

Temple, Court, Salon, Stage: Crafting Dance Repertoire in South India

A day-long interdisciplinary conference
dedicated to the historicization of dance repertoire in South India



Tuesday June 9, 2015

Maison des Cultures du Monde

101, boulevard Raspail, Paris 75006

9:00am – 7:00pm

A joint-program of the Centre d'Études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud (CEIAS, EHESS/CNRS); the École française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO); the Dynamiques Asiatiques (PresHesam), and the Maison des Cultures du Monde, Paris.

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Welcome & Introduction

INES G. ŽUPANOV (Director, CEIAS) and **the conference organizers**

9:15am-9:30am

Inaugural Lecture: Dance Repertoire in the Tanjore Library Manuscripts

B.M. SUNDARAM (Sangeet Natak Akademi and Kala Pariseelana, India)

9:30am-10:00am

10:00am-11:15am | Session 1 - Chair: **EMMANUEL FRANCIS** (CNRS, CEIAS, Paris)

**Rudraganikas: Courtesans in Siva's Temple?
Some Hitherto Neglected Sanskrit Sources**

DOMINIC GOODALL (EFEQ, Pondicherry, India)

Playing Flute under a Mountain, Dancing upon a Snake Hood: About the Specificities of the Southern Contribution to the Iconography of Krsna

CHARLOTTE SCHMID (EFEQ, Paris)

11:00am-11:15 am | Discussion

Coffee Break

11:45am-1:00pm | Session 2 - Chair: **Anne Castaing** (CNRS, THALIM, Paris)

Enta Prayogam – “Which Purpose?”

SASKIA KERSENBOOM (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

The Voice in the Shawm: Devadasi Songs in Periya Melam Temple Repertoire

WILLIAM TALLOTTE (SOAS, London)

12:45pm-1:00pm | Discussion

Lunch Break

2:00pm-3:15pm | Session 3 - Chair: **Tiziana Leucci** (CNRS, CEIAS, Paris)

**Dance Repertoire from Ramanathapuram Zamindari
in the Late Nineteenth Century**

HARI KRISHNAN (Wesleyan University, USA)

Dance Repertoire in Tamil and Telugu Early Print Sources

DAVESH SONEJI (McGill University, Canada)

3:00pm-3:15pm | Discussion

3:15 pm - 4:30 pm | Session 4 - Chair: Davesh Soneji (McGill University, Canada)

Courtesan Dance Repertoire from Coastal Andhra Pradesh

YASHODA THAKORE (University of Hyderabad, India)

Temple, Stage, and Cinema Screen:

V.S. Muthuswami Pillai and M. Selvam's Dance Repertoire

TIZIANA LEUCCI (CNRS, CEIAS, Paris)

4:15 pm - 4:30 pm | Discussion

Coffee Break

Performances

5:00pm-7:30pm | Introductions: Davesh Soneji (McGill University, Canada)

5:00-5:30pm | HARI KRISHNAN

Hari Krishnan will be performing the first half of a very rare *padavarṇam* in the *rāga* Vācaspati dedicated to King Ṣaṇmukharājeśvara Setupati (1909-1967), the last titular ruler of Ramanathapuram. The lyrics, music and *jatis* (clusters of rhythmic syllables) for this piece were all composed by the late Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillai (1869-1954). This piece was composed for Pandanallur Jayalakshmi (b. 1930), who was one of Pillai's last disciples from within the *devadāsī* community, and who eventually married Ṣaṇmukharājeśvara Setupati.

5:30-6:00pm | SASKIA KERSENBOOM

In continuation of the paper "Enta Prayogam?" Saskia Kersenboom will sing and dance selected compositions from Smt. P. Ranganayaki's repertoire for daily, weekly, and festival worship from the Tiruttani Murukan temple, for social rites of passage, and for Navarātri celebrations at the royal court of Karvetinagar.

6:00-6:30pm | YASHODA THAKORE

Yashoda Thakore will present three short pieces from the East Godavari district *kalāvantula* repertoire, as described in her paper. The first is a *salām daruvu* dedicated to the god Pratāparāmasvāmi and King Serfoji II of Thanjavur; the second is an excerpt from the *padavarṇam* in the *rāga* Khamās attributed to the Tanjore Quartet, and performed in the seated style; and the third is a *jāvaḷi*, *emoyani yeñcakura* ("please don't think otherwise") in the *rāga* Bhairavi.

