupur Bharatanatyam Nrityalaya (the specific style I learned), there are 28 Asamyuktas (single hand gestures), 23 Samyuktas (combined hand gestures), 150 Adavus ("beat of the foot"), many Shiro bhedas (head movements), griva bhedas (neck movements), and drishti bhedas (eye movements).
- Bharatanatyam is so fascinating to watch and incredibly difficult to perform because there is not only complex foot and hand movement work, but the performer must also have very specific head and eye movements that accompany each movement.

Methods

- To create true fusion of two or more dance forms, the dancer must first master the forms being fused.
- During my 2009 stay in India, I learned from Dr. Surashree Joshi and Nupur Bharatnattiyam Nrityalaya.
- I was able to complete enough step combinations in order to self teach myself the rest of the Bharatnattiyam manual provided by Dr. Joshi.
- I composed a choreography of a simple Bharatanatyam dance for my belly dance troupe at the time, Cold Fusion Tribal Belly dance .
- I kept in mind the meaning of movements associated with song choices and troupe member's physical abilities when choreographing.

Results

- The song I chose to choreograph, for the Bharatanatyam fusion group piece, was to a Russian song by the artist, Kitka, titled "Ne Po Pogrebu Bochochek Kataetsja."
- When choreographing I made sure to include the Nameskar (greeting movements) and other basic movements associated with this dance form.
- The choreography was then taught to local dance troupe Cold Fusion and performed at Tundra Caravan's Suzanne Delvecchio showcase on October 8th, 2010 at 7:30pm at Dance Theatre Fairbanks' Edna Wise Theater.



Discussion

- The initial performance went very well and was well received by the audience.
- The choreography was performed at many events including, the Tanana Valley State Fair, the Diwali Festival at UAF and many other bellydance events.
- This project lead to me teaching a classical Indian dance workshop accompanied by Rachel Heilman.
- Although there are many things I wish I could improve upon with the choreographed and taught fusion dance, in the end it only inspires me to create other choreographies that are more dynamic and challenging.