

Asia Society  
Presents

## Reimagining Indian Dance: Moving Forward



**Saturday, October 27, 2018  
7:00 P.M.**

**Asia Society  
725 Park Avenue at 70<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York City**



Part of the *Season of India*, a series of programs held in conjunction with the exhibition, *The Progressive Revolution: Modern Art for a New India*, on view at Asia Society Museum from September 14, 2018, to January 20, 2019.

## Program

Welcome by Rachel Cooper and Rajika Puri, co-curators

### ***Cosmic Dance of Siva (1926)***

Ted Shawn

Footage from 1940, courtesy of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives

### ***Mea Culpa (2018 Redux)***

Choreography: Hari Krishnan

Dancer: Phil Strom

Music: Rossini and Gowri Shankar

Lighting Design: John Carr

Costume Design: Rex (Rajavairan Rajendran)

Stage Management: Monique Bernier

### ***enduring silence (2017)***

Choreography and Performance by Parul Shah

Violin: Arun Ramamurthy

Cello: Jake Charkey

Tabla: Naren Budhakar

### ***Re-thinking Orissan Dance (2018) (premiere)***

Choreography and Performance by Kuldeep Singh

Vocals: Ali Raj and Shubhra Prakash

Rhythm: Mir Naqibul Islam

Double bass: Michael Gam

### ***Bahu-Beti-Biwi (2008) (excerpt)***

Choreography and Performance by Sheetal Gandhi

### ***Holy Cow(s)! (2017) (excerpts)***

Prologue: *burgers, shoes and ankle bells*

Dancer: Phil Strom

Solo: *Hollywood via Kollywood via Hollywood North*

Dancer: Paul Charbonneau

Duet: *FEMINISTS-past and present for the future*

Dancers: Roney Lewis and Xi Yi

Choreography: Hari Krishnan

Choreography of *Hollywood via Kollywood via Hollywood North*: Seán Curran and Hari Krishnan

Music Composition: Niraj Chag

Lighting Design: John Carr

Costume Design: Rex (Rajavairan Rajendran)

Stage Management: Monique Bernier

**Panel Discussion with artists**

Dancers/choreographers **Sheetal Gandhi, Hari Krishnan, Parul Shah** and **Kuldeep Singh** present recent works that speak to contemporary issues, each pulling from their own unique interpretation of—or departure from—Indian dance forms. Their movement based practices are evocative, provocative, sometimes satirical, and even camp, as each artist interprets influences of Indian dance into a contemporary movement vocabulary.

A thriving and vital diaspora dance community exists today, as Indian artists working from their present North American base examine new challenges arising with the changing times. In the era of identity politics and nationalist movements, these artists tackle complex contemporary issues each through their own artistic expression. Experimentation—either within tradition, or through wholly contemporary forms—push these artists to interpret Indian dance in new ways. This performance invites audiences to leave their comfort zone, as they are presented with new ideas about what can define “Indian” dance.

**Mea Culpa and Holy Cow(s)!**  
Choreography by Hari Krishnan

***Mea Culpa*** (2018 redux)

The eleventh hour. The groom at his wedding in Chennai....

Inspired by a vintage photograph of American dance pioneer Ted Shawn’s 1926 work, “The Cosmic Dance of Siva,” *Mea Culpa* is a twisted comment on re-appropriating the misappropriated.

Choreography: Hari Krishnan

Dancer: Phil Strom

Music: Rossini and Gowri Shankar

Lighting Design: John Carr

Costume Design: Rex (Rajavairan Rajendran)

Stage Management: Monique Bernier

***Holy Cow(s)!*** (2017) (excerpts)

“Everything is Art. Everything is Politics.” - Ai Wei Wei

*Holy Cow(s)!* is a tongues-in-many-cheeks caricature remix, recycling worn-out culture-specific taboos of gender, identity, sexuality, politics and power via a global dance lens.