6:30-7:00pm | TIZIANA LEUCCI

Tiziana will present two invocatory compositions by the late V.S. Muthuswami Pillai, the *puṣpāñjali/śloka* and *alāriṭṭu* (adapted from the original choreography). This will be followed by an excerpt from a *padavarṇam* (in the *rāga* Ānandabhairavi) and *tillānā*, both choreographed by M. Selvam, son of Muthuswami Pillai. She will conclude with a *nāgasvaram* composition called *mallāri*, adapted for dance by the late V.S. Muthuswami Pillai. This piece ends with a *śloka* dedicated to Śiva.

Discussant: Elizabeth Claire (CNRS, CRH, Paris)

Paper Abstracts

Inaugural Lecture: Dance Repertoire in the Tanjore Library Manuscripts

B.M. Sundaram (Sangeet Natak Akademi and Kala Pariseelana, India)

This presentation is about nineteenth century manuscripts related to the preservation and codification of dance repertoire by hereditary dance-masters (*naṭṭuvaṅārs*). The Sarasvati Mahal library, which dates back to the Nāyaka rule in Tanjore, houses a number of such works in Telugu, Grantha and Tamil script from the rule of Serfojī II and his son Śivājī II. This talk is about the making of a book I have written entitled *Varṇa Svarajati* (published by the Sarasvati Mahal Library, 2002). This book is a critical study of the compositions in several such manuscripts, including compositions attributed to the famous Tanjore Quartet, as well as older repertory masterpieces such as the *svarajati* in the *rāga* Huseni. Almost all the compositions are in Telugu, with a few in Tamil and Marathi as well. This presentation will also touch on manuscripts related to the theory of dance, such as *Abhinaya Lakṣaṇamu*, a Telugu manuscript attributed to Tanjavur Ciṅṅaiyā (1802-1856), the eldest of the Tanjore Quartet. In bringing the historical and aesthetic details of these sources to the foreground, the paper demonstrates the importance of *documenting* and *writing* in the making of dance in the nineteenth century.

B.M. Sundaram is a leading historian of South Indian dance and music. Hailing from a traditional family of musicians that can be traced back over 40 generations, he has published extensively on the performance cultures and communities of South India. Son of the great *tavil* percussionist Nidamangalam Meenakshisundaram Pillai, Dr. Sundaram received early music training from Melattur Narayanasvami Iyer, Vaiyacheri Janakirama Iyer, Thanjavur K. Rama Iyer, and later, from Padma Vibhushan Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna. He has also studied with several other hereditary music and dance masters, including Panduranga Rao Jadav Sahir, the last traditional performer of Marathi songs (*lāvāṇi*) in Thanjavur. Formerly Music Producer and Composer with the All India Radio, Pondicherry, Dr. Sundaram is fluent in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, and Hindi/Urdu. His research spans a broad range of methodologies from manuscript preservation and editing to ethnography. His tireless commitment to dance history in the Thanjavur region has brought to light several pathfinding works, including *Varna Svara Jati*, a unique text of *devadāsī* dance compositions edited from manuscripts at the Thanjavur Sarasvati Mahal library. He is also the author of major books on cultural history in South India in Tamil, including *Marabu Tanda Manikkangal* (“Women Who Gave the Gift of Tradition”), and *Marabu Vali Perasarangal* (“The Great Hereditary Masters of the Tradition”), a book on *naṭṭuvaṅārs* (dance-masters) that received a major award from the Tamilnadu State Government. He has also contributed a large number of scholarly works in English, including *The Advent of Lavani in Thanjavur*, *The Origin and Evolution of Nagasvaram*, *The Origin of Jalatarangam*, and a revolutionary essay entitled “Towards a Genealogy of Some Thanjavur Natyacharyas.” Dr. Sundaram has been honoured with several prestigious awards including the Kalaimamani Award from the Tamilnadu State Government and the Kalabharati Award from the Tansen Festival in Gwalior. Dr. Sundaram is the Director of the Kala Pariseelana Trust, a private archive and research centre in Chennai.

