

 **Play
Ball**

PROGRAMME

A 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.



Play Ball captures the spirit of modern life through love, football and the workplace. This cast of dancers and musicians takes you on a captivating journey, from poignant to playful to powerful, through the medium of classical Indian dance forms Bharatanatyam and Kathak, and specially composed live music by Y Yadavan.

This production had its India premiere to huge acclaim at the Natya Kala Conference, Chennai, in the 2019 and is now returning with a tour in India in December 2025, followed by a much-anticipated UK tour in 2026.



Kadala... Is it Love?

What are the ingredients necessary to play ball in a relationship when loyalty and fidelity are questionable?

This work portrays a woman in love, who is in constant dialogue with her mind, talking to her absent lover who she imagines in front of her. Her inner feelings are personified by the other dancers in the piece. Her love is bold, like a fragrance, which when it disperses cannot be captured or contained. She shudders to think that evidence of her love is written all over her face and it can no longer be kept a secret. But she doubts her lover's commitment and talks of his unfulfilled promises and her shattered dreams, questioning why she continues to wait for him when he never comes her way. Is their love a mirage or a reality?

A highly emotional piece, this work is studded with complex rhythmic intricacies at breathtaking speed.



Bend It...

Let's play ball! A fun-filled ensemble piece about the beautiful game, featuring rhythm and rivalry with complex footwork and vibrant energy.

A collision between football and classical Indian dance and music, this energetic work showcases the shared agility and intricate footwork that connect the two. The dancers and musicians face off in a fast-paced contest complete with dramatic challenges, near misses, slow-motion replays and with the heart-stopping ultimate goal, the crowd erupts and the celebration dance ensues. Never has classical Indian dance been so competitive!



Quick!

Set in the fast-paced corporate world, this powerful piece captures cut-throat competition. Will business associates play ball and close the deal? This piece won Nina the 2006 Place Prize, Europe's largest choreographic competition for contemporary dance, sponsored by Bloomberg.

In QUICK!, an energised display of 8 business people unravels, exclusively using classical Indian dance technique and Karnatik music rhythmic patterns to portray today's cut-throat business world.

The impatience that comes hand-in-hand with the day-to-day mania of city life is reflected in the neck-breaking speed of the piece, and the aggression of the interaction between the performers.



SRISHTI - NINA RAJARANI DANCE CREATIONS

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 classical Indian dance and music while presenting these forms in innovative ways and within contemporary contexts.

Biographies of Collaborators



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. She trained in nattuvangam with Seetharam Sharma, in addition to the training received from her dance gurus.

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.

B Charles - Light Engineer (India)

Charles is a multi-faceted theatre technician and lighting designer based in Chennai, India. He has fifteen years of experience working across classical Indian and contemporary dance, theatre and stand-up performances in India and abroad. Charles has been nominated for a META award for his work in lighting design and continues to collaborate with a range of touring and venue-based productions.

Shanthosh Kannan - Sound Engineer (India)

Shanthosh is a freelance sound engineer based in Chennai, India. He completed a Diploma in Sound Engineering from KM Music Conservatory in 2016. Shanthosh has worked on concerts for Indian film music directors including AR Rahman, Yuvan Shankar Raja, Harris Jayaraj, D Iman and Vijay Antony, as well as playback singers. His work also includes projects with Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall and the Indian Eastern Navy Symphony Band Concert.

Gaurav Singh Nijjer - Multimedia Design

Gaurav is a theatre-maker, creative technologist and multidisciplinary designer from New Delhi, India who creates hybrid, interactive and multilingual performances using technology and media. His work explores themes such as digital futures, climate change, posthumanism and the reimagining of classic literature in contemporary immersive formats. Gaurav is one half of the Indian arts organisation Kaivalya Plays and collaborates with arts collectives in India, the United Kingdom and Europe. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Centre for Performance, Technology and Equity at the Royal Central School of Speech and

Drama in London, researching hybrid and intermedial live performance. Gaurav is a former German Chancellor Fellow, Chevening Scholar and Salzburg Global Fellow.

Nikhil Bansal - Multimedia Operations (India)

Nikhil is a theatre practitioner whose work began during his studies at Delhi University. He was later selected for the Tagore National School of Drama and completed an MA in Dramatic Arts between 2021 and 2023. Nikhil currently works as a theatre practitioner at Carmel Convent School while undertaking freelance theatre projects, including work with the tribal Gond community. He also works in performance technology, operating the projection aspect of the performance for Play Ball.

Satu Tuomisto - Original Filmmaker for Quick! And Bend it

Satu is a London-based Finnish filmmaker and contemporary dance choreographer who tours her work throughout Europe. Her work varies from movement-based pieces to humorous dance work.

Biographies of Performers



Abirami Eswar - Dancer

Abirami is a Kathak dancer, teacher and choreographer based in London, UK. She specialises in the Lucknow gharana and is the founder and principal of Teentaal Kathak, a dance school providing Kathak training for aspiring dancers of all ages, and she also regularly conducts workshops across the UK. Recognised in Akademi's 40 Under 40 for her contribution to South Asian dance activity in the country, she has further been featured in The Times and interviewed by the BBC for her journey from South India to the UK stage. Abirami works with dance companies in the UK and internationally, creating and presenting work in performance, education and community contexts across a range of collaborative programmes.