Prologue: *burgers, shoes and ankle bells*

Dancer: Phil Strom

Solo: *Hollywood via Kollywood via Hollywood North*

Dancer: Paul Charbonneau

Duet: *FEMINISTS-past and present for the future*

Dancers: Roney Lewis and Xi Yi

Choreography: Hari Krishnan

Choreography of *Hollywood via Kollywood via Hollywood North*: Seán Curran and Hari Krishnan

Music Composition: Niraj Chag

Lighting Design: John Carr

Costume Design: Rex (Rajavairan Rajendran)

Stage Management: Monique Bernier

Photography: Miles Brokenshire

*Mea Culpa* and *Holy Cow(s)!* were created with the generous support of The Canada Council for the Arts, The Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council and the Bank of Montreal. inDANCE is immensely grateful to Nada Ristich for her continued support of our work. A special thanks to our beloved producer Shana Hillman.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Monique Bernier** is a NYC-based stage manager who specializes in new work. Past credits include *Once Upon a Rhyme* (NYU/TISCH DRAMA STAGE), *Celebration* (NYU/New Studio), *Love's Labour's Lost* (Santa Cruz Shakespeare), and *The Loon* (Abrons Arts Center/Witness Relocation). She recently worked on a workshop of Alice Austen's *Bolshoi Oedipus Rex*, directed by Jeff Calhoun. In addition to traditional theatre, Monique has experience with dance and immersive work. She has an interest in breaking boundaries and a passion for supporting collaborative processes. This is her first season with inDANCE.

**John Carr** is Professor of Theater Emeritus at Wesleyan University. In addition to multiple designs for Hari Krishnan/inDANCE, he has designed for Richard Bull; Dances for 2; Douglas Dunn; Susan Foster; Deborah Hay; and almost all faculty dance concerts and theater productions at Wesleyan from 1984 to 2015, as well as productions at other American Universities such as Connecticut College, Manhattanville College and Fairfield University. Professional theater projects include lighting for the Folger Theatre; Hartford Stage Company; National Players; the Shubert Theater; Theater for the New City; DTW; and SKIN, MEAT, BONE by Robert Wilson and Alvin Lucier. His international projects include the lighting for DEATH AND THE MAIDEN at the New Wolsey Theatre in Ipswich, U.K., BURY ME UNDER THE BASEBOARD and CRIME AND PUNISHMENT at the Bulandra Theatre in Bucharest.

**Paul Charbonneau** is a Montreal based dance artist who has been performing with inDANCE since 2009. An artist, performer and choreographer, Paul is inspired by all forms of art but resonates most with dance. Paul was nominated for the prestigious 2017 Dora Award (Toronto) in the Outstanding Performance category for his performance in "Holy Cow(s)!".

**Hari Krishnan** is a Bessie (New York City) and Dora (Toronto) Award nominee dance artist, scholar and teacher. He is Associate Professor of Dance in the Department of Dance at Wesleyan University and artistic director of Toronto-based company inDANCE. He holds a PhD in Dance from Texas Woman's University. Krishnan's research areas include queer identities in dance performance, contemporary dance from global perspectives, colonialism, post-colonialism and Indian dance, Bharatanatyam in Tamil cinema and the history of courtesan dance traditions in South India. He has just completed a monograph entitled *Celluloid Classicism: Early Tamil Cinema and the Making of Modern Bharatanatyam* (forthcoming, Wesleyan University Press). He continues to be commissioned internationally for his bold and transgressive choreography.

**Roney Lewis** attended Etobicoke School of the Arts, where he studied Music Theatre. He is a graduate of Ryerson University where he majored in Performance Theatre- Dance. He is a Toronto-based dancer, singer, and actor. Most recognized for his role as part of the Beat Team on "4

Square” (Treehouse TV). He has performed with critically acclaimed artists/choreographers such as Jeff Dimitriou, Melissa Williams, Janelle Monae, Vicki St. Deny’s, Robert Glumbek, Natasha Powell, Jasmyn Fyffe, Scott Fordham and Hari Krishnan. He has toured across Canada, the United States and Asia.

**Phil Strom** received his early Dance training under Debra Pearse Rogo in Richland, Washington. He then attended New York University’s Tisch School of The Arts where he worked with choreographers such Crystal Pite, Sonya Tayeh, Ronald K. Brown, & Paul Taylor, amongst others. Phil currently dances in NYC with Cherylyn Lavagnino Dance, and Ryder Dance, as well creating his own work. This is his first season with inDANCE.

**Rex** (Rajavairan Rajendran) studied art and design with specializations in textiles, fashion and interiors at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. He currently lives in Toronto, directing his own creative design consultancy. His work has been featured on premier soloists, ensembles and companies at prestigious venues in Canada, the U.S., Europe and Asia. Along with dance and theatre, Rex works on commissioned interior design projects.

**Xi Yi** started his professional dance training at the age of ten with the Beijing Dance Academy. He was awarded a complete 3-year scholarship, and received his BFA in 2013. Xi has performed in principal roles for Peter Quanz, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet’s resident choreographer. He has toured Australia, Germany, France, Italy, New Zealand and The Vatican. This is Xi’s second season with inDANCE.

### ***enduring silence***

Choreography and Performance by Parul Shah

They toil in arid fields while bearing and caring for children. Balance heavy pots of water, cement blocks, and wooden planks on their heads. They endure physical hardship, violence, and inequality protected under the canopy of tradition. *enduring silence* takes its inspiration from women that are subjected to violence and their ignored sorrows, resiliency, and desperate strength. This solo work recognizes the beautiful gaits and gestures found in all Indian classical dance repertoire that have evolved from various ways of life and culturally specific work. Drawing from the classical source, Kathak, *enduring silence* pays tribute to the dignity, courage and grace of women all over the world amidst harsh realities.

**Choreography:** Parul Shah

**Composers:** Trina Basu, Mike Lukshis, Arun Ramamurthy, Narendra Budhakar, Jake Charkey

**Dancer:** Parul Shah

**Musicians:**

**Violin:** Arun Ramamurthy

**Tabla:** Narendra Budhakar

**Cello:** Jake Charkey

Supported by Eva Dean Dance 2017 Mertz Gilmore Late Stage Creative Stipend.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Parul Shah**, artistic director of the Parul Shah Dance Company is an internationally acclaimed *Kathak* and contemporary dancer and choreographer whose work is expanding the classical medium beyond cultural boundaries. With a dedication to excellence, Shah preserves the form's aesthetic integrity while exploring contemporary stories and questions around belonging, identity, and empathy. Behind Parul's work is decades of rigorous *Kathak* training under the world-renowned guru and choreographer, Padmabhushan Kumudini Lakhia. Parul's repertoire spans both classical and contemporary dance vocabularies and her influences include her own experiences and observations as much as her training.

She is especially driven to shining a light on marginalized stories and is committed to outreach and education. Parul's New York studio is home to both the Parul Shah Dance Company and her training facility. With a Masters degree in dance and dance education from Columbia University, Teachers College, Parul has been teaching *Kathak* for over 15 years. Shah has presented her work around the world and at home to critical acclaim, including City Center's Fall for Dance Festival, NYC; the Kennedy Center, Washington D.C.; Asia Society, NYC; Jacobs Pillow, Inside/Out series, Massachusetts; World Music Institute, NYC; Japan Forum Foundation, Tokyo; and Suvarna Parva, Ahmedabad, India.

**Naren Budhakar** was born in India into the tradition of Indian classical music. He is a versatile *tabla* player who has accompanied great maestros of vocal, instrumental and dance music including Pundit Birju Maharaj, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pundit Jasraj, Shahid Parvez and Grammy winner Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. He has also contributed his *tabla* to varied music genres including pop, rock, Irish Celtic and jazz. Notably, he did a duo with Bobby Mc Ferrin at the "Notes and Neurons" event and also did a recording with Alicia Keys for her album. Naren also did a concert series with the acclaimed Alvin Ailey dance company for which he was cited in the *New York Times*. He has played Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Getty Museum, and the U.S. Open. He has performed abroad in France, Czech Republic and Scandinavia, among others. Naren created a percussion album with conga maestro Paoli Mejias, which was nominated for the Latin Grammy awards. Naren is a disciple of Ustad Shabbir Nisar, with whom he continues to study.

