

## **Author's & Arts Series**

Bharatanatyam by Shruti Abhishek

**Shruti Abhishek** is an Indian dancer, teacher, and choreographer practicing Bharatanatyam. In addition to her own company and solo performances, Shruti is a Principal Dancer and Rehearsal Director at Nava Dance Theatre.

In 2018, Shruti founded Kshetram, an intergenerational dance institution based in Livermore and Pleasanton, CA. A direct response to her growing knowledge about dance, culture, appropriation, tradition, and embodiment, Kshetram helps keep Indian traditions alive in California while offering space to reflect on how Indian traditions continue to transform, evolve, and grow with each new generation.

Shruti Abhishek co-curates two festivals: Varnam Salon, a series of performances by California-based senior art practitioners, mid-career artists, and upcoming dancers, and When Eyes Speak.

She initiated the Art Echoes Series to inspire and educate kids through live performances. The series provides a unique opportunity for young audiences to learn, be inspired, and engage with the artists in candid conversations about their practice.

Shruti's work has been funded by the Creative Work Fund, Zellerbach family foundation, the California Arts Council, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the American Conservatory Theater ArtShare Fellowship, CASH dance award, CClarts, ARTtogether & the ACTA apprenticeship program.

Currently, Shruti is in the creation process of a dance theatre work "Kismet With Kali" which is a poignant exploration of a woman's journey through childhood, discovering solace and strength in her imagined relationship with a divine mother figure amidst revelations about her own identity. Shruti started her training with Rohini.M.Singhi from Mumbai. Since 2012 she has been training with Vaibhav Arekar.

<https://www.shrutiabhishek.dance/>

### **Roopa Mahadevan - Vocal**

Roopa is a leading Indian classical vocalist and crossover artist in the South Asian diaspora. Known for her powerful and emotive voice, multidisciplinary talents, and collaborative spirit, Roopa's artistic projects take her to diverse soundscapes and corners of the world - from Chennai's Music Academy to the cutting-edge venues of New York City and the cultural centers of American suburbia. Roopa strives to build community, celebrate differences, and find joy.

<https://www.roopamahadevan.com/>

## **Nadhi Thekkek - Cymbals**

Nadhi Thekkek is a dancer, choreographer, and the Artistic Director of Nava Dance Theatre. Nadhi uses the south Indian dance form of Bharatanatyam to navigate place, identity, and politics through the lens of her lived experience as a child of immigrants and an unapologetic South Asian, diasporic woman. She reimagines how Bharatanatyam can serve marginalized narratives that need to occupy space in the US right now. Her nationally touring work “Rogue Gestures/Foreign Bodies” sources community interviews, historical texts, and poetry to explore the intersections of labor, agency, and belonging in our South Asian ancestry. Nadhi’s body of work has been supported through the NEFA National Dance Project, The MAP Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, the San Francisco Arts Commission, and others. Through Nava, Nadhi also produces and co-facilitates the Unrehearsed Artist Residency Program, where South Asian dancemakers create art that challenges the status quo. She is one of the co-founders of Varnam Salon and serves on the board of the Western Arts Alliance. Nadhi has learned Bharatanatyam from Guru Smt. Sundara Swaminathan (Kala Vandana Dance Company, San Jose) and Guru Smt. Padmini Chari (Nritya School of Dance, Houston). As of 2012, she has continued training under Guru Sri. A. Lakshmanaswamy (Chennai).

<https://www.navadance.org/>

## **Aishwarya Subramaniam - Keyboard**

Aishwarya Subramaniam is an interdisciplinary artist with training in Western Classical Piano/Keyboard and Flute, along with Bharatanatyam (South Indian Classical Dance), Carnatic (South Indian Classical) Vocal Music, and Nattuvangam (rhythmic cymbals). As an instrumentalist, she has performed in solo, duet, and group ensembles, including marching and symphonic bands, along with keyboard and flute accompaniment for devotional music albums and Indian music and dance performances. She has performed at various events and festivals around the world, including The Kennedy Center in Washington DC. In addition to her artistic pursuits, Aishwarya is a mental health and expressive arts therapist in the Bay Area.

## **Aditya Iswara - Mridangam/Percussion**

Aditya is trained in Mridangam, Carnatic Music, and Bharatanatyam with an abundant sense of rhythm. He is a disciple of Sri Poovalur Sriji, for Mridangam and Kanjira, Sri Vittal Ramamurthy for Carnatic Violin, and a disciple of his mother, Smt. Vani Iswara for Bharatanatyam.

Aditya has been a regular performer as an accompanist for both music and dance across the country. He graduated from Stanford University and is working as a software engineer in San Francisco.

