



"The interplay of the sculptural and rhythmic aspects of Indian dance was compelling...riveting" – The New York Times

"[Jiva Dance] make the movement of the cosmos visible on a human scale." – California Literary Review

"...technical precision and geometric skill..." – The New York Times

Jiva Dance is a critically acclaimed dance company based in NYC. Jiva Dance, under the artistic direction of Sonali Skandan. Jiva Dance holds the belief that **tradition is a continuum of evolution and invigorates classical works with a freshness and unique voice**. Jiva investigates, explores and creates works which highlight the evolving nature of our art form. They have presented at Universities, Colleges, and Festivals across the US and internationally.

Artistic Director's Statement

Jiva Dance strives to present work that is inclusive. We are not tied to Bharatanatyam's cultural specificity, but create work that reflects our lives in a diverse urban environment. And though the art form in which we predominantly work has historical and cultural ties, we feel the vocabulary of movement and expression has the ability to transcend both time and culture. The Company creates original works with modern themes, re-energizes classical pieces with

innovative design and staging and continually seeks to push the boundaries of expression. We believe that Indian classical dance is a holistic art form, and is not fixed but is continually evolving.



"...sharp control and stunning speed culminate in ecstasy...Skandan's choreography here has a follow-through of motion that is somehow natural yet tense with the pull of mystery." – NYtheatre.com

Jiva Dance, the professional dance Company of Jiva Performing Arts, has received considerable recognition in the press and has been recognized as a leader in the arts. Jiva was invited to bring classical Indian dance to the Joffrey Ballet School roster for the first time in its 63-year history. Jiva Dance presented work in major venues in the US, becoming the first Indian Classical dance company to be presented at the prestigious Victory Dance Series at the New Victory Theater, the first Indian Classical company to be part of the CUNY Dance Initiative (2017 and 2018) at Queens College, as well as performing

for Juilliard's new online educational program. Jiva Dance was also featured on NBC Learn, in a short documentary titled "Why We Dance." Jiva Dance's first dance film short, 'Urban Nritya,' has received much attention, and was an official selection in the 17th NY Indian Film Festival. Jiva has been supported by the NEA, NYSCA, The NYC Dept. Of Cultural Affairs, Dance/NYC, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and receives ongoing private donations to continue its work from its supportive patrons and community base.

About the choreographer



Sonali Skandan is a passionate dancer and choreographer whose work has been described as "natural yet tense with the pull of mystery." (nytheatre.com), and highlighting the "interplay of the sculptural and rhythmic aspects of Indian dance was compelling...riveting" (Alastair Macaulay, NY Times). Sonali has been an NYC resident for over 30 years, and her work reflects the urban, dynamic and diverse atmosphere inherent in the city. Sonali is the Artistic Director of Jiva Performing Arts, where she teaches and creates engaging dance productions to increase the accessibility of the classical arts, and Jiva Dance, a professional dance company presenting compelling works based on Bharatanatyam.

featured in Juilliard's online course for Bharatanatyam. Over the course of her career, Sonali has proven to be one of the leaders ushering in a new generation of Indian Classical dance presentation in the US.

Press Quotes

"The juxtaposition of her slim, almost wraith-like frame against the cyclorama showed vulnerability and hope. Using Bharatanatyam as her foundation, Sonali superimposed visuals of another film where her frame was silhouetted against the sun, a warm orb in the horizon across the waters. This was a smart way of using film to amplify the visual impact of her choreographic motifs." - Anita Ratnam, *Narthaki.com* June 2021

"The interplay of the sculptural and rhythmic aspects of Indian dance was compelling...riveting" - Alastair Macaulay, *The New York Times*, August 2015

"Tightly choreographed and interestingly varied choral interludes for the four horsemen sweep the action along, bind the apocalyptic solos into a unified composition, and showcase the technical proficiency of these capable dancers...I found this work to be an exciting development that demonstrates the strong voices and talented proponents of Indian classical arts who are creating and performing stimulating work right here in the United States." - Karen Greenspan, *The Ballet Review*, Fall-Winter 2019

"Also, Bharatanatyam has well and truly entered the 21st century as it engages with an increasingly wide range of themes and ideas, pushing into thought-provoking political and socio-cultural realms, the abstract and the concrete, and embracing the myths, stories and issues of the world at large...The dancing, by all four dancers, was absolutely top-notch. The choreography was outstanding, and the whole production was tightly woven together and perfectly executed." - *Narthaki.com* April 2019

"These dancers turns their bodies into a language; as if every hand-motion or foot stomp is a hieroglyphic. By the end of their act, you swear they could be painted on the sacred walls of pyramids because they are so visually potent." - *diandreviewsitall.com*



"[Skandan's] charisma on stage permeated every piece and drew the eyes of the audience as she shifted her gaze in conjunction with the movement. The five dancers that performed as part of Jiva Dance were all convincing in their commitment to the dance's precise structure..." - Annie Woller, *Eye on the Arts*, Sept. 2014

"...technical precision and geometric skill..." - Alastair Macaulay, *The New York Times*, August 2012

"It is this devotional aspect of Indian dance that latter-day choreographers tend to emphasize, as did American Bharata Natyam practitioner Sonali Skandan with a section of *Swarupa: Infinite Form*, a meditative ensemble piece less to do with the gods than with our worship of them." - Apollinaire Scherr, *Financial Times*, August 2012

"The choreography - full of statuesque balances and sharp lines formed by the arms - was attractively modest

and had simple but powerful geometries..." - Ryan Wenzel, *DanceTabs*, August 2012

"The ensemble performed three works, of which the most vivid was perhaps Shadjam, a vignette that depicted a group of girls preparing for a visit by Shiva, in his lover-man guise. As they combed each other's hair and praised each other's beauty (in mime), I could see the next group preparing in a tent off-stage, busy with similar tasks. For a moment, art intermingled with life." - Marina Harss, *TheFasterTimes.com*, August 2012

"Sonali Skandan and Jiva Dance are very much a part of New York, bringing their own sensibilities to the ancient dances of Bharat Natyam." - Lavina Melwani, *Lassiwithlavina.com*, August 2012

"Skandan's sharp control and stunning speed culminate in ecstasy...Skandan's choreography here has a follow-through of motion that is somehow natural yet tense with the pull of mystery." - *NYtheatre.com*, August 2011

"Two of this year's most impressive pieces came from companies specializing in narrative dance, and their energy, discipline and passion bodes well for the future. Choreographer Sonali Skandan pays close attention to the details (wherein God resides, according to the old adage). Small, subtle movements are as much a part of the story as the large angular and sinuous shapes created by colorfully clad limbs in motion. Eye gestures, smiles of irony, and wistful tilts of the head make the movements of the cosmos visible on a human scale." - Ethan Kanfer, "Life After Fringe: Two Dance Companies to Watch," *California Literary Review*, August 2011

Current repertoire

B'Rhythm (2019-2021) - work in progress showing at Drive East Festival, La MaMa, full premiere at NYC Open Streets - Garfield Place, Brooklyn supported by NEA

The Four Horsemen (2019) World premiere March 2019 at Dixon Place, NYC. An evening-length dance production that explores the human metaphors of the four horsemen of conquest, war, famine and death, through the very real stories of female protagonists. Challenging the notions of Indian classical dance content and technique, these intimately relatable stories bring the never-ending cycle of despair and hope vividly to life.



Mayura:Blue Peacock (2014)

The evening-length work uses classical poetry and literature to weave vivid images of the peacock from Indian myths and legends - from the powerful ancient Mayil Virutham which praises the peacock as Lord Muruga's vehicle, to the lilting epics of Kalidasa describing the peacock in the rains, as a reminder of Ram's longing for Sita, to the love songs of Andal and Mirabhai. Original music score by Rajkumar Bharathi.

From Heaven and Earth (2011-2012)

A selection of solo items where the earthly become the divine, where ritual and daily life merge, and the Gods and Goddesses walk the earth. Sonali presents classical pieces and original pieces with the theme of devotion and desire as their crux.

Swarupa: Infinite Form (2011)

Through the poetic movement and storytelling of the Indian Classical Dance form of Bharatanatyam, we encounter the dynamic forms of Shiva – from his dance of bliss to his dance of anger and destruction, to the love, longing, desire, and devotion felt by all those who seek him. Swarupa is an evening-length work that presents a suite of solos, duets and dynamic group pieces that speak of the all-mighty dance of Shiva – and the fear, joy and love that he manifests through his dance. The result is a richly evocative and soulful experience of classical music and dance.

Rasa/Laya (2009)

Rasa, or flavor, mood and Laya, or rhythm combine in a joyful expression of group dance where classical items are presented in dynamic group formations and interactions.

Solo Works (Current)

A journey into the solo art of Bharatanatyam, where the art is manifested in its full form- from the intricate footwork to eloquent abhinaya. Margam meaning “path,” is a journey the dancer takes from the simple to the complex, from devotion to love and finally to bliss.

Dance on Camera Work

*** Produced and Presented two Dance on Camera festivals:**

Still Point Expanding (2020)

Dualities (2021)

(un) silent voices (2022)

“The Naughty Bee” (2021) Commissioned by Erasing Borders Festival of Dance

“The Sun Unto A Day” (2021) Commissioned by The World Music Institute for Dancing the Gods Festival

“The Backyard” (2020) commissioned for Narthaki’s virtual Series Boxed

“Into Nature” - a film short using hand gestures within nature

“Melting” - a short dance film commissioned by Jiva’s Still Point Expanding Festival (2020)

‘Bharatanatyam in a Modern World’ (2017) by NBC Learn – Jiva Dance was featured in a vibrant video featured on NBC Learn’s educational portal, featuring music by Bala Skandan and Akshara.

<http://nbclearn.com/portal/site/learn/cuecard/110980>

‘Urban Nritta’ (2016) – A Dance Film short concept and choreography by Sonali Skandan, directed by Jesse Newman, 2017 official selection for the NY Indian Film Festival. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P64yDi9EfYw>

‘Why We Dance’ (2016) - Sonali presents solo work for the online magazine Mental Floss

<https://www.facebook.com/mentalflossmagazine/videos/10154477101217365/?pnref=story>

Selected Performances

New Victory Theatre, NYC

Madras Music Academy, Chennai

2011 International Fringe Festival

Fashion Institute of Technology

Natyanjali Music and Dance Festivals

American Dance Guild Festival

IAAC Erasing Borders Festival

Centre Mandapa, Paris, France

Joyce/Soho, NYC

Toronto International Dance Festival, Canada

Nehru Centre London, UK

Narthaki Festival of Dance, Houston, TX

Atlas Performing Arts Center, Washington, DC

Downtown Dance Festival, NYC

Dance/Now Festival, NYC

Rubin Museum of Art, NYC

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

Queens Museum of Art, NY

University of Queens, Charlotte, NC

Dumbo Dance Festival, NYC

Oxford College, Atlanta, GA

St. Lawrence University Canton, NY

El Cachorro, Sevilla, Spain

Eka Palace, Lisbon, Portugal

Jamaica Dance Festival

Lincoln Center, NYC

Asia Society, NYC

IDEA Living Dance Festival, Washington, DC

Sruti Organization, Philadelphia, PA

Sun to Stars Festival, NYC

92Y Harkness Dance Center and Musical

Introduction Series

Columbia University, NYC

New York University, NYC

Yale University, CT

Fordham University, NYC

Elmira College, Elmira, NY

Hunter College, NYC

Manhattanville College, NY

Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY

Queens College, NY

SUNY, Cortland

Flushing Town Hall

Stephen Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

Tagore Center, Berlin Germany

Espacio Rhonda, Madrid, Spain

Spazio Sirin, Milan, Italy

Ramapo College, NJ

Yale University

Dixon Place



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Websites

For information about the company, visit:

www.jivadance.org

For more information about Jiva Performing Arts, visit:

<http://www.jivaperformingarts.org>



<https://www.facebook.com/jivaperformingarts/>



<https://www.instagram.com/jivaarts/>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs4vucGaxRfhgTRiiu-M7g>



<https://vimeo.com/channels/jivadance>

