

UNLEASHED Artists Bios

THE MIGRATED KNOWLEDGE



[Pushkala Gopal MBE \(India/UK\)](#)

Pushkala Gopal is a Bharatanatyam artiste with experience in different aspects of the art form. She is a choreographer, composer, lecturer, trainer and performer. Over the years she has developed her own teaching styles, with different approaches for workshops and traditional training. Her current work is extensively with teachers and with a focus on how to impart Abhinaya from early stages to complement the inherent creativity in a Bharatanatyam aspirant.

[Pali Chandra \(Switzerland/Dubai \(UAE\)/India\)](#)

Pali Chandra is an internationally recognised performing artist with more than 30 years of industry experience. Her work encompasses Kathak performances, choreography, training and dance evaluation. An educationist par excellence, Pali has launched one of the biggest portals for learning Kathak called [learnkathakonline](#) and [natyasutraonline](#) in English and Hindi language, with a following of more than 435,000 subscribers. Recognised as 'Kathak Ambassador' in the UK, she is the soul of Gurukul Studios in Dubai, Bangalore and Switzerland. Here she trains, mentors and guides 350 students since 2006. Besides dance training, she is the Artistic Director of 7 Dance Festivals and innumerable productions.



[Nikita Thakrar \(Reading, UK\), CAT Yuva Gati Home Tutor](#)

Nikita Thakrar is a British born dance teacher, Yoga instructor and Life coach. After a decade of intensive Kathak dance training in India, Nikita launched the purpose-built 'DNC Studio' in Berkshire, to act as a base to Educate and Empower the next generation through Kathak dance, Yoga and Personal Development.



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



Urja Desai Thakore (UK)

Urja Desai Thakore is one of the UK's leading kathak dancers. A graceful and emotive dancer, Urja is renowned for her love of abhinaya, subtle movements and technical strength. She is interested in creating neoclassical work based on her observation of her surroundings. Urja is the Artistic Director of Pagrav Dance Company, which she established in the UK in 2005. The company promotes kathak, giving the form a modern context and renewed presentation, whilst encouraging new thinking and understanding of the discipline. Urja is an active advocate for the dance sector and passionate to create the new pathways for the next generation of artists.

Sooraj Subramaniam (Belgium)

Sooraj Subramaniam is versatile in Bharatanatyam, Odissi, ballet and contemporary dance forms. He graduated from the Western Australian Academy for Performing Arts in 2006, and has since toured internationally with companies across the UK and Europe. Based now in Belgium, he uses an organic amalgam of styles create personal and reflective work.

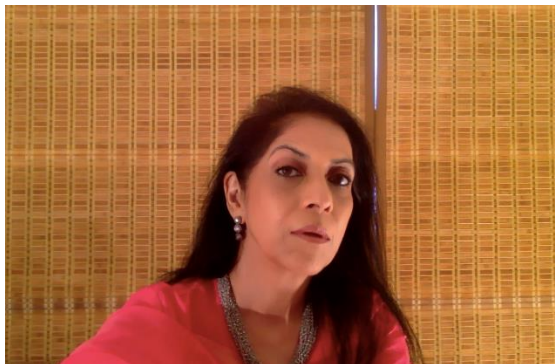


Kalpana Raghuraman (Netherland)

Kalpana Raghuraman has an independent, inquisitive and curious mind. Kalpana was trained by her mother in the Indian classical dance form Bharatanatyam and from an early age has had the goal of making Indian dance visible on professional stages in the Netherlands. Kalpanarts sees Indian sources as an entry point to transform personal experiences into a contemporary perspective with a universal character. As a result, her performances appeal to a diverse audience. By using sources of inspiration other than Western ones and

performers from different cultures, she aims to open up the codes of contemporary dance. By combining Indian classical dance forms with urban and contemporary dance, Kalpanarts creates a genre-transcending dance language.

THE TRANSIENT SOURCE



Aditi Mangaldas

Aditi Mangaldas is a leading dancer and choreographer in the classical Indian dance form of Kathak, who is recognised for her artistry, technique, and eloquence. Besides dancing and choreographing classical productions, she has used her knowledge of Kathak to evolve a contemporary dance vocabulary. Aditi has won critical acclaim across the world and was nominated in the category of outstanding performance (classical) by the

National Critics Circle Awards 2017 in the UK. She was awarded both the State and National Sangeet Natak Academy Award India, in 2007 and 2013 respectively, both of which she declined to accept due to compelling reasons. Aditi heads the Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company-The Drishtikon Dance Foundation.

Navtej Johar

Navtej Johar is a dancer/choreographer, yoga exponent, scholar, and social activist. He was trained in Bharatanatyam at Kalakshetra and studied yoga with Sri Desikachar at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai. A long-time performer, practitioner, and teacher, he has devised two pedagogical methods of embodied practice, namely the BARPS method to practice asana more effectively, and Abhyas Somatics that is inspired by the sukha and rasa components of yoga and Indian poetics respectively. He currently teaches at the Department of Performing Arts, Ashoka University, and is the founder director of Studio Abhyas, New Delhi.



Preethi Athreya

With a background in classical Indian dance Preethi Athreya has been working within the Indian contemporary dance scene as a performer, choreographer and facilitator. She has been engaged since early 2000 in creating a personal movement language that reflects her relationship with her context, being at the same time open to new ways in how we may relate to the body. With a strong commitment to constantly redefine the Indian body, Preethi lives and works in Chennai, India.

Vikram Iyengar

Vikram Iyengar is an arts leader and connector based in Calcutta, India, and working internationally. He is a dancer-choreographer-director, curator-presenter, and arts researcher-writer. Co-founder and artistic director of Ranan Performance Collective, he also initiated and leads the Pickle Factory Dance Foundation – a hub for dance and movement practice and discourse. His scope of work spans practice, discourse, critique, ideation and management, and revolves around the central tenet of creating deep connections with and through the arts.



THE OTHER CHOREOGRAPHY



Ananya Chatterjea (Minneapolis, USA)

Ananya's work as choreographer, dancer, and thinker brings together Contemporary Dance and social justice choreography. She is artistic director of Ananya Dance Theatre, a dance company of BIPOC women & femmes, and co-founder of the Shawngrām Institute for Performance and Social Justice. Her second book, *Heat and Alterity in Contemporary Dance: South-South Choreographies* was published in 2020.

Subathra Subramaniam (London, UK)

Subathra, Akademi's Artistic Director and Joint CEO is a choreographer and educator working at the confluence of dance, culture and science having spent over 20 years as Artistic Director of two South Asian dance companies – Angika and Sadhana Dance. Creating work for theatres, festivals and alternative spaces Suba's works are a result of in-depth cross art collaborations with award winning artists alongside extended periods of research undertaken with scientists and academic institutions.



Atsuko Maeda (Tokyo, Japan)

Atsuko Maeda is one of the very few leading Kathak dancers in Japan. Having been fascinated by the beauty and graceful choreography of Smt. Kumudini Lakhia ji, she was trained at KADAMB (Ahmedabad) since 2007, initially with a scholarship from ICCR. Atsuko has an interest in incorporating Kathak with Japanese traditions, and has created unique choreographic works. Atsuko is the founder and director of Kadamb Japan. She often performs and in addition to her passion for teaching Kathak in Tokyo.





Parul Shah (New York, USA)

Expanding cultural boundaries, artistic director Parul Shah of the Parul Shah Dance Company preserves the aesthetic integrity of the Kathak dance form while building on the form's storytelling roots to express contemporary narratives and create awareness on cultural practices that undermine human dignity. Drawing from her classical training but extending to her personal history, Shah's work aims to create shared experiences between performer and audience while exploring questions around belonging, identity, and empathy.