Rudraganikas: Courtesans in Siva's Temple? Some Hitherto Neglected Sanskrit Sources

Dominic Goodall (EFEQ, Pondicherry, India)

Much ink has been spilt on the status and roles of the *devadāsī* in pre-modern times, but some Sanskrit works that contain potentially useful nuggets of information have until now, for various reasons, been neglected. To cite one instance, some scholars draw passages about dancers from an edition of what is purported to be a Śaiva scripture called the *Kāmikāgama*. In 1990s, however, H  l  ne Brunner denounced this "scripture" as a late-nineteenth-century forgery concocted for the purpose of winning a legal case, and thereby called into question the value of the text as evidence for much of what it had to say about, for instance, the initiation of dancers. Meanwhile, hiding, so to speak, in plain view, passages from a rather older *Kāmikāgama*, one that has been published by the South Indian Archaka Association and that survives in many South Indian manuscripts, actually also contain information about the status of *rudraganikās* in medieval times. But these seem not to have been examined to date by historians of dance. The purpose of this paper is to draw into the debate some hitherto unnoticed passages of relevance that are to be found in pre-modern Sanskrit texts.

Dominic Goodall studied Greek and Latin, then Sanskrit at Pembroke College, Oxford. After finishing his BA (Sanskrit with Pali, 1990), he went to Hamburg for two years to learn medieval Tamil with Professor S.A. Srinivasan. He then returned to Oxford, to Wolfson College, where, under the guidance of Professor Alexis Sanderson, he produced a critical edition of the opening chapters of Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's tenth-century commentary on the *Kiraṇatantra*, which he submitted as a doctoral thesis in 1995 and subsequently published from Pondicherry in 1998. He was attached to the French Institute of Pondicherry as a junior researcher in 1996–1997 before returning to Oxford as Wolfson College Junior Research Fellow of Indology from 1998 to 2000. In 2000, he became a member of the   cole fran  aise d'Extr  me-Orient (EFEQ, "French School of Asian Studies"). He became Head of the Pondicherry Centre of the EFEQ in 2002, where he remained until April 2011. Posted in Paris from 2011 to 2015, he gave lectures at the   cole pratique des hautes   tudes (Religious Sciences Section), principally on Cambodian inscriptions in Sanskrit and on the history of Śaivism from unpublished sources. He is now once again posted in Pondicherry, where he continues to pursue his scholarly interests, in particular in Sanskrit poetry and in the history of the Śaiva Siddh  nta. He is currently a professor (directeur d'  tudes) at the EFEQ, co-editor with Dr. Marion Rastelli of the Viennese dictionary of tantric terminology, the *T  ntrik  bhidh  nako  sa*, and a contributor to the Hamburg Encyclopaedia of Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa (EMCAA). Among his publications are editions and translations of works of poetry in Sanskrit and of hitherto unpublished Śaiva scriptures and theological commentaries. Two recent books upon which he will draw in this presentation may be mentioned. The first is a Kashmirian work of Sanskrit poetry: *D  modaraguptaviracitaṃ Kuṭṭan  matam, The Bawd's Counsel, being an eighth-century verse novel in Sanskrit by D  modaragupta Newly edited and translated into English*, by Csaba Dezs   & Dominic Goodall. Groningen Oriental Studies XXIII. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2013. The second is a twelfth-century South Indian compendium of ritual prescriptions: *Śaiva Rites of Expiation, A First Edition and Translation of Trilocanaśiva's Twelfth-Century Pr  ya  cittasamuccaya (with a transcription of a manuscript transmitting H  dayaśiva's Pr  ya  cittasamuccaya)*, ed. R. Sathyanarayanan, with an introduction by Dominic Goodall. Collection Indologie 127. Pondicherry: IFP/EFEQ, 2015.

Playing Flute under a Mountain, Dancing upon a Snake Hood: About the Specificities of the Southern Contribution to the Iconography of Kṛṣṇa

Charlotte Schmid (EFEO, Paris)

Sculptures and texts elaborated in South India have contributed a great deal to shaping the figure of Kṛṣṇa of Medieval India but the important impact of South India on the iconography of Kṛṣṇa and more generally on the figure of this Hindu deity is far from being correctly assessed. The distinctive part played by music and dance in the documents produced in Southern tip of the Peninsula has thus been neglected. With this lecture our aim is to have a fresh look at the specificities of the Southern contribution to the iconography of the god Kṛṣṇa and to highlight the part played by music and dance in this contribution. After briefly discussing the impact that the figure of Kṛṣṇa elaborated in the South had on the iconography of Kṛṣṇa in the whole of the Indic world, we will focus on Kṛṣṇa as musician and dancer. These two aspects of Kṛṣṇa were first represented in the sculpted tradition of South of India, where Tamil texts of the 7th-9th centuries (*Cilappatikāram*; *Tivviyappirapantam*) have elaborated specific narratives associated with music and dance. In the first known sculptures and texts that are from North India, the main myths of the Kṛṣṇa legend were to move a mountain, that is to uplift the Govardhana mount, located in the surroundings of Mathurā, and to fight against a snake-god, Kāliya, inhabiting the Yamunā. In the South of India both myths received a specific treatment, ending in the appearance of Kṛṣṇa as a musician and a dancer, two figures at the centre of new legends where music and dance are part of an erotically charged atmosphere.

The scientific life of **Charlotte Schmid** is marked by her stays in India: two years in North India (1991-1993) were followed by an assignment, in September 1999, in the centre of Pondicherry (EFEO) in Tamil Nadu. Those Indian sojourns articulate a research led between two spaces of field-work, the North and the South of the subcontinent. After an attempt to define a colonial culture, the Bactrian Greece, based on the material from Ai Khanum – the most important Greek colony excavated in Central Asia – and classical studies (Greek, Latin, museology at the École du Louvre), the discovery of Sanskrit led her to India. Firstly, Charlotte Schmid worked on the first known figures of a major Hindu deity of *Bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā. She focuses on the relationships between two types of corpus, texts and archaeological material taken in a broad sense. Today an Indian city of medium size of which Kṛṣṇa-devoted cults have forged cultural identity, Mathurā, with its mosque of the 17th c. and its numerous Jain, Buddhist and Brahmanical remains dated from the 2^d c. BC, is loaded with myth. *Le don de voir* is one of the main results of the researches conducted there. Secondly, a posting in Pondicherry led C. Schmid to study the appearance of the deities of *bhakti* in the Tamil country. The issue of the elusive matching between texts and archaeology is conducted on a different space and on better documented periods of time. The EFEO gave access to new fields of research. Posted in Paris since 2003, she pursues research on the figures of Hinduism in Ancient India, fed by lively exchanges with the Indian scholars of the Centre of Pondichéry and by archaeological material (monuments, sculptures, inscriptions). Temples *in situ*, provided with dozens of inscriptions and sculptures, established between the 6th and the 12th c., as well as the texts, often devotional, connected to them, constitute the basis of *Sur le chemin de Kṛṣṇa: la flûte et ses voies* and *La Bhakti d'une reine*. Her seminars at the École pratique des hautes études (Epigraphy and Iconography of the Pallava and the Cōla periods), her role as editor in chief of *Arts Asiatiques* and member of the editorial board of the *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, her involvement in the Corpus des Inscriptions Khmères (CIK) provide opportunity for many exchanges with students and colleagues, which, finally has also

made Southeast Asia one of the horizons of her research. She is currently director of studies and director of publications at the EFEO, Paris.

Enta Prayogam – “Which Purpose?”

Saskia Kersenboom (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

During my intensive fieldwork in the 1970s and 80s, Smt.P. Ranganayaki (1914-2005), former *devadāsī* at the Murukan temple in Tiruttani (North Arcot district), wondered which purpose research served. Evidently, a legitimate question. Ritual *efficacy* marked the professional status of *devadāsīs*. Her and her grandmother’s repertoire attests transformatory rituals, devotional attendance in Tiruttani temple and feudal entertainment to the King of Karvetinagar. This “double-bill” where temple and court are intimately related was to change drastically during her own lifetime. After the *Devadasi Act* of November 26, 1947 -- which barred her from further affiliation with the temple -- Smt. P. Ranganayaki tried to adjust her legitimate *prayogam* to new demands not known to her so far: those of secular ‘entertainment’ determined by “survival of the fittest.” This paper drafts her *curriculum vitae* and *prayogic* diversifications through family photographs and repertoire of song and dance within the ritual, festival and social spheres of her times. This is not a story of “success,” but rather one that charts an “ecology of failure” to borrow Arjun Appadurai’s coinage of cultural imperatives that find themselves marginalised. They do so not because of inherent shortcomings, but because of changing political narratives.

