



KATHA DANCE THEATRE | EPK 2023-24

Katha Dance Theatre (KDT) is a Minnesota-based dance company and school rooted in Kathak, the Indian classical dance form. Rita Mustaphi (photographed below) founded KDT with the goal of making Kathak relevant and accessible across lines of generation, culture, and community. Over three decades, she has built a reputation as an innovative, risk-taking artist; introduced Kathak to a worldwide audience and garnered countless awards for her choreography and leadership.

Kathak is an ancient dance form characterized by rhythmic footwork, graceful hand gestures, pirouettes, lyrical movements and storytelling. Conceptualized by Rita Mustaphi, KDT's repertory strives to modernize and diversify Kathak in ways that make it relevant and inclusive while still maintaining its authenticity and cultural integrity. Through incorporating cross-cultural influences and crossing boundaries of genre and form, KDT is at the forefront of Kathak's artistic evolution.

In addition to performances and education, KDT's programs include touring and outreach opportunities specifically tailored to suit the needs of individual communities. These programs deepen audiences' connection to the material, helping KDT more effectively fulfill its mission to make Kathak universally accessible. Outreach programming options include master classes, lectures/demonstrations, residencies and workshops in dance or folk art.



KDT premiered two new productions in 2023. The first, *Kathak E-motion*, featured live music by Dr. Pooja Goswami Pavan and Tabla artist Kousic Sen, as well as an appearance by acclaimed Kathak dancer Souvik Chakraborty. The show highlighted Kathak's beauty and emotional expressiveness. The second, *Prakritir Pratisodh*, touched on themes of environmentalism and the perils of climate change, using dance to speak to a larger social movement.

Past collaborators have included musician J.D. Steele, poet Ifrah Mansour, gospel singer Robert Robinson, Indigenous artist Larry Yazzie, flamenco dancer Susana di Palma, the late Kathak master Pandit Birju Maharaj, and tabla artist Ustad Zakir Hussain, among others.

Current Touring Repertory:



Kathak Yatra - The Journey of Kathak Dance follows Kathak's evolution through time, beginning with its inception in Hindu temples and culminating in its contemporary multicultural incarnations. The show explores Kathak's duality as both classic and modern.

Prakritir Pratisodh - Nature's Revenge features a series of dance vignettes depicting what happens when human actions drive the five basic elements of Asian Indian folklore – the “panchamahabhutas” of earth, water, fire, wind & space – out of sync, and how we can work together to bring them back

into harmony. By incorporating themes of social justice and environmental advocacy, *Prakritir Pratisodh* is in keeping with KDT's mission to propel the Kathak tradition into genre-bending spaces.

Critical Consensus:

“Performed with unfailing graciousness, Katha Dance Theatre takes an evocative art form and makes it vibrantly real.” ... “The complexity and power of Katha Dance Theatre's stories are fully realized in their dynamic, percussive dance sequences.” - The Minneapolis Star Tribune



“Katha Dance Theatre is dazzlingly proficient in the dramatic and virtuosic style of Indian classical dance, while being adept of taking English speaking audiences into the literary wellsprings of classical Indian dance performances.” - The Octopus, Champaign, IL



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Learn more at www.kathadance.org



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