**Jake Charkey** is an acclaimed cellist with a strong background in both Western classical music and Hindustani music. He completed his MFA at California Institute of the Arts where he learned under Aashish Khan, Swapan Chaudhury, Wadada Leo Smith, Charlie Haden, and Vinny Golia. He is also an eclectic improviser, drawing from his extensive training in both Eastern and Western musical traditions. A sought after performing and studio recording artist in the film, television and music industry in both India and the U.S., Jake has performed and recorded with artists like Arijit Singh, tUnEzArDs, and Hariharan. His cello was recently featured prominently in the soundtrack of the Netflix series *Sacred Games*. Jake Charkey is a disciple of the renowned violinist Padmabhushan Dr. N. Rajam in the rare Gayaki Ang style and is one of the few cellists in the world performing Indian music on the cello.

**Arun Ramamurthy** is a violinist, composer and educator based in NYC. A disciple of the celebrated Carnatic violinist brothers, Dr. Mysore Manjunath and Sri Mysore Nagaraj, Arun has become one of the country's leading Indian Classical and crossover musicians. He has carved a niche for himself as a versatile artist, performing internationally in both traditional Carnatic and Hindustani settings as well as bridging genres with his own innovative projects. He leads the Arun Ramamurthy Trio, an ensemble that brings a fresh approach to age-old South Indian classical repertoire and raga inspired originals, and considered "a beautiful, exotic, ear-opening listening experience" by *All About Jazz*. Arun is a co-founder and artistic director of Brooklyn Raga Massive, a collective of forward thinking musicians rooted-in and inspired-by the classical music of India. He created the concert series Carnatic Sundays at Cornelia Street Café, an iconic jazz venue in New York's West Village.

### ***Re-thinking Orissan Dance (premiere)***

Choreography and Performance by Kuldeep Singh

Kuldeep identifies himself as a non-accidental inheritor of the tradition of Odissi, in a non-romanticizing manner. By taking charge as the music composer for this work, along with his selected musicians (across the city of New York), he creates an idiosyncratic choreography, juxtaposing a framework of components – which apart from exfoliating eclectic patterns in rhythm, oscillate the understatement of Odissi to its grounded power and desires of androgyny culminating with Sufi elements – all formulating into an experimental kineses that indirectly imbibes his contemporary visual art practice.

Kuldeep additionally refers, as an undertone, to an essay '*Rama and Krishna and Shiva*' from the book *Interval during Politics*, by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (activist for the Indian independence movement and socialist political leader, and the mentor to seminal artist M.F. Hussain), where the writer wishes from the land – the mind of *Shiva*, the heart of *Krishna* and the world and deed of *Ram*. Thus rejecting perfections, idealism and pedestals, and situates a sense of imperfection in humanity desiring pluralist voices.

### **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Kuldeep Singh** is a multi-disciplinary artist with a compound artistic practice that comprises a system of non-linear narratives in visual art and multi-media performance —through inventing situations in theatrical installations and hybrid myths surveying hiatuses in post-colonial histories. Through his intensive, decade-long training in the Indian classical dance form of *Odissi* — with critically acclaimed dancer Madhavi Mudgal, in New Delhi — he deconstructs components in movement and acting, sound/percussive mnemonics, and spatial arrangements — all as re-arranged fragments in layers, engaging in body politics and social anthropology. The content transpires from eclectic stories across timelines, classic Sanskrit texts, and is layered to contemporary human situations — reemphasizing contemporary relevance. For the past six years, he has been in training in the percussion instrument *Odissi Pakhawaj* to further understand *Odissi's* lyrical expression.

Kuldeep is the recipient of prestigious residencies, including: the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ME (2014); Yaddo, NY (2015); and Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, NE (2016). He was recently the artist in residence at Residency Unlimited, Brooklyn (2018) and at HH Art Spaces,

Goa (2018) — on an award from Inlaks Foundation, Mumbai. He was recently awarded a "New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship" (2018), in inter-disciplinary arts category. Kuldeep holds the National Freedom of Expression Award, Mumbai (2009, Infinity Films). His recent performances include the Kolkata International Performance Festival (2014); Yaddo (2015); Rapid Pulse International Performance Festival in Chicago (2016); and La Mama Theater (2016).