Saskia Kersenboom created a stir in academic circles with her PhD dissertation *Nityasumangalī: Towards a Semiosis of the Devadāsī Tradition of South India* (Utrecht University, The Netherlands May 18, 1984; 4th commercial edition 2011, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass). Controversial as it was at the time, it triggered an extensive following, critique, and further research in India and in the West. Her combination of Indian language and literature studies, fieldwork and artistic apprenticeship in dance and music coincided with paradigm shifts that obliterated classical Indology in The Netherlands. Research into the “oral genius of *muttamīl*” as Fellow of Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam, resulted in an Associate Professorship in Linguistic Anthropology, an international think-tank entitled “Orality versus Literacy” (1991-2 NIAS, Wassenaar) and her publication *Word, Sound, Image: The Life of the Tamil Text* (1995, Oxford: Berg Publishers) with an interactive CD enclosed. Former Associate Professor in Musicology and in Theatre Studies she continues now at Amsterdam University as Affiliated Researcher. Saskia Kersenboom aims to combine her artistic work and academic research into *Intangible Cultural Heritage* projects within the framework of her NGO *Paramparai Foundation* (www.paramparai.eu) based in Legend, Hungary.

The Voice in the Shawm: Devadasi Songs in Periya Melam Temple Repertoire

William Tallotte (SOAS, London)

The *periya mēlam*, a south Indian orchestra composed of shawms (*nāgasvaram*), drums (*tavil*) and cymbals (*tālam*), is today the last ensemble performing a repertoire of Karnāṭak songs and instrumental pieces during high caste Hindu temple worship.

In the context of Tamil Śaiva temple complexes, such as those of Chidambaram, Tiruvarur or Madurai, this repertoire adheres to strict prescriptions in which each musical piece, whether adapted or not from a song, is closely tied to a particular action or set of actions embedded in a daily ritual (*pūjā*) or a calendrical festival (*utsava*). Interestingly, observations made on a regular and systematic basis show that a few of the songs played today by *periya mēlam* musicians belong to the dance repertoire and were probably part of *devadāsī* performances. One may ask, therefore, how far this situation can inform us about temple dance repertoires of the last centuries, from both a musical and performative perspective.

William Tallotte is an ethnomusicologist with a regional focus on South Asia. He holds a PhD from the University of Paris 4-Sorbonne and is currently a Marie Curie Research Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He specializes in south Indian religious musical traditions, with reference to history, cultural and cognitive anthropology, performance studies, and music analysis. Since 1997, he has spent several years conducting research in South India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. As part of his research, he has learnt *nāgasvaram* with S.R.D. Vaidyanathan in Chidambaram and Injikkudi M. Subramaniam in Tiruvarur. He has published on Śaiva temple music (*periya mēlam*, but also *Tēvāram*), folk music (*naiyāṇḍi mēlam*), and tribal music (Irula Kota, Kurumba and Toda) from the Nilgiri hills. He is completing a project on processes of musical improvisation in the context of Hindu rituals and preparing a monograph on instrumental music in the temple complexes of the Kaveri delta.

Dance Repertoire from Ramanathapuram Zamindari in the Late Nineteenth Century **Hari Krishnan (Wesleyan University, USA)**

This paper focuses on dance repertoire in the time of the enigmatic yet contradictory figure of the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Setupati (1868-1903), one of the last rulers of the Ramnad (Ramanathapuram) princely state in the nineteenth century. In the texts of several compositions by court musicians meant for *devadāsī* performance, he emerges as a munificent patron of the arts. Somewhat ironically, however, Bhaskara Setupati was among the elites responsible for the alienation of dance and music from the courtly rituals at Ramnad, and by extension, for the early disenfranchisement of *devadāsī* dancers from a large part of the southern Tamilnadu region. From his diaries and public statements in the press, it is clear that the “gentleman-zamīndār” had much disdain for *devadāsī* dance, even as he continued to applaud male Brahmin court musicians. My historicization of some of compositions from the dance repertoire dedicated to Bhaskara Setupati and his descendants highlights the dramatic irony of the lyrical trope of the “deceitful” *nāyaka*, and foregrounds issues of modernity, reform, kingship, the gradual public invisibility of *devadāsī* dance in the late nineteenth century.

