

"The highlight was the deeply moving vocal accompaniment, composed and sung faultlessly by Y Yadavan"

The Independent



"Rajarani's take on classical Indian dance is invigorating."

The Sunday Times

*"I felt as though I didn't want the show to end....
Such a treat to the senses."*

Audience Member



SEVENS

A new triple bill of Bharatanatyam and Kathak dance with live music from one of the UK's leading choreographers of classical Indian dance, Nina Rajarani MBE

PROGRAMME





A triple bill that explores the sacred and sinful significance of the number seven through the medium of Indian classical dance forms Bharatanatyam and Kathak, and specially composed live music.



Seven Snags

The choreographic equivalent of an obstacle race, this is a fast-paced rhythmic ensemble filled with exciting dynamics and laced with challenging cross-rhythms. This is an abstract display of the fun and frolics of youth, the flirtatious quality of interactions, the freedom and liberties one takes with choices, all inspired by the modern day phenomena of speed dating and dating apps.

Seven Steps

This is a duet by Nina Rajarani MBE and vocalist/composer Y Yadavan, based on 'saptapadi', the most important rite of a Hindu marriage ceremony, where with each step, the couple make a promise to each other.

Although an age-old ritual dating back to Vedic times, the vows remain relevant for

anyone entering into a committed relationship. The beauty of these vows lies in their timelessness and in the simplicity of the formula for a happy and fulfilling relationship.

Ekam iṣe Viṣnustvā anvetu

With the first step may we be nourished together.

Dwe ūrje Viṣnustvā anvetu

With the second step may we give each other strength.

Trīni vratāya Viṣnustvā anvetu

With the third step may we be united in our decisions.

Chatvāri māyobhavāya Viṣnustvā anvetu

With the fourth step may we enjoy worldly pleasures.

Pancha paśubhyaha Viṣnustvā anvetu

With the fifth step may we nurture living beings.



**Shad ritubhyaha Viṣnustvā
anvetu**

With the sixth step may be together through all six seasons of the year, not having to endure separation.

**Saptasaptabhyo hotrābhyaha
Viṣnus tvā anvetu**

With the seventh step may we compromise by learning the art of give and take.

**Sakhā saptapadā bhava
sakhāyou saptapadā babhūva**

Now that we have taken these seven steps together, we are the best of friends.

**Samayāva sankalpāvahai dhour
aham prithvī twam**

Let us go together and take vows. If I am the sky, you are the earth.

**Reto aham retobhrut twam
mano aham asmi vāk twam**

If I am the seed, you are the bearer of that seed, if I am the thought, you are the speech.

Ehi sūnrute

Come, O one of sweet speech.
Seven Sins

This addresses the age-old concept of rights and wrongs. Performed by an ensemble of seven dancers and musicians, the piece is an abstract exploration of what it is like to live under the burden of the idea of sin. Coming from the perspective that the behaviour we call ‘sinful’ is never simply that, and that instead sins are the most profound expression of unmet needs. Representing an unfortunate response to difficulty and distress, Seven Sins considers that we are not evil at all, but in fact in all types of very human and difficult pain.

The piece evolves to evoke both the



claustrophobic feeling of guilt that comes from living a life deemed sinful, untrue or unacceptable; and the dark places we are driven towards by a capitalistic consumerist society that simultaneously demands and condemns accumulation and wealth.

But the journey of the piece is one of acceptance as we learn to listen, not admonish or punish. We find a way to forgive ourselves for being ‘sinful’ and instead respect and honour ourselves for not only surviving this challenging journey, but also for finding a way to live as who we really are.

Lust stems from loneliness and the need for connection and acceptance. We need proof of someone else’s unconditional affection.

Wrath, an expression of panic or intense fear in which we need our fragility acknowledged, is often a sign that we are actually terrified and fighting for our lives.

Envy and **jealousy** arise when we feel inadequate, incomplete and imperfect; deprivation or

desperation manifest as greed; **gluttony** is the result of emotional starvation, and demonstrates a need for sources of kindness, security and emotional connection.

Sloth is generated by low self-esteem and a fear of failure; we lose the will to keep trying, as we feel we can never meet the expectations of others.

Pride, or what we call false pride, is the exaggerated highlighting of one’s own abilities or achievement, but in fact it belies feelings of inadequacy and invisibility.

Our unmet needs take the shape of ‘sins’ when we haven’t found any other way of addressing them. We need an open affection that welcomes us as we are, a forgiveness that doesn’t involve criticism and judgement, and a tenderness that delicately, without humiliation, locates our true vulnerabilities and encourages an acceptance of ourselves.

The inspiration for this piece has been taken from a video made by The School of Life.

COMPANY BIOGRAPHIES



Nina Rajarani MBE



Y Yadavan



Shammi Pithia



Olivia Moore



Vijay Venkat



Abirami Eswar



Mithun Gill



Sankari Mridha



Suhani Dhanki Modi



Lou Cope



Chris Cuthbert



Sandhya Raman

Nina Rajarani MBE — Artistic Director, Choreographer and Dancer

Nina carried out her Bharatanatyam training under Prakash Yadagudde at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (London), during which time she also had additional training with Chitra Visweswaran of Chennai, India, during her visits to London. Since 1988 Nina has received training regularly in Chennai under Shanta and VP Dhananjayan. Nina's dance style today is unique in its assimilation of the best qualities from each of the different traditions followed by her gurus. Nina has also received Karnatik music vocal training under Sivasakti Sivanesan at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and under Karpagam Balasubramanian in Chennai.

Over the years, Nina and her husband, vocalist and composer Y Yadavan, together have created several outstanding new works, providing a strong artistic team. Nina's professional dance work has been performed extensively within the UK, in many European countries, in India, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, the US and Canada. In September 2006, Nina won the Place Prize, Europe's largest choreographic competition sponsored by Bloomberg for her piece QUICK!

Nina has earned herself an admirable reputation as a teacher and has to her credit, a thriving school of dance based at the Harrow Arts Centre in Middlesex, since 1991. She is a founder committee member of the Classical Indian

Dance Faculty of the ISTD (Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing), and served as the Secretary and later the Vice Chair of the Faculty. She is a senior Bharatanatyam examiner for ISTD, currently serving as Lead Examiner of Vocational and Teaching Qualification Bharatanatyam exams.

Nina Rajarani was awarded an MBE (Member of the British Empire) in the Queen's 2009 Birthday Honours, in recognition of Services to South Asian Dance. The award recognises Nina's many years of work developing and raising the profile of South Asian dance.

Y Yadavan — Composer and Vocalist

Yadavan trained from a very young age in Sri Lanka under Sangeeta Bhooshanam S Balasingam and furthered his musical aspirations in Chennai, India, under the renowned Sangeeta Kalanidhi B Rajam Iyer. Yadavan holds a Bachelor of Arts in Indian music from Madras University, India, as well as a Diploma from the Music Academy of Chennai, for which he was awarded the "Sangeetha Rathna" title. Yadavan is a much sought after vocalist and has provided vocal accompaniment for many dance performances, as well as dance and mridangam arangetrams all over the world. He has been performing on a regular basis with various dance teachers based in the UK, Switzerland, France, Germany, Norway, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, India, Canada and the US.

Since April 2002, Yadavan has been collaborating with his wife

Nina Rajarani MBE, touring internationally with her professional dance company, SRISHTI - Nina Rajarani Dance Creations and composing original music scores for the company's new dance productions. Yadavan is involved in all of SRISHTI's education initiatives. In addition to this, he teaches Karnatik vocal music at Srishti's dance school based at the Harrow Arts Centre as well as on an individual basis. Yadavan teaches the music component of the Bharatanatyam syllabus of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD), and has sung for the ISTD's Bharatanatyam audio resource for teachers.

Shammi Pithia — Composer and Multi- instrumentalist

With a number of successful albums to his name, Shammi Pithia is an in demand creative composer, producer and collaborator. He has performed his music around the world for the past twelve years with notable appearances at Glastonbury Festival, Wembley Stadium, Serendipity Arts Festival (Goa, India) and sold-out solo shows at London's Southbank Centre. As a collaborator Shammi writes and performs music for dance in the classical Indian, ballet and contemporary fields, as well as writing for film, large ensembles and directing music for large scale shows.

Olivia Moore — Violinist

Olivia Moore is a dedicated band

leader who fuses jazz and classical Indian music. Her band "Unfurl" has performed at all the main UK jazz festivals. Within jazz, she has worked on many different projects in the UK and abroad with luminaries such as Jean Toussaint, Tony Remy, Matthew Bourne, Adam Fairhall, Stuart McCallum, Alabaster DePlume, Kirsty Almeida, Shirley Smart and Jason Singh. Within World Music she has worked with Kefaya, John Meyer, Chitravina Ravikiran and Suns of Arqa. She has toured internationally many times with Tabla player Mukesh Jhadav. She has played twice at Glastonbury festival and at major UK venues such as the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Sage Gateshead, Lowry Centre and Bridgewater Hall.

Vijay Venkat — Musician (Flute and Viola)

Vijay Venkat is a well known multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, multi-genre performer and composer specialising in the violin, viola, flute and vichitra veena (an ancient Indian fretless slide instrument). Although a multigenre performer, Vijay specialises in Karnatik music. He has performed in major musical festivals as well as for renowned music organisations around the world as a soloist. Vijay has performed with top ranking Indian Bharatanatyam dance artists and composed music for several dance productions in classical and contemporary styles. Vijay has also composed a specially commissioned piece for the members of the BBC Philharmonic

orchestra and performed with them on vichitra veena.

Abirami Eswar — Dancer

Abirami is a Kathak dance artist trained by Padmasri Pratap Pawar MBE and specialises in the Lucknow style which emphasises grace along with speed and complexity. Whilst she remains true to traditional Kathak as a solo artist, her performances with other contemporary artists both in the UK and abroad have showcased her ability to tastefully blend her dance style with other art forms. Abirami's dedication to Kathak and the performing arts brought her recognition in 2019 as one of Akademi's 40 under 40 South Asian artists in the UK. Her work aims to push her creative boundaries while keeping their roots intact. She works as a freelance artist collaborating with dance companies and independent choreographers across the UK. In addition to being a performing artist, she teaches aspiring Kathak dancers of all ages across England and in the UAE.

Mithun Gill — Dancer

Mithun Gill is a dance artist with training in Kathak and contemporary as part of his dance degree. Having trained in both styles, Mithun has a unique performance quality. Kathak has installed rhythm and musicality in his dance and the contemporary training has brought a wider range

of movement dynamics allowing his body to find its own style. Over the last five years since returning to dance after a break, Mithun has collaborated and toured both in the UK and internationally as a freelance artist and as a company member with Sujata Banerjee Dance Company. Performances include solo work 'Unfold Me Emerge Festival', physical theatre 'Outside the Igloo', dance on screen 'Silent Spaces Royal Albert Hall', art installations 'Il Corpo Del Sale Rialto Bridge Venice', online 'Impulse Festival', theatre 'The Troth Usne Kaha Tha', site specific 'Understory', and outdoor work at 'Southbank'. Mithun was included in Akademi's 40 under 40 list of South Asian dancers in the UK 2019.

Sankari Mridha — Dancer

Sankari Mridha is a Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher who trained under Jayalakshmi Eshwar and is now training with Nina Rajarani MBE. Sankari completed her Senior Diploma in Bharatanatyam and Kathak from Prayag Sangeet Samiti Allahabad. She is currently working towards ISTD'S teaching qualification DDE (Diploma in Dance Education) under Nina Rajarani at Srishti. Sankari is assisting in training students at Srishti – Nina Rajarani Dance School and is involved in Srishti's outreach education work.

Suhani Dhanki Mody — Dancer

Suhani Dhanki Mody is a

Bharatanatyam performer, teacher and choreographer and qualified as an Assistant Professor of Dance with a gold medal in her Masters in Dance - Bharatanatyam. Suhani has trained in Mumbai, India under Guru Dr Sandhya Purecha in the Thanjavur tradition in both the Shastra (theory) and Sampradaya (practice) methodology. Suhani has been teaching and performing in the UK since she moved to London in 2019, also collaborating with reputed dance companies and organisations. She initiated a series called #WednesdayWisdom for Akademi where she curates and compiles nuggets of information from ancient dance Sanskrit texts to share the theoretical knowledge as received from her guru, under whom Suhani works as a research assistant. She was also featured in the list of 40 under 40 promising artists to look out for in the UK released by Akademi. In March 2020, Suhani joined Manch UK as a Co-Founder.

Lou Cope — Dramaturgy

Lou Cope is a UK-based dance & theatre dramaturg who has worked across the UK, Europe and in the Middle East. She is the founder of CoAD - The Centre of Applied Dramaturgy (www.thecoad.org) and specialises in collaborative practice. Recent/current collaborations include: Garry Stewart & Australian Dance Theatre, Aakash Odedra, Gary Clarke, Birmingham Royal Ballet, English National Ballet' Rhiannon Faith, Stopgap Dance. Lou also

offers Practice Dramaturgy – working with artists outside of productions, has a podcast called Downtime, and has recently launched Doing Dramaturgy – an online intensive course for Choreographers and Dramaturgs. Past collaborations include: Phoenix Dance Theatre; Scottish Dance Theatre; les ballets c de la b; Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui & Damien Jalet.

Chris Cuthbert — Lighting Designer and Technical Manager

Chris Cuthbert is the founding director of Acquismedia Ltd which he set up in 2005 to offer creative, digital & technical expertise to artists and cultural organisations. Chris has designed the lighting for many prestigious productions and festivals across the UK, including lighting for a star-studded cast 'The Children's Monologues' directed by Danny Boyle at the Carnegie Hall. Chris has designed the lighting for Sonia Sabri Company's Virago, Sampad Arts' award winning Birmingham Weekender festival and DanceXchange's various projects, to name a few.

Sandhya Raman — Costume Designer

Sandhya Raman has a versatile career spanning over thirty years and across the world as costume designer, curator and textile activist. Working towards spreading awareness about socially responsible design, Sandhya co-founded DESMANIA DESIGN. She is actively involved in textile revival

for artisans to have a larger reach in the global market, and was conferred the Stree Shakti Puraskar from the Govt of India for her contribution in empowering women, craftsmen and artisans. In addition to costuming, Raman has designed dioramas for the permanent exposition of ‘Discovery of India’ at The Nehru Centre, Mumbai, depicting the thread that binds costumes across the length and breadth of India. She conceptualised and produced the pan India experience of ‘Mythologies Retold’ – a dance drama that addressed the issue of female foeticide and was conferred with the Creative Excellence award from UNFPA.

Behind-the-scenes team

Anita Srivastava —
General Manager

Sarah Trist —
Tour Booker

Ambika Kucheria —
Marketing Consultant

Rakhee Taank —
Company Administrator

Pritpal Ajimal —
Website And Graphic Designer

Suhani Dhanki Mody —
Social Media Manager

Shyam Dattani —
Kathak Teacher

Jahnavi Sheth —

Bharatanatyam Teacher And Dance
School Administrator

Anjana Jeevan —
Bharatanatyam Teacher And Dance
School Administrator

Kavita Chauhan —
Trainer

Monisha Bharadwaj —
Board Member

Kavita Chauhan —
Board Member

Andrea King-Holder —
Board Member

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artists

SRISHTI OUTREACH WORKSHOPS & PERFORMANCES



Srishti has vast experience of delivering Indian Dance workshops in Bharatanatyam and Kathak dance forms which are suitable for students of primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, as well as community groups. Our workshop leaders make the workshops fun and enjoyable and are DBS certified.

Suitable for all ages and abilities. participants have a chance to learn a simple routine including basic dance movements, hand gestures, facial expressions, and rhythms used in these dance forms.

Srishti also provides performances at small scale venues, weddings, corporate events and can adapt to various settings, including outdoor or site-specific locations and celebrations of all kinds.

These performances can be tailor-made for any event and are available as full length productions or shorter pieces that can be billed with other groups.

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NINA RAJARANI DANCE SCHOOL



Srishti – Nina Rajarani Dance School is based at Harrow Arts Centre in Hatch End, Harrow, Middlesex, and provides classes in Indian classical dance and Karnatik music from age 5 years upwards. Since 2016, Kathak dance classes have been established at the school.

The school started in 1991 and is lead by Nina Rajarani MBE who is the principal Bharatanatyam tutor at the school. Karnatik vocal is taught by Y Yadavan, and Kathak dance is taught by Shyam Dattani. Over the years, the school has earned itself an admirable reputation where students pride themselves upon the high

standard of dancing and singing they aim to achieve. The school emphasises adherence to the classicism of Kathak and Bharatanatyam dance and Karnatik music, ensuring training with a strong foundation firmly rooted in tradition.

The school performs publicly at least twice a year, allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned over the year as well as giving them the opportunity to experience dancing in a performance setting outside of the classroom.

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Srishti – Nina Rajarani Dance Creations is a London-based dance company directed by Nina Rajarani MBE. The company tours both its small-scale and mid-scale performance works with live music in the UK and internationally.

Since 1991, Srishti has established itself as a high-quality touring dance company, innovative in outlook and rigorous in technical quality. The company aims to create work that maintains the authenticity of Indian classical dance and music while presenting these forms in innovative ways and within contemporary contexts.

Instagram
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