

# P R O F I L E



NAVIA  
Natarajan

<http://www.navianatarajan.com>

Email: [navnat\\_9@yahoo.com](mailto:navnat_9@yahoo.com)

Ph: +91 95380 15436 (India)



*“When an artist embarks on a theme, it usually stems out of her life experiences. These experiences layer the choreography, and as she journeys through the piece, the process itself becomes exhilarating. Performance is just a reflection of that journey.”*



A whirling vortex of energy and grace, accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer, Navia Natarajan, has a luminous presence on stage. Whether she is performing a complex sequence of adavus or a free flowing dramatic piece steeped in abhinaya, Navia embodies impeccable flexibility, rhythm and technique besides stillness and beauty.

But beyond the flawlessness of her craft and the ability to express abstract ideas, the dancer's performances cast a spell of deep emotion. Neither hybrid nor experimental, Navia's dance is rooted in classicism, taking its cues and inspiration from the present.

She stays true to the rigors of classical technique but injects her dancing with creativity and vision that are uniquely her own. Approaching her art with a questioning and experimental spirit, she thinks about the dance with a modern mind, energizing the beauty and elegance of its classical idiom with the vitality and vibrancy of contemporary thought. In her performances, the traditional repertoire of movements - the intricate footwork, the deft flicks of the wrist and the neck, the subtle and dramatic flicker of facial expressions and the rapid spins and elegant turns of the waist - are expressed in pristine classical glory. Above all, she is ever so graceful in the rare Vazhavor style.

Bharathanatyam, the supreme art form which skillfully embodies the three primary ingredients of dance - Bhava, Raga, Thala, fascinated Navia at a tender age. In her early years, she demonstrated keen interest and dedication forged by innate talent and sincerity. At the age of ten, she had her arangetram under Smt. Radhika Kalyani (a renowned student of Smt. Chitra Visweswaran and Guru K. J. Sarasa, Chennai). Later she was trained under Guru Smt. Padmini Ramachandran (Director - Natyapriya, Bangalore). She has been further honing her skills with Guru Sri A. Lakshmanaswamy (Artistic Director - Nrithyalakshana, Chennai) and Abhinaya exponent Smt. Bragha G. Bessell.

Blessed with natural flair for the art, and relentless single-minded devotion, she has evolved into her present state as an elite performing artist.

Her abilities were recognized very early on and she has received numerous scholarships and awards throughout her career. Her elaborate and elite performances - both in doing traditional Margam pieces as well as contemporary themes have won all round appreciation and accolades from the press and public alike. Today, Navia is truly an accomplished dancer, performing all over India, the United States of America, Europe and the Middle East.

Though Navia holds a Master's Degree in Microbiology (from the University of Bangalore, India) and worked as a Research Assistant at the Vittal Mallya Scientific Research Foundation in Bangalore, she opted to be one with the passion of her heart - Bharathanatyam.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Recipient of the prestigious "Yuva Kala Bharathi 2011" award from Bharat Kalachar, Chennai, India - December, 2011
- ◆ "Kala Rathna" award at Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana Festival, Cleveland, USA - April, 2014
- ◆ Recipient of the "Sanatan Nritya Puraskar 2010" from Sanatan Sangeet Sanskriti, New Delhi in recognition of outstanding talent and potential for the future in Indian Classical Dance, New Delhi, India - December, 2010
- ◆ Empanelled artist of ICCR (India Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi)
- ◆ Recipient of Scholarship from CCRT (Centre for Cultural Resources and Training), New Delhi, India
- ◆ Recipient of Scholarship from the Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India
- ◆ Top grade 'A+' grade auditioned artist of Prasar Bharathi, Broadcasting Corporation of India, Doordarshan, New Delhi, India
- ◆ "Natya Kala Mani" from Trinity Arts Festival of India, Chennai, India -November 2023
- ◆ Recipient of the Devdasi National award during the observation of 18th Devdasi National Dance Festival, Bhubaneswar, India - December 2024

# NOTEWORTHY PRODUCTIONS

## Agni

Agni is a powerful conceptual piece that explores the sacred elements of fire in all its forms and manifestations.



## Virodhabhasa - The Paradox



"Form is Emptiness. Emptiness is Form," says the Buddhist Heart Sutra speaking of the paradox that lies at the core of all phenomena. Indeed, the world we inhabit is itself a paradox for it is both real and an appearance: Maya. So to better appreciate this world, one needs to look more deeply at what seem like opposites or contradictions.

"A real life experience that held within it both sadness and peace led me to consider more deeply this idea of Paradox. As I lived through those difficult days, my thinking about 'paradox' began to transform and find expression in my dance." says Navia.

## BHARATHAM KATHAI KATHAIYAM (*Story Narration through Dance*)

This experimental production commissioned by Natyarangam (the dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha, Chennai, India) brought together mime, classical dance and music.



## NOTEWORTHY PRODUCTIONS

### Namayachi Jani

#### - *The Songs of the Stonemill*

A musical exploration of the life and teachings of Sant Janabai, as reflected in the poems ('abhangs') attributed to Janabai herself. She was a prominent saint-poetess of the Varkari sampradaya (Maharashtra). This production is a melting-pot for different musical genres, weaving together Bharathanatyam, dhruwad and traditional music of the Varkaris. The presentation is interspersed with narration in English, expressing the deep, philosophical meanings of Janabai's poetry. Concept and Music Direction - Janhavi Phansalkar, Choreography and Performance - Navia Natarajan.



### Earthen Pot

The Earthen Pot carrying the ashes of a loved one at the center of it - all seem to point to an elusive truth. What does it symbolize? She wonders. What lies at its depth? Is it just mortal remains we see or the

experiences of a lifetime? The 'Earthen Pot' premiered at the 15th Natya Darshan Conference of Kartik Fine Arts. Designing Space: The Creative Process, Dance Symposium, curated by Malavika Sarrukai, Chennai, India.



### Chitra Bharatham

Performance based on paintings of S. Ragam - commissioned by Natyarangam (the dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha, Chennai, India) brought together a synergistic confluence of contemporary Indian Painting and Bharathanatyam.

# NOTEWORTHY PRODUCTIONS

## Quest Unsaid

Tells the age-old story of Karna from the Mahabharata with a universality that not only makes the mythological character come alive but makes him relatable and interesting to present-day audiences.



## Reflections of Mandodari - *An Act on perspectives*

Mandodari's character and her experiences as depicted in various versions are intriguing as she goes through situations that test her resolve and mental makeup. Mandodari in this

act reflects and possibly imagines a situation where she asks what she could have done. Did she wither away, did she stand the test of love or was something else expected. Presented for Transparent Critiquing at the 39th Natya Kala conference curated by Guru Smt. Rama Vaidhyathan, Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai.

## Draupadi

Born from sacrificial fire and not from the womb, Draupadi embodies the quest for justice and the fierce spirit of womanhood, the violation of which at any level compels one to stand up for oneself. And that is no easy feat. It's her confidence and competence that drive her to take a vow for the deep dishonour she faced and her demand for retribution.

# MAJOR PERFORMANCES

- ◆ Annual Dance Festival conducted by The Madras Music Academy, Chennai
- ◆ Kalavaahini's Dance for Dance Chennai, for Guru Malavika Sarukkai's Kalavaahini Trust
- ◆ Namayachi Jani - A Musical and Dance exploration of the life and teachings of Jana Bai, at Bangalore International Centre
- ◆ Natyakala conference - "Nirikshana" 2019 curated by Guru Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan
- ◆ Gandharva Mahavidyalaya's "Prastaar" Dance Festival, New Delhi
- ◆ Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Award Festival, Bhubaneswar, Orissa
- ◆ National Center for Performing Arts - Mumbai
- ◆ DANCE Discourse curated by Ashish Mohan Khokar
- ◆ The Dance Festival by Sangeet Natak Academy, New Delhi and Kerala
- ◆ Natyarangam (The Dance wing of Naradha Gana Sabha, Chennai) Thematic Festival
- ◆ HCL Concert by India Habitat Centre - New Delhi
- ◆ India International Centre - New Delhi
- ◆ Kinkini Festival- Bangalore
- ◆ "Parampara", Soorya Festival, Trivandrum, Kerala Kalamandalam, Deemed University for Art & Culture Vallathol Nagar, Cheruthuruthy, Thrissur Dt. Kerala
- ◆ Khajuraho Dance Festival



## PERFORMANCES ABROAD

- ◆ Drive East Indian Music and Dance Festival, New York
- ◆ Sampradaya Dance Creation's Momentum Festival - a presentation festival to showcase the diversity and richness of South Asian dance forms and provide a platform for artists to share their artistry with global audiences
- ◆ Erasing Border Dance Festival by Indo - American Arts Council, New York
- ◆ Korzo's India Dance Festival, Korzo theater, The Hague
- ◆ Nehru Centre - London
- ◆ Nrithya Upahaar, International Festival of Classical Dance, London
- ◆ Yuvabharathi, San Jose, CA, USA
- ◆ IDIA 2019 - "I dance, Hence I am", San Jose, California, USA
- ◆ Performance for the "Youth Festival" organized by Soorya, stage and film society in eleven countries
- ◆ Performance at the fourth annual GAIT TO THE SPIRIT Festival, a festival of Indian Classical Dance, Presented by Mandala Arts & Culture, Vancouver, Canada
- ◆ Indian Fine Arts Academy - San Diego, California, USA
- ◆ A Tribute to Adi Yogi - Dance Performances - Isha Foundation, USA
- ◆ Collaborative project Bharatanatyam and Odissi Performances as part of Asia Alive, San Francisco Asian Art Museum, California, USA
- ◆ Tradition and Transcendence - Presentation for Sangam Arts, San Jose, CA, USA
- ◆ Performance at Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana, Cleveland, USA

## PRESS REVIEWS

*Biting in its restrained interpretative skill, this critic particularly liked the recital being culminated with the presentation of Draupadi - The Agniputri based on verses taken from Subramania Bharati's Panchali Sabatham, with some of the Tamil verses written by Prof Ragburaman and music scored by Ragburam Rajagopalan . . . There was none of the usual scene of Dushasana dragging Draupadi by the hair, pulling her robe and finally submitting to defeat while trying to disrobe her. The dancer wincing, holding on to her head with a pained expression was sufficient to convey what was happening - for after all abhinaya is the craft of suggestion more than an actual portrayal. And then came the final curse in menacing calm, of not putting up her loose hair, till it was anointed with the blood of Dushasana.*

Leela Venkataraman, Narthaki, January 23, 2025

Moments of movement and melody from Music Academy's mega dance festival - Taalam:  
column by Leela Venkataraman

*"Virodhabbasa is an exciting progression towards new and abstract themes in dance . It came through beautifully in Navia's intense performance."*

~ V.V Ramani, The Hindu, 9th Jan 2025

<https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/music/navia-natarajan-comes-up-with-an-abstract-theme-for-her-bharatanatyam-performance/article69075733.ece>

*"Navia's Bharatanatyam, characterized by very expressive fingers, combines excellent lines with deep internalization."*

~ Leela Venkataraman, Narthaki, 4th Jan 2025

<https://narthaki.com/info/taalam/taalam198.html>

*"There are times when you question life and there are moments when your whole life teeters as you examine a question. With Virodhabbasa - The Paradox, Navia Natarajan throws both into luminescent light, while also expanding the narrative, representative, and interpretative repertoire of Bharatanatyam. It also sets up Navia again, as a dancer unafraid of bringing her intellectual, strong, technical, vulnerable, exponential dancer-selves to be in communion with us and the Divine."*

~ Priya Das, Narthaki, 9th Dec 2022

<https://narthaki.com/info/rev22/rev2809.html>

*"Despite Navia's enrapturing performance, she managed to deftly slip away from the spotlight both literally and figuratively, when needed. It takes an artists of high maturity to pull off something like this ."*

Sajan Sankaran, The Hindu, 23ed March, 2023

<https://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/music/abhanga-in-dhrupad-mould/article66653130.ece>

## PRESS REVIEWS

*"A dancer with that concentrated stillness of internalized emotion, Navia's recital based on the larger theme of dance becoming one with that cosmic energy which can only be experienced, being beyond all form and description, was a tricky subject."*

~ Taalam by Leela Venkataraman, 19th Jan 2020

<https://narthaki.com/info/taalam/taalam110.html>

*"Making a measured entry with Shiva Spanda built round verses from Rudra Chamakam, Shiva Tandava Stotram and Nirvana Shatakam, Navia Natarajan in her performance showed herself to be an evolving dancer..."*

~ Leela Venkataraman, The Hindu 14th Jan 2016

<https://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/Facets-of-sringara/article13999468.ece>

*"Navia has matured in so many levels when it comes to her dance. Her abhinayam has gotten better from the previous years' performances in the season and one can see she has put in a lot of hard work and attempted genuinely in reaching new depths of substance in her art ..."*

~ Veejay Sai, Narthaki, 29th Jan 2014

*"...Navia Natarajan is one such passionate dancer that rasikas can bank their confidence on. With enough grooming from her older guru Padmini Ramachandran and A Lakshman, Navia's standing precedes her. Opening the fifth day of the academy's festival, Navia's performance proved her reputation right..."*

~ Veejay Sai, Narthaki, 14th Jan 2012

*"Experienced dancer Navia Natarajan trained under Padmini Ramachandran, A. Lakshman and Bragha Bessell, accompanied by a competent musical team comprising vocal support and nattuvangam by Sri Vatsa, Sri Ganesh (violin) and Chakrapani (violin), regaled the audience at the IIC auditorium, with her Bharatanatyam proficiency..."*

~ Leela Venkataraman, The Hindu, New Delhi, 26th Feb 2010

*"Bharatanatyam technique given its complete symmetry can impress by itself when immaculate. And it is on the strength of the perfect geometry of lines that Navia Natarajan's dance made its strong impact at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi as she danced under the HCL Concert Series ... Has flawless nritta, the linear perfection of her movements making her an ideal model for youngsters to watch."*

~ Leela Venkataraman, The Hindu, New Delhi, 21st Nov 2008