**Michael Gam** is a jazz bassist, multi-instrumentalist, vocalist and composer based in New York City in the lineage of the Ray Brown and Ali Akbar Khan. As an experienced, skillful and intuitive jazz improviser, Michael has worked extensively alongside respected elder jazz musicians and young innovators, while also being called upon regularly to play bass in variety of other musical worlds ranging from R&B, Classical, Bluegrass and Rock to Afro-Peruvian, Cuban, Klezmer and West African music. Since 2009, Michael has been a student of the rich musical tradition of Raga and is an emerging Sarod and Sarangi performer of the *Maihar gharana*.

**Mir Naqibul Islam** is a regular performer in the classical music arena of Dhaka and New York both as a soloist and an accompanist, incorporating other genres of music as well. He is fortunate to have traditional training, for the past 17 years with Shri Ashoke Paul as his guru (disciple of eminent Padmabhushan Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh), with whom he honed the technical and aesthetic aspects of *tabla* playing. He has also learnt from Janab Syed Hafizur Rahman, Shri Madan Gopal Das, Pandit Gopal Mishra and Pandit Suresh Talwalkar. At present, Mir is taking additional training from Pandit Anindo Chatterjee.

**Shubhra Prakash** is a theatre maker, who most recently co-wrote and produced an original play - *Music In My Blood* with live Indian classical music that was seen by over a thousand audience members on the east coast. She served as a voiceover artist for *Priya's Shakti*, a multi-platform project supported by Tribeca New Media fund which has garnered over 400 press and media mentions. She has co-founded the award-winning NYC based Hypokrit Theatre Company. She has served as festival director of the company's South Asian International Performing Arts Festival in its inaugural year 2015 and Tamasha: Festival of South Asian Performing Arts. She studies Hindustani classical with Sandip Bhattacharjee and her aspirations are to keep creating work in theatre/film and interactive mediums that span different cultures and disciplines.

**Ali Raj** is a musician and culture writer from Pakistan. He was mentored by *qawwali* icon Amjad Farid Sabri and has a rock band in Karachi that puts to music poetry from the Urdu literary canon. He attended Columbia University for a Masters in Arts and Culture Journalism, and is presently a postgraduate fellow at Columbia Journalism Investigations. His research interests include informality and pirate infrastructures in South Asian music cultures.

**Costume consultation: Deepshikha Chatterjee**

## ***Bahu-Beti-Biwi (Daughter-in-law, Daughter, Wife) (excerpt)***

Choreography and Performance by Sheetal Gandhi

**Bahu-Beti-Biwi** is a powerfully rhythmic dance-theater solo that wraps North Indian music traditions and family characters into a contemporary exploration that glides between humorous portraiture and active resistance. Gandhi mines the text and subtext of centuries-old North Indian women's songs to re-imagine the singers' lives by confronting them with women from her own life. Her characters have conversations with each other across time and space, revealing the complex tensions around freedom and compromise, desire and longing, duty and love. Gandhi merges dance, live singing and percussive text based on the *bols* of the *tabla* to transition from one character to the next. In both form and content, the work reflects her love for tradition with her equally urgent desire to break from it.

