

## Serendipity Arts Festival 2024: Dance Highlights

This year's edition will witness an array of dance performances curated by **Geeta Chandran** and **Jayachandran Palazhy**. Geeta Chandran and Jayachandran Palazhy are both highly respected figures in the Indian classical and contemporary dance worlds respectively.

### Performances Curated by Geeta Chandran:

- **Sutra:**

This Odissi dance performance, featuring Sharmila Biswas, delves into the evolution of the classical dance form, combining traditional choreography with live music, projections, and an interactive set design. Through its seamless blend of past, present, and future, Sutra pays homage to Odissi's storytelling nature while modernizing its expression for contemporary audiences.

- **Parvathy Baul:**

A performance in Baul music from West Bengal by Parvathy Baul.

- **Aqeedat:**

"Aqeedat - Love's Union in the Divine", featuring Divya Goswami, is a Kathak dance performance set against a backdrop of Hindustani classical music that explores the timeless love of Sohni and Mahiwal, blending Indian classical forms with Punjabi folk traditions to convey a union beyond the physical realm. Through storytelling, music, and dance, it brings to life a spiritual journey of love's transcendence.

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# SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2024

- **Nautanki:**

An age-old folk tradition from the state of Uttar Pradesh, this Nautanki performance brings on stage the satire in its truest form.

- **Bhangra:**

This performance brings the grace and energy of Bhangra to the stage and compels the audience to dance along.

- **Songs of the Millstone:**

This dance performance, curated through the lens of women's work songs, explores the rhythms of everyday labour and the lives of women across India's diverse regions. Adapting traditional work songs such as the Ovi from Maharashtra, weaving songs from Punjab, Fado from Goa, and migration songs from Bihar, the performance delves into the invisible, unpaid labour that sustains society. Through music and dance, it brings forth the drudgery, camaraderie, and spiritual connection experienced by women, offering a poignant reflection on their labour and identity across domestic and public spaces.

- **Vismay Chakit:**

This performance blends the reverberating rhythm of Kathak with various percussion instruments that explode in resounding patterns. The unique fusion of Hybrid Drum set, Pakhawaj, Mann (a copper pot), with Kathak Ghonghrus, creates a conversation which speaks volumes.

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- **Legends: Bala Saraswati, Kelucharan Mohapatra and Sitara Devi:**

Highlighting the contribution of iconic dancers Balsaraswati (Bharatnatyam); Kelucharan Mohapatra (Odissi) and Sitara Devi (Kathak), this project showcases not just the impact these legends have made on the world of dance in their fields, but also the strong legacy they have left behind. In the case of all three dancers, short films will be screened on their work and life, followed by a performance by their grandchildren and a discussion.

## **Performances Curated by Jayachandran Palazhy:**

- **That's All, Folks:**

"That's All Folks!" by Damiano Ottavio Bigi and Alessandra Paoletti is a work that, on the one hand, sets the objective of investigating the nature of perception and time, questioning the distinction between reality, perception, and representation. On the other hand, it seeks a connection with something ancestral, with the rhythm of the environment surrounding us through the study of ancient rituals and cultures that sink their roots into the distant past and still emanate echoes of those mythological, astronomical, and geometrical visions that permeated them.

- **Triple Bill:**

A showcase of 3 contemporary dance performances by Aseng Boreng, Jasmine Yadav and Jaewoo Jung.

- **Izilo:**

"Izilo" is a captivating dance performance choreographed by Vincent Mantsoe, celebrating the profound connection between mind, body, and spirit through the lens of Nguni culture. The performance embodies a journey of embedded

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spirituality, intertwined with the dynamic rhythms and rich traditions of the Nguni people.

- **The Chinky Express Comes to Town:**

The Chinky Express, featuring Aseng Borang, is a provocative dance performance that confronts the objectification and dehumanisation of individuals. Through a powerful exploration of how some-bodies are reduced to mere objects of fascination and control, the piece challenges the audience to reflect on issues of autonomy, exploitation, and identity.

- **Deviant Octopus:**

"Deviant Octopus," performed by Jasmine Yadav, is a transformative dance piece that explores desire and identity through a shape-shifting body. The performance, blending human, creature, and monster elements, challenges conventional labels and standards. It delves into female desire through a dynamic interplay of dressing and undressing, revealing raw, unashamed expressions while questioning norms of decency and censorship.

- **Uninhibited Island:**

"Uninhibited Island," performed by Jaewoo Jung, explores the profound theme of loneliness and the quest for connection.

- **Deus Nos Acudi:**

It is a choreographic work of contemporary dance that explores the local and global space, in different situations and moments. It delves into themes of secularised religiosity, social control, and the tension between freedom and constraint in the contemporary body.

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- **Sonnets of Samsara:**

"Sonnet of Samsara," performed by Ali Preety, is an immersive, site-specific promenade performance that delves into the concept of "Samsara," allegorically exploring the compulsions of worldly pursuits, karmic cycles of existence, wandering and transmigration. It dynamically adapts to the unique characteristics and histories of landscapes or sites, intertwining with the experiences, memories, myths, and aspirations of the communities that inhabit them.

Against the backdrop of urgent environmental crises, climate emergencies and the call for sustainable living, this performance intertwines local specificities with global themes. It employs rituals, stylized movements, and everyday gestures set to a captivating musical score and live percussion.

- **Superhero:**

This performance explores the resilience of human connection in the face of the skewed values of contemporary society. The work imagines the body as a catalyst to reconcile the aggressive and the compassionate - the reckless and the rigorous. Body as a site which is vital and generative. In collaboration with the performance team, investigations have attempted to uncover novel pathways to the paradoxical intersection of these themes by following our instincts, curiosity and inventiveness.

- **Folios of Time:**

"Folios of Time," curated by Jayachandran Palazhy for the Serendipity Arts Festival 2024, delves into contemporary somatic expressions that reflect the pressing issues of our time. From environmental crises to migration, gender issues, and more, the festival seeks to highlight the challenges individuals and

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communities face today while offering hope for building inclusive, sustainable futures.

Under the mentorship of renowned Italian choreographer Damiano Ottavio Bigi, dramaturge Alessandra Paoletti, and Japanese digital artist Kunihiro Matsuo, a diverse group of choreographers embarked on an intensive residency in Bangalore. Their works will present the pulse of our epoch through distinct perspectives, highlighting empathy, tolerance, and care for the environment as central themes. Through this celebration of contemporary dance, Folios of Time aims to embody the realities of a world in flux while nurturing a collective vision for a better future.

## Other Performances:

- **Pilgrim:**

A personal piece by Mark Philip: Artistic director, choreographer and dancer in Uppercut Dance Theater, called "PILGRIM". In this soulful solo, Mark reflects on his journey from adolescent to adulthood, from purposeless teenager to driven artist, from his upbringing in the suburb Hvidovre to his busy life in pulsating Copenhagen. Every living fibre of Mark Philip has been woven into this bodily tale: From the movement language, to the work with the materials at hand: water, stage, attention from the public.

- **Littoral States of Being:**

Curated by Preethi Athreya, takes place on Cranzalem Beach and explores the ever-changing coastal landscape through a dynamic visual and performative installation. A forest of bamboo poles holds up glowing, kite-like figures shaped like humans, animals, birds, and insects, which sway and flutter in the wind. In this surreal environment, a masked dancer moves

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gracefully, embodying the forces of earth, sea, wind, and mythological elements. Conceived in collaboration with visual artist Siva Murugan from Chennai and Javanese dancer Agung Gunawan from Jogjakarta, the performance creates a mesmerizing interplay between nature and movement.

- **Around the Corner, Goa:**

Also curated by Preethi Athreya, is a site-specific dance film set in the streets of Fontainhas, Goa. The film follows two dancers, Davis Freeman and Sharan Devkar Shankar, as they engage with the city's architecture, people, and atmosphere. The dancers create a dialogue between their movements and the urban landscape, using the streets and buildings as inspiration. The project invites the public to observe or participate, with their presence shaping the choreography. Goa's architecture and energy become integral parts of the narrative, as the dancers improvise and respond to their surroundings, weaving the city's essence into their physical expression.

- **TO DA BONE:**

A high-energy dance performance that brings together various "post-internet" dance styles, including Hardstyle, Tekstyle, Shuffle, Hakken, and especially Jumpstyle. Proposed by Institut Français en Inde and in collaboration with (La) Horde, the performance captures the intense physicality and rebellious spirit of youth. It reflects on how social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube play a pivotal role in mobilising groups and fostering opposition movements, illustrating the power of digital networks in shaping modern dance and cultural expression.

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There will also be a series of workshops curated by Jayachandran Palazhy called **Sonnets of Samsara Workshops**. The project hosts workshops where communities come together to create movement materials and craft pennants. Led by Indian and British artists, these sessions foster the sharing of ideas and skills, bringing diverse groups together in a collaborative creative process. This culminates in a collective performance by both community members and professionals, providing participants and spectators alike with a shared experience of celebration and reflection.

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