Shivani Jatar - Dancer

Shivani is a dancer from Mumbai, India, now based in Leeds, UK, working across Kathak, contemporary and experimental movement practices. She is trained in the Benarasi and Lucknowi angas of Kathak and holds a Vishaarad (BA) from Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. In the UK she has performed in multiple theatres, festivals and outdoor programmes, including work for LEEDS 2023. She holds an MA in Dance and Creative Enterprise from the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Her works include Threads of Change, One Dha at a Time, My Dance Starts Here and We Are Other. She develops new projects through her Leeds-based platform, Menaka Dance and has received mentoring through Arts Council England's Developing Your Creative Practice grant.

Preeti Mahenthiran - Musician

Preeti is a UK-based flautist and has been learning Karnatik flute for the past fifteen years. She began her training under Chittoor Shri T. Raghavaraman and continues under Shri Pitchaiappah Gnanavarathan. She gave her debut flute performance in 2019 and has since participated in concerts in the UK as both a soloist and accompanist. Preeti also trains in Bharatanatyam under Smt Usha Raghavan and studies Karnatik vocal under Shri Manipallavam K. Sarangan. She maintains regular engagement with all three disciplines through continuous practice, recitals and events.

Preeti draws on all three art forms to deepen her understanding and development as a holistic artist, applying their shared principles across her creative work and performance activities.

Kirsten Newell - Dancer

Kirsten is a Bharatanatyam artist based in Scotland. She began training in ballet and contemporary dance before learning Bharatanatyam in Edinburgh with Priya Srikumar. She later trained at Attakalari in Bangalore, India and Bharatanatyam at the Kalakshetra Foundation in Chennai, India. After returning to Scotland, she has worked on dance projects across the UK and internationally with artists like Subathra Subramaniam (Akademi), Leela Samson, Shane Shambhu, Seeta Patel and others. Kirsten co-directed and choreographed the production MaMa, which toured in the UK and abroad, and is the lead artist for Hebridean Treasure: Lost & Found. Since 2019, she has collaborated with Oxana Banshikova to develop Bharatanatyam's presence in Scotland, and together they established the Cosmic Dance School in Edinburgh.

Kartik Raghunathan - Musician

Kartik is a violinist based in the UK. He began his music training in classical Hindustani vocal music with his mother and was later introduced to the violin through his father's interest in Karnatik music. Growing up in London, he was exposed to a wide range of cultures and musical influences, which shaped his continuing interest in music. Kartik has worked with artists and groups including Kavita Krishnamurthy-Subramaniam, Akram Khan, Nitin Sawhney, the BBC Concert Orchestra, Susheela Raman, Yaima and Kaya Project. His work includes studio recording, live performance and cross-genre collaborations. Kartik has taken the Indian violin beyond its traditional boundaries and continues to develop and present work across varied musical settings in the UK and internationally.

Abhiram Sahathevan - Musician

Abhiram is a UK-based Mridangam artist who has trained under Sri M. Balachandar at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London. He has accompanied numerous eminent Karnatik musicians and dancers from Sri Lanka and India, performing in concerts, fusion orchestras and numerous arangetrams across the UK and internationally. Abhiram also plays a range of Eastern and Western percussion instruments, contributing to a versatile musical practice shaped by classical training and engagement with a range of musical work. He was awarded the title Kalalayaratnapooshan by the late Padmashri Adyar K. Lakshman for Best Mridangam Player at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Dance Music Festival in Chennai, India. Abhiram continues to present work, collaborate and support the next generation of South Asian performing artists.

Greeshma Thilakan - Dancer

Greeshma is a UK-based Bharatanatyam dancer who began her training at the age of three and continues to train in the Pandanallur bani under Dr Sunil Nellore in Kerala, India and Vidhushi Divya Ravi in the UK. For over ten years, she has performed widely across the UK, both as a lead dancer for her Peterborough-based dance school and as a member of the Watford ensemble Trinetra Nadanam. Greeshma has choreographed several pieces and dance dramas exploring cultural and narrative themes. Alongside performance, she focuses on fitness and precision, and continues to develop her technique through regular training. She remains engaged in presenting Bharatanatyam in a range of performance and community settings.

Behind-the-scenes team

Sarah Trist — Tour Booker

Rama Kshirsagar — Tour Manager (India)

Ambika Kucheria — Social Media Consultant

Suhani Dhanki Mody — Social Media Manager (UK)

Aalaap — Social Media and Marketing / Press Services

Varsha Vijay — Administrator

Pritpal Ajimal — Website And Graphic Designer

Monisha Bharadwaj — Board Member

Kavita Chauhan — Board Member

Andrea King-Holder — Board Member



SRISHTI YUVA CULTURE - 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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SRISHTI - NINA RAJARANI DANCE SCHOOL

Srishti Nina Rajarani Dance School is based at Harrow Arts Centre in Hatch End, Harrow, Middlesex, and provides classes in classical Indian dance and Karnatik music from age 4 years upwards. Since 2016, Kathak dance classes have been established at the school.

The school started in 1991 and is led 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 qualified teachers. 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

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