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

**Sheetal Gandhi** is an intercultural, multi-disciplinary director/choreographer, performer and educator. Her career has spanned genres and disciplines including work as a creator and performer in Cirque du Soleil's *Dralion*; playing a leading role in the Broadway production of *Bombay Dreams*; dancing throughout Ghana with the traditional West African dance company Novisi; and singing with the New York based, all-female a cappella group, Anamcara. Her work is invested with a uniqueness often missing in contemporary dance/theater, stemming from her strong point of view as an American woman of South Asian descent. In both form and content, the work reflects her love for tradition, with the equally urgent desire to break from it. In 2009, Sheetal received an M.F.A. in Dance from UCLA. She is a recipient of a 2012-13 NDP Touring Award for her acclaimed solo dance-theater work, *Bahu-Beti-Biwi*, which has toured internationally to over five countries and to over 16 cities in the U.S. She is a recipient of a 2016 MAP Fund Award for her work *In / Expiration*. She was also awarded a 2011 COLA Individual Artist Grant, the LA Dance Advance Grant, a 2012 Annenberg Community Beach House Artist Residency, and was a participating member of the 2012 Choreographers in Mentorship Exchange (CHIME) Program. Her passion for intercultural exchange has been supported by the 2010 Asia Pacific Performance Exchange (APPEX), a Cultural Exchange International (CEI) fellowship in Amsterdam, and an invitation to attend the Tanzmesse International Festival for Contemporary Dance in Dusseldorf, Germany. Sheetal is currently on faculty in the Theatre and Dance Department at Pomona College.

**Ted Shawn** (21 October 1891 – 9 January 1972), was one of the first notable male pioneers of American modern dance. A former divinity student, Shawn was introduced to dance as therapy after an illness. Along with creating Denishawn with former wife Ruth St. Denis he was also responsible for the creation of the well-known all-male company Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers. With his innovative ideas of masculine movement, he was one of the most influential choreographers and dancers of his day. He was also the founder and creator of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Massachusetts, and he believed that dance as a whole is composed of many valid styles and so presented ballet as well as modern and ethnic dance at Jacob's Pillow. He created this dance in 1928 when he was in India and the film was shot in 1940.

### **Ted Shawn's commentary on *Cosmic Dance of Siva* (ca. 1951)**

The theme of the *Cosmic Dance of Siva* is a natural theme for a dancer. The Hindu theology has a trinity, just like our Christian theology and the Hindu trinity is Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Brahma is the absolute, out of which all things come and into which all the things go, Vishnu is the preserver, he is you might say the god of the status quo, Shiva is the active principle of birth and death, of the entering out of Brahma into the visible world and the disappearing out of the visible world back into Brahma.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> Century and before, there was an aspect of Shiva portraying him as a Divine Dancer, and in that aspect he is called Nataraja - Lord of the Dance. This was the theme that interested me and inspired me to create my dance. I studied it through books and through sculptures all over India and talked about it with all the learned people that I could contact and I found that all of them were in agreement, that:

*The Cosmic Dance of Siva* is in 5 movements. That is to say:

Through rhythm Shiva created this visible universe.

Through rhythm he created his visible manifested world.

Then, all of the experiences which we call death and destruction are an aspect of Shiva; that is the 3rd movement.

The fourth movement is a very characteristic oriental belief of many lives—it's the illusion of material existence and having to go through many lives and many deaths.

And in the 5th movement Shiva draws us all back into the divine cosmic rhythm and we become one with him as the divine dancer.

The production, if you can call it that, was done in India. I had considerable ups and downs to get the platforms and the ring of flame which is always seen in these 11<sup>th</sup> Century figures of Shiva as Nataraja had to be carved out of wood in India. The costume of course did not exist. (You can't go around buying the costume of a god.)

In this case it was a case of going around in the bazaar and picking up pieces of hand wrought silver here and there until I had accumulated enough pieces.

The necklace was made of dozens of different pieces, the trunks were covered with this virgin silver, and ornamentations. The chain that hangs across diagonally was made of two different flexible belts.

And the crown was made in its entirety by silversmiths, and in the crown they have followed all of the symbols that are found in the authentic sculpture: the head of Ganga, the flying hair, the Cashew leaves, the Crescent moon, all of the things that one finds in the crown—all of those things had to be put in the crown.

The last thing I have to say is that a friend of mine, Boshi Sen, a devout Hindu, who had had a fine western education but remained a devout Hindu, travelled with me to many parts of India, to Benares a holy city and Allahabad another holy city, and took me to holy men, and interpreted and got them to talk to me about Shiva, and eventually after 5 or 6 months I said to him, “Boshi, you have been very patient with me. I now realize your motive was for me to find out that this was too enormous a theme for me to package into one neat little dance. How can I dance the creation and destruction in a single dance?” He laughed and said, “No that wasn’t my motive. Because you don’t have to do it. All you have to do - make the form of the dance and present the form and the body and say, ‘Lord Shiva here I am; dance through me,’ and Shiva will dance.”

