

*Selected Choreography*

Silencing the Nautch

Year 1997

Time 20mins

Venues: Bryn Mawr College, Swarthmore College, Asian Arts Initiative, Jadavpur University (India), Temple University, (Saptasur music circle, India). To be performed at an international dance festival in India in March 2004.

This piece is based on the repressed history of the dancing girls of North India. The dancing girls also known as the "nautch", 'tawaif' or the 'baiji' (who were mostly Muslim women) were the bearers of the popular tradition of Kathak dance in colonial India. But the social reform movement of 1892 ("anti-nautch") made dance an immoral practice and subsequently the dancers were stigmatized as prostitutes. Kathak like other Indian dance styles was revived by the upper class, Brahmin elite and sanctified as a classical, Vedic and patriarchal tradition. The piece highlights this Hindu reconstruction of Kathak dance.

Directions:

From the North:

New Jersey Turnpike to Exit 6 (PA Turnpike connector). Follow PA Turnpike to Rte.476 (Old Exit 25A/New Exit 20). Follow 476 South to Rte. 76 East, toward Philadelphia. Follow Rte. 76 East to Exit 339 (Rte. 1, City Avenue). Follow two miles to SJU.

From the East:

From the Ben Franklin Bridge (via Rte. 676) or the Walt Whitman Bridge: Follow Rte. 76 West to Exit 339 (Rte. 1, City Avenue). Follow two miles to SJU.

From the South:

Interstate 95 North to 476 North. Follow 476 North to Exit 5 (Rte. 1). Follow Rte. 1 North to SJU approximately 10 miles.

From the West:

PA Turnpike to Old Exit 24/New Exit 326 (Valley Forge). Follow Rte. 76 East, toward Philadelphia, to Exit 339 (Rte. 1, City Avenue). Follow two miles to SJU.

The Philadelphia Women's Studies  
Consortium

Presents

Pallabí Chacravorty  
&  
The Courtyard Dancers

Performing Asian dance that uses the Idioms of  
Tradition to engage themes of modernity

Friday, February 27, 2004

At 7:00PM

St. Joseph's University Chapel

St. Joseph's Co-sponsors:  
Gender Studies  
Faith Justice Institute  
Office of Multicultural Life



## ***Courtyard Dancers***

### *Company History*

Courtyard Dancers, a diverse body of South Asian and Asian American dancers performs contemporary dance from South Asia based on classical and interpretive Kathak, and other classical and folk styles from India. The company's goal is to build community through performance by drawing on global and local processes that shape social issues both in South Asia, and the diaspora community here. Courtyard Dancers is striving for a community based understanding of anthropological and sociological issues through its choreographic works. It's hope is to make dance/performance relevant to our lived experiences by using the idioms of tradition to engage themes of modernity.

The company made its debut at Goodhart Theater, Bryn Mawr College in April 2000. The one-hour event was a great success, drawing a crowd of about four hundred people. Since, Courtyard Dancers have presented works at several venues. It has received support for its works from The Asian Arts Initiative, Kumquat Dance Center, Bryn Mawr College, Seton Hall College, among many others. All the members in the group are pursuing careers in various professional fields.

For more information: email  
pchakra1@swarthmore.edu, or call (610) 658 0266



### *Biographical Sketch of the founder/artistic director*

The founder and artistic director of Courtyard Dancers, Pallabi Chakravorty was born and raised in Calcutta, where she continues to conduct research and perform; She draws from there her inspiration and energy. Pallabi is currently an Assistant Professor in the department of Music and Dance at Swarthmore College where she teaches both Kathak technique and theory courses in Anthropology. She received her doctoral degree in Visual Anthropology from Temple University. Her dissertation, titled "Choreographing Modernity: Kathak Dance, Public Culture, and Women's Identity in India," looked at the politics of Kathak, a north Indian classical dance, and women's identity formation in post-colonial India. The fieldwork for this research was supported by India Foundation for the Arts and the dissertation writing by a grant from Temple University. Her works have been published in several scholarly journals. She is working on a book On Kathak and Public Culture. She has also made a short film based on her fieldwork titled Kathak in the city.

Pallabi studied Kathak and several Indian classical and folk dance styles as a child. Later she specialized in Kathak (a premier classical dance style from North and East India) under Guru Bandana Sen and Pandit Vijay Shankar for more than twenty years.

Pallabi toured all over India as a young performer with Children's Little Theatre, Calcutta, and has presented Kathak at several venues in India and the U.S.

Pallabi has been engaged in exploring new directions in classical Indian dance for sometime. Her experimental choreographic works have ranged from exploring the history of "nautch" dancers (Silencing the nautch, 1997), the lives of domestic workers in India (Imagining Jamuna, 1999) to negotiating boundaries of cultural identities (Translations, 2000). Trained in both Anthropology and Classical Indian dance, she is committed to bridging the boundaries between disciplines, cultures and the knowledge(s) of the mind and body.