



ANITA R RATNAM



LONG BIO

Dr. Anita Ratnam is a choreographer, performer, producer, speaker, mentor, Arts entrepreneur and the pioneer of Neo Bharatam, a unique dance style that has re-assimilated the performative and somatic vocabularies of Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Yoga, forms that she has been formally trained in. She began performing in the 1970's as a Bharatanatyam dancer and over the next 50 years has been able to set up her own dance theatre, curate various festivals, develop her own movement style and has made a significant contribution to the world of performing arts by producing and choreographing a large body of work.

With a background that travels across geographies and a repertoire that journeys through disciplinary boundaries, the influences and inspirations that inform Anita's work, reflect her experience and the wide range of activities that she is involved in. As a performing artist Dr. Anita Ratnam felt drawn to work on preserving and reviving traditions that were dying or had low visibility. As part of her Ph.D thesis in Women's Studies from University of Madras in Chennai, Anita set out to revive Kaisiki Natakam, a dying theatrical ritual practice found in the temple at Tirukurungudi, a town in the Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu. She is also one of the few female practitioners of Arayer Sevai that is now sadly practiced in only a handful of temples. The ritual performance uses chanting and gesticulation before an idol of the god Vishnu.

With over two and half decades of experience as choreographer, renowned performer, writer, speaker and cultural mentor Dr. Anita Ratnam has created a multitude of works that have been performed to great acclaim. The active repertoire that has toured in India and internationally, offers a glimpse into the rich and complex choreographies that Anita has been developing over the years

along with the Arangham Dance Theatre. Anita's most notable works in her current repertoire are Naachiyar Next (2019), A Million Sitas (2010), Ma3ka (2009), 7 Graces (2005), Faces (2007), Neelam (2006) and Andal Andal (2011). has been recognised both nationally and internationally. Anita's style of choreography is characterised by her use of voice, singing, chanting Vedic hymns, drumming, contemporary mythology, and devised movements. She believes that dance is a collaborative art form and sees all the people involved in a performance, including costume, sound, set and light design, as collaborators. Anita has been able to pass on the techniques she has learned to the young dancers who work with her, enabling them to understand the approach of Neo Bharatam.

In 2000, Anita launched NARTHAKI.COM, the largest online portal on Indian dance, and she continues to embrace technology and social media to reach her global audience. From a directory to a resource portal, to being a producer and curator of original dance content, Narthaki has come a long way. 30 years after its conception, Narthaki is a one-of-its-kind networking tool for the dance community. It features a comprehensive Address Bank of practitioners and teachers of Indian classical dances worldwide, the contact details for musicians, festivals, and dance spaces.

Dr. Anita Ratnam's journey as a performer, choreographer, arts presenter, cultural activist and arts entrepreneur has been marked by her passion for exploring different dance forms and her dedication to promoting dance in India. She is the recipient of India's Presidential Award (2016), the Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar for Contemporary Dance (2016), and the Vishwa Kala Ratna from MilapFest, UK, for pioneering arts entrepreneurship (2016). Her unique style, which blends classical and contemporary forms, has had a significant impact on the dance scene in India, and her contributions have been recognised both nationally and internationally. Today, Dr. Anita Ratnam's work reflects her vision of bridging the past with the present, tradition with modernity, and East with West.



Get in touch for inquiries and collaboration opportunities.

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