And that is what I have done in all these years that I have danced this dance, I have said, “Lord Shiva, dance through me,” and he has.

—*Courtesy of Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival Archives*

### **Co-curated by Rachel Cooper and Rajika Puri**

Rachel Cooper (co-curator, panelist) is the Director of Global Performing Arts and Cultural Initiatives at Asia Society. She is widely recognized as a leader in the performing arts field, developing projects that include a range of work by Asian and Asian-American artists, working in both traditional and contemporary mediums. Rachel’s curation focuses on process and context, giving artists a voice and exploring the connections between the arts and the society we share. She is a frequent participant at major conferences and commentator in the media (CNN, ABC, WNYC, *New York Times*) addressing Asian performing arts, international arts exchange and cultural diplomacy. She has served as an advisor and panelist for major international projects and institutions in the U.S. and in Asia. She received a national award for Sustained Programmatic Excellence from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, a Borough of Manhattan award for Preserving Cultural Diversity in New York City, Global Citizen Diplomacy award for best practices in presenting performing arts and a Rockefeller MAP award for choreography. She did her undergraduate and graduate studies at UCLA in World Arts and Cultures and Dance Ethnology.

**Rajika Puri** (co-curator, panelist) is an exponent of Bharatanatyam and Odissi, and has performed extensively in solo recital throughout the US, Latin America, Europe and India, including a command performance for the President of Mexico. She now focuses on her own form of storytelling: singing, chanting in Sanskrit - and narrating in English - as she dances stories from Indian myth. Her very first production *Union/Severed: Expressions of the Divine* was at Asia Society in 2005, followed by *Conversations with Shiva* (Joyce SoHo - 2007), *Devimalika* (Rubin Museum and Off Broadway, 2005 and 2008) and *Tapasya: ascetic power and tales of the Ganges* (Joyce, SoHo, 2009).

Rajika curates dance festivals, like World Music Institute’s *Dancing the Gods*, is also known for her danced and sung slide lectures, both onstage before dance performances and in museum galleries, and is in demand as *Sutradhar*/Narrator for dance-theatre shows. She is currently member of the NY Dance and Performance Awards (‘Bessies’) and Screen Actors Guild nominations’ committees.

## **About Performing Arts at Asia Society**

Asia Society's Performing Arts Program is an intrinsic component of Asia Society's commitment to sharing vital aspects of Asian culture by placing creative expression at the center of a more comprehensive understanding of culture. Whether it is experimental artists exploring new territory or traditional artists bringing to life the voices of a great legacy, the Performing Arts Program has created a powerful platform for connecting and engaging with Asian culture within a deeper cultural context. We have presented extraordinary artists from renowned names such as Lang Lang, Tan Dun, Abida Parveen, Shen Wei, David Henry Hwang, Sardono and Malavika Sarukkai, to the latest emerging voices. Beginning in 1957, with New York's first performance by Indian maestro Ravi Shankar, the Performing Arts Program has since presented over a thousand performances, including original commissioned work from Asian and Asian-American artists, as well as American artists influenced by Asia, such as Phillip Glass, DJ Spooky and Vijay Iyer. From Indonesian hip-hop to electronica from Shanghai; experimental dance to the deeply moving traditions of India's *Kuttyatam*, Burmese *Zat Pwe*, we foster artistic exchange and provide creative opportunities for artists. For more information, please visit [AsiaSociety.org](http://AsiaSociety.org)

**Alejandro Fajardo**: Lighting Design and Production

### **Asia Society Staff:**

**Boon Hui Tan**, Vice President, Global Arts & Culture & Director, Asia Society Museum

**Rachel Cooper**, Director, Performing Arts and Cultural Programs

**Rachel Rosado**, Assistant Director, Cultural Programs

**Elaine Merguerian**, Director, Communications

**Oscar de la fe Colon**, A/V Manager

### **Technical Staff:**

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**Oscar Moronta**, Video Technician

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