Hari Krishnan is Associate Professor of Dance in the Department of Dance at Wesleyan University (Connecticut, USA) and the artistic director of Toronto based company inDANCE. His Bharatanatyam gurus include K. P. Kittappa Pillai and R. Muttukkannammal. As an award winning dance-maker, Krishnan is frequently commissioned to create his avant-garde work on soloists and companies around the world. He holds a Master's degree in Dance from York University and is

currently completing his PhD in the dance department at Texas Woman's University. Krishnan's research areas include queering the dancing body, contemporary dance and hybridization, Bharatanatyam in Tamil cinema, and the history of *devadāsī* dance traditions in South India. He is a regular contributor to academic conferences and scholarly publications on cultural history and dance, and is currently co-editing a new volume entitled *Dance and the Early South Indian Cinema* with Davesh Soneji and Tiziana Leucci (Oxford University Press). This summer Krishnan was awarded the prestigious Erasmus Mundus grant for visiting scholars to the "Choreomundus International Masters in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage" for which he was in residency at the University of Roehampton's Department of Dance in London, UK. This fall, Krishnan continues the research phase of his solo dance project, *Holy Cow(s)!*, working with choreographers David Brick, Sean Curran, and Margie Gillis, which is slated for a 2016 premiere.

Dance Repertoire in Tamil and Telugu Early Print Sources

Davesh Soneji (McGill University, Canada)

In this paper I argue that the period between 1850 and 1930 – the “mature phase” of the development of vernacular print culture in South India – marks the development of what some scholars have called a “unified field of communication” on the subject of *devadāsīs* and their dance practices; in other words, a discursive construction of *devadāsī* dance, the flows of which were multidirectional, involving men/women, Orientalists/natives, *devadāsīs*/non-*devadāsīs*, Brahmins/non-Brahmins, and sustained by a distinctly new colonial technology. The diffusion and consumption of these works – many of which are simply “treatises” on artistic repertoire and theory – is, for course, also interesting from the standpoint of contemporary historiography on the arts. The contents of nearly all of these works have been excised from middle-class, urban cultural histories of the arts in South India produced over the past sixty years. Indeed, the neglected texts capture repertoire – consisting quite literally of thousands of individual compositions – that has disappeared from the arts in their reinvented, repopulated forms. Spanning the whole temporal range of “before, during, and after” the vociferous anti-nautch movement in the Madras Presidency, these texts provide significant insight into the transformation of pedagogy, aesthetic practice, and cultural economy in this region over this nearly hundred-year period.

Davesh Soneji is Associate Professor of South Asian Religions in the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montréal, Canada. He is also Director of McGill's Centre for Research on Religion (CREOR), and is also a core member McGill's Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies (IGSF). His research interests lie at the intersections of social and cultural history, religion, and anthropology. For the past two decades, he has produced research that focuses primarily on the performing arts in South India. He is best known for his work on the social history of professional female artists in Tamil and Telugu-speaking South India and is author of *Unfinished Gestures: Devadāsīs, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), which was awarded the 2013 Bernard S. Cohn Book Prize from The Association for Asian Studies (AAS). *Unfinished Gestures* is also currently being translated into Tamil, and this edition will appear shortly from Cre-A Publications, Chennai. He is also editor of *Bharatanatyam: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2010; 2012) and co-editor, with Indira Viswanathan Peterson, of *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India* (Oxford, 2008). He is presently co-editing, with Hari Krishnan and

Tiziana Leucci, another volume entitled *Dance and the Early South Indian Cinema* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press). Currently, Prof. Soneji is also embarking on a new research project entitled “Corporeal Cosmopolitanism: Performativity and the Making of Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Travancore.” Prof. Soneji is also the co-founder and director of The Mangala Initiative, a non-profit organization centred on social justice issues for hereditary performing artists in South India. He has also trained in Karnāṭak vocal music and *naṭṭuvāṅkam* for a number of years in Thanjavur, Tamilnadu and coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Courtesan Dance Repertoire from Coastal Andhra Pradesh

Yashoda Thakore (University of Hyderabad, India)

This paper focuses on the courtly dance repertoire of the *kalāvantula* community of hereditary female performers from coastal Andhra Pradesh, which was known popularly as *mejuvāṇi*. I begin with a brief personal narrative about my own involvement in the practice of this artform, and then move on to a discussion of the *mejuvāṇi* repertoire as it was encountered in the early part of the twentieth century. I will focus my discussion on three genres, examples of which I will be performing in the later performance session: (1) the *salām daruvu* or *salām śabdham*; (2) the *padavarṇam*; and (3) the *jāvaḷi*. In this paper, I will dwell on the idea of Thanjavur as a cultural epicentre, the circulation of Thanjavur court repertoire into the Telugu-speaking areas, and the unique techniques of embodiment and performance of this repertoire among women in courtesan communities of the East Godavari region.

