



Neelima Raju

Kuchipudi Dancer and Choreographer

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Kuchipudi, is a unique performance tradition from Southeast India. Theatre, Dance and Music traditions have existed in various parts of India since the second century BC. In the 13th century AD, based on the existing religious, social, political, economic, and cultural atmosphere a unique travelling, all male, theatrical, musical and dance tradition was codified by an ascetic named Siddhendra Yogi in the village of Kuchipudi. This unique form, known as Kuchipudi, taking the name of the village, evolved through the centuries and was passed on as an oral tradition between the mentor and the student. The performance uses rhythm (feet), movement (body and space), and gesture and mime techniques for communication of abstract or contextual pieces.

About Neelima- Neelima started learning dance since 1985. Most of the traditional performing arts are taught as a mentorship, in India. She joined the Kuchipudi Kalakshetra, a premier institution for Kuchipudi and was mentored by Mr Hari Rama Murthy and internationally renowned choreographer and Guru Dr Vempati Chinna Satyam since 1987. Both her mentors hail from the village of Kuchipudi and are the hereditary practioners of the art form. Performing since the year 1994 she has many solo performances to her credit, winning the approval of critics and dance lovers alike. Her choreography is based on the traditional idiom, yet explores new dimensions in the art form of Kuchipudi.

Selected Performances-

- ❖ 2016: 1.Sai Temple, Richmond, Virginia; 2. First Niagara Rochester International Fringe Festival, Rochester, NY.
- ❖ 2013: 1.Hindu Temple Society, NY; 2.Chicago Fringe Festival, Chicago.
- ❖ 2012: 1.Hindu Temple, Atlanta; 2.SVTemple, Pittsburgh; 3.Albany Indian Association, Albany.
- ❖ 2011: 1.Kent State University, Canton; 2.Sai Narayana Organization, Richmond, VA.
- ❖ 2010: 1.Kalabharathi, India; 2.India International Center, New Delhi, India; 3.Henrico County Theatre, Richmond, VA.
- ❖ Kuchipudi Nrityotsav (1997-Central Sangeet Natak Academy); Vishaka Utsav (1996 & 1998 Govt of Andhra Pradesh); Sagar Utsav (1999 Dept of Culture, Govt of Andhra Pradesh); 4th Biennial World Telugu Conference (2000); Gunghroo Festival (2001, Ustad Allaudin Khan Sangeet Academy, Govt of M.P); Konark Music and Dance Festival (2002); Annual Music and Dance Festival (2002-Chennai); Tour of Orrisa (2003, South Zone Cultural Center, Govt of India); National Center for the Performing Arts, Mumbai (2006); Triveni (2006-USA); Indian Association of Buffalo (2007).

Current Solo Repertoire-

- ❖ **Kuchipudi-A dance and theatre tradition from India.** Running Time-1hr 30 min. Choreographer Ms Neelima Raju
- ❖ **Kuchipudi through the ages. “*Shastra, Viniyoga and Prayoga*”-Selected works from the traditional repertoire.** Running Time-1hr 30 min.
- ❖ **Sacred and Sensual-Gods and Goddesses of India.** Through this evening length’s solo dance performance work, I explore the inner intangible masculine and feminine energies as tangible external representations of gods and goddesses. The work consists of five dance pieces with an English introduction before each piece. The dance pieces are either describing the attributes or telling a story about the exploits of the god or goddess. Choreographers Ms Neelima Raju. Running Time-2hr.
- ❖ **Exploration of Vishnu Tattvam through the medium of Poetry, Song and Dance.** Running Time- 2hr
- ❖ **Nayika, the Protagonist.** Running Time- 2hr

Selected Press-

1. **Truly classic**– “Neelima performed a full-fledged concert adhering to the tradition.” The Hindu, 2010.
2. **Neelima Raju’s Kuchipudi solo wowed.** “She danced her way into the hearts of the audience. Enchantingly the effort seemed to be successful explorations of the ideal of making the dance assume an exquisite form of visual music.” The Hindu, 2006.
3. “Neelima exhibited remarkable grasp of the lyrical grace of the Ashtapadhi and its erotic aura of abiding passion in the broad play of divine love between Radha and Krishna in the rite of spring.” The Indian Express, 2006.
4. “The presentation of various expressions from the well-known composition of Goswami Tulsidas proved that Kuchipudi is traditional among all styles. Audience was spell bound by the performance of Neelima on the plate. She was successful in leaving a memorable mark in the heart of the audience.” The Times of India, Jabalpur, 2001.
5. **“Neelima Raju- delicate and intricate patterns. Poised performance. Elan and aesthetics mark Neelima Raju’s dance recital.”** The Hindu, 2001.
6. “The charming Kuchipudi recital by promising danseuse Neelima Raju, impressed the art lovers. With a flair for expression, her recital was impressive.” The Indian Express, 2001.
7. “Neelima, sans exuberance, that is so common in classical dance recitals nowadays, stood out as a paradigm of balance between *nritta*, *nritya* and *natya*.” The Hindu, 1997.
8. **“Grace says it all**– Be it Shringara, Ananda or Veera rasa, with delectable quality of precision and beauty, her exposition of various facets of *Rasabhava* mirrored her fecund imagination, spontaneity and appreciation of the nuances of the composition. Neelima’s footwork, full of lithe grace is indication of her dedication to the art.” The Indian Express, 1997.

Residency Activities- We work with presenters to create dynamic residencies for your community. Our performances and outreach activities are effective in any number of settings including theaters, schools, colleges and universities, museums, community centers, art and dance centers and more. Residency activities may include:

Performances: We are available for professionally presented performances in a wide variety of venues from proscenium theaters to alternative spaces. Performances are tailored to your specific needs.

Pre/Post-Performance Q&A: One of the favorite outreach activities, the question and answer session provides an opportunity for our audiences to talk to the dancers and musicians about our work. Often mediated by the presenter or a dance professional, topics can range from the choreographic process, Indian Culture and issues specifically related to Indian dance.

Master classes and Workshops: We offer classes and workshops to adults with any level of experience. Disciplines taught include: Indian dance technique of Kuchipudi, Improvisation, creative movement and choreography and composition. We also offer master classes for intermediate and advanced students, as well as special 'intensives' providing more concentrated study of particular themes or approaches.

Lecture Demonstrations: Lecture demonstrations are often a good choice for community centers, schools, conferences, libraries, or other public venues, which lack the space or resources for a performance or workshop but are interested in learning about our work. Demonstrations may include video presentation, slides or other media aids, and short physical demonstrations.

Lectures on Indian Dance/Culture or Dance Theatre traditions of South Asia/India: Neelima, has learned dance in a strict mentorship model which are still being followed as a traditional method of learning dance and music in India. Training involves developing sensitivity for music (ear) and the visual (dance) without the aid of any books, videos or audio, relying on memory alone. Lectures on the training methodology, creative improvisation techniques or the history of the performing art practices and their evolution provide a very in-depth and firsthand knowledge for audiences, students as well as connoisseurs of performing arts in universities, colleges and schools.