



SAMA

Sama Arts and Akademi present

SADIR:

Dancing for Rajahs, Nawabs, and the Officers of the Raj

Dora Salaam | 18th century

The common subjects of South Indian Kings addressed their ministers, men of nobility and later, the colonial officers respectfully as Dora sahib. Invoking a Salaam to welcome the Dora is a Sultanate practice that was imbued into Sadir. In this piece, Serfoji II, the Maratha King of Tanjore is welcomed. The Dora Salaam will be preceded by a “birudu,” or recitation of the genealogy and titles of Serfoji in Marathi as was done in his court.

Pada Varnam | 19th century | Sarasa ninnu- Karnataka kapi (raga)

The ethos of Sadir repertoire is situated within the courtly aesthetic realm of bhoga (enjoyment). The legendary musicians, Tanjore Quartet, composed pada varnams where the protagonist in the poetry is the dance artist. While she addresses Lord Brihadeeswara, the presiding deity of Tanjore she also is flirting with him, inviting him to make love. This Varnam is illustrious in Sadir vocabulary and was a courtly display of bhoga at the Tanjore palace.

“Enough of the flirting...I am in the dizzy of desire, fondle my breasts, kiss me and make love...”

Thumri | 18th century | Poem (Moulana Baqhir Agah Vellori) - Charukesi (raga)

Under the patronage of the Sadathullah Khan, the Nawab of Arcot (Madras) literary genres thrived in Persian, Arabic and Deccani Urdu. Artistes from across India, including 400 tawaiif’s came to settle in the Nawab’s court and were known as Kanchini’s. They performed Persian and Deccani poems composed by great Sufi masters. Later, Kanchini’s came as far away from Wajid Ali Shah’s court and brought with them Awadhi music and culture. This fused with southern traditions to create a distinct Nawabi repertoire.

“Company” Javali | 18th century | Oh!

My lovely lalana (Karur Sivaramaiyya)-Kharaharapriya (raga)

Manali Muthukrishna Mudali (Moody Kitsna) was a prominent dubash (interpreter) to the British officers in Madras Presidency. A patron of artistes, he hosted many banquet dinners accompanied by country music and native Sadir dancing for the officers of the Raj. Creatively titillating bespoke pieces were composed, mainly to entertain the officers leading to an explosive development of the javali genre. Oh my lovely lalana specially composed for General Pigot is a fine example of company (Kambeeni) Javali and the cosmopolitan atmosphere in which Sadir thrived.

Gujili (Parsi) Javali | 19th century | Hindustani Mettu- George Town Narayanasami

The word Gujili originates from Kucharar or Kuchiliyar referring to the sizeable Gujarati population that inhabited Madras in the 18th-19th centuries. The elite literary circles - while looking down upon Gujili literature - subsumed much from it. This, fused with the popularity of Parsi theatre at this time, produced many Gujili songs in popular tunes called Hindustani Mettu with Iranian and even Tajik influence. This piece depicts the heroine, teasing the hero who stands outside her house but is not emboldened to enter due to fear of what others might think. She teases him and mocks his cowardice, even as she cajoles him to come inside.

Nottu Swaram and Anthem | Early 20th century

Indian composers were intrigued by military, marching band music and celtic tunes. Christian Fredrich Schwartz - a Dutch missionary in Serfoji’s court arranged many of these

notations. Court composers were inspired by these, and Nottuswaram's were born. Part of the Sadir repertoire, this set is interspersed with the British National Anthem, composed in Sanskrit in 1912 by Narasimha Rao Naidu to commemorate the arrival of King George V and Queen Mary at the Delhi Durbar.

Credits

Dr Swarnamalya Ganesh, Performer

Swarnamalya is a trained Bharatanatyam dancer, an Indian actress and TV anchor. Over the years, she has anchored several shows, acted in films across various languages and performed on many stages all over the world. She has a Masters in Bharatanatyam and PhD in Dance History from Madras University.

Chitra Sundaram, Guest Artistic Director

Chitra is a choreographer, Bharatanatyam performer, mentor and educator. Her research concerns the problems and potential of classical forms in cross-cultural and intergenerational transmission of narratives. Chitra is on the board of Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, an Associate Lecturer at Goldsmiths and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

Dr Avanthi Meduri, Cambridge introduction

Dr. Avanthi Meduri is a scholar, dancer, actress, playwright, curator and an arts administrator. She is internationally recognized as the founder of postcolonial devadasi dance studies in India/US and UK. She is a Reader at University of Roehampton, London and ex-convenor of South Asian Dance Studies at University of Roehampton, London.

Acknowledgements and Staff

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Akademi Team | Mira Kaushik OBE, Kirsten Burrows, Antareepa Thakur, Christina Christou, Sydney Rae, Claire Farmer, Rohanne Udall, Apollonia Bauer and Catherine Ibbotson.

Guru Bharadwaj, Mridangam Artist

Guru is a young mridangist hailing from a traditional family in Andhra Pradesh. He is well recognised for his fine and nuanced playing techniques best suited for dance concerts. Apart from being an accomplished mridangist, Guru also composes jatis and korvais patterns for many modern-day Bharatanatyam dancers.

Srikrishnan Balasubramanian, Harmoniumist

Srikrishnan is a disciple of Carnatic and Hindustani musical traditions. The fourth-generation musician from his family, he performs with prominent artists in India and abroad. He plays both the Harmonium and the violin. Srikrishnan has been accompanying Dr. Swarnamalya Ganesh for over a decade.

(Mysore) Sangeetha Sudhir, Vocalist

Sangeetha is an award-winning vocal artist in Carnatic music, singing for prominent senior dance artists. She is also a violinist, in the Parur style, performing in duet with her husband K.J. Dileep. In 2017, Sangeetha represented India in Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa and performed as an Indian Cultural Delegate.

Balaji, Mandolin

A senior disciple of Mandolin genius U. Shrinivas, Balaji has performed world over both with his guru and as a solo artiste. The under tones that Shrinivas ji devised in playing techniques of mandolin lends itself as a soulful accompaniment to Sadir. Balaji is working on solo albums and covers. He is currently living in London.



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Akademi is the UK's leading South Asian Dance organisation. It develops artists, inspires audiences and changes lives.

Sama Arts Network is one of the UK's oldest and most influential arts organisations in the genre of traditional and contemporary South Asian arts.