Yashoda Thakore belongs to the hereditary female dancers’ community called *kalāvantulu* in the Telugu speaking areas of Southern India. She is a descendent of the celebrated nineteenth-century dancers Madhuram and Picchayi of the East Godavari region. Yashoda is the first after four generations to have taken up dancing. From the age of six, dance has been an integral part of her life, so much so that she pursued a formal education in dance, earning both Masters and Doctoral degrees in the field. Yashoda performs the modern art-forms known as Kuchipudi and “Vilasini Natyam” widely, but is also deeply invested in performing the technique and repertoire of the *kalāvantula* community. She is the Founder and Director of the Rinda Saranya Dance Academy in Hyderabad, Adjunct Faculty of Dance at BITS-Pilani, Hyderabad, and has also served as Guest Faculty at the University of Hyderabad. In collaboration with Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao, Yashoda has produced a translation of the thirteenth-century Sanskrit treatise on dance, *Nṛttaratnāvali*, into English, which was published in 2013 to critical acclaim. In addition to her performances throughout India she has also performed at the European Telugu Association Convention (Manchester), Regent's College and the Nehru Centre (London), the Indian High Commission (Dubai), the Sanskrit Theatre Symposium (Dhaka), the International Kuchipudi Dance Convention (California), and the Volos International Festival (Greece) amongst others.

Temple, Stage, and Cinema Screen: V.S. Muthuswami Pillai and M. Selvam’s Dance Repertoire

Tiziana Leucci (CNRS, CEIAS, Paris)

This paper focuses on the modern Bharatanāṭyam repertoire and technique created in the mid to late twentieth century by two *naṭṭuvanārs*: V.S. Muthuswami Pillai and

his son M. Selvam, both belonging to the hereditary *devadāsī* communities of Chidambaram and the Thanjavur district (Tamilnadu). The highly dynamic items were composed ex-novo or were re-adapted by them from the previous music and dance repertoire played in the past in the temples, salons, and courts. These pieces mirror not only the vibrant creative qualities of their composers, but also the new urban context that deeply nurtured and encouraged technical changes in performance practice, such as the limitations of the cinema set, the context of emergent dance festivals, and the tours of a number of prestigious European and North American dance companies throughout India. Additionally, the paper notes the impact of the large presence of foreign students who lived in India for several years in order to learn dance and music under this family, some of whom were previously trained in western ballet and contemporary dance styles.

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Orientations

The “classical” dance known as *bharatanāṭyam* is among the most popular and widely circulated cultural forms of modern South India. While many scholars have developed critical social histories of the form in recent times, the historicizing and contextualizing of the sources for the repertoire of *bharatanāṭyam* remain largely untackled.

This conference focuses on both the ‘living’ and ‘written’ sources of *bharatanāṭyam*’s rich and historically dense repertoire. Drawing on the memory of performing artists themselves, as well as on documents related to dancers and musicians found in libraries and private archives, this conference traces and reconstructs the dance’s complex and variegated choreographic traditions. Special attention will be devoted to developing an aesthetic history of the form that takes seriously the hybrid and cosmopolitan nature of the dance repertoire of the past 300 years. This is a task that involves the analysis not only of dance-making and choreography, but also of texts in a range of Indian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Marathi, and Brajhasha), of music, poetics, and of course social history.

The conference and its performance-based sessions address a range of topics, including South Indian royal patronage by the Tanjore Maratha kings, the artistic lineages of *devadāsī* courtesans and dance-masters (*naṭṭuvaṇārs*), temple and salon-based dance and music pieces, inter-regional connections between princely states, questions of colonialism and the advent of English-language repertoire, and the place and function of repertoire in the so-called “dance revival” of the early twentieth century. The discussion also includes critical deliberations on the twentieth century itself, including the role played by cinema in the growth and dissemination of popular dance repertoires.

Our discussion of the dance repertoire in recent centuries is supplemented and contextualized by the work of scholars working on sources that contain information about the milieu of dancers and musicians in earlier periods: inscriptions, literature, and figurative representations in sculpture, mural paintings and architecture. This unique interdisciplinary conference brings together the world’s leading scholars of *bharatanāṭyam* dance, bridging the disciplines of philology, history, anthropology, dance studies, ethnomusicology, art history and religious studies. The latter half of the day includes presentations of never-before-seen dance and music repertoire by internationally acclaimed scholar-performers.

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We hope you enjoy the conference and thank you for your participation.

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