

# *SUNOH!* TELL ME, SISTER

contemporary Indian dance and multimedia storytelling



## THE PERFORMANCE

# SUNOH! Tell Me, Sister

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*SUNOH! Tell Me, Sister* brings to life women's stories of being silenced, finding voice and sisterly community. Blending multimedia storytelling and contemporary Indian dance-theater, *SUNOH! Tell Me, Sister* draws on the histories of the dancer-courtesan of the Indian subcontinent, stories of contemporary South Asian domestic violence survivors, and the performers' personal struggles with tradition. This multidisciplinary work emerged from the Post Natyam Collective's long-distance creative process, which uses internet technologies to enable transnational choreographic collaboration. The piece also reflects Post Natyam's long-term community work with AWAZ, the South Asian Network's support group for survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

*created and performed by:* Cynthia Ling Lee and Shyamala Moorthy with long-distance contributions from Sandra Chatterjee and Anjali Tata  
*multimedia design:* Carole Kim  
*original music:* Loren Nerell and Ravindra Deo  
*dramaturgy:* Mona Heinze  
*dance media collaborator:* Sangita Shresthova  
*technical direction and lighting design:* Kedar Lawrence  
*community partner:* South Asian Network's AWAZ



## THE PERFORMANCE



### VIDEO WORK SAMPLES

Please see <http://vimeo.com/channels/sunoh> for excerpts of the show.

### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

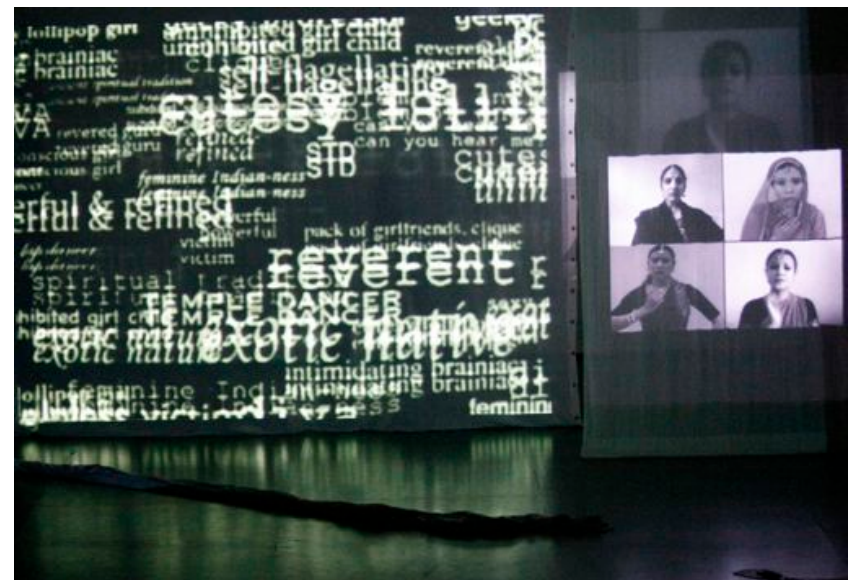
- professional theatrical sound system
- audio mixing console with 2 available stereo channels or 4 mono channels with 1/4 inch inputs
- stage monitors
- 2 boundary mics and 1 hand-held vocal mic on boom stand
- lighting grid with theatrical lighting suitable for dance
- programmable lighting console with 24 channel dimmer pack
- video projectors (2) and video cables from booth to stage
- capacity to hang two scrims
- sprung wooden floor (with or without marley)
- ideal playing space – 30 ft wide by 30 ft deep or larger
- 1 costume rack on wheels

NOTE: Some items are negotiable; please contact us for a detailed technical rider.

### TOURING TEAM

2-3 performers and 1 technical director

*SUNOH! Tell Me, Sister* was made possible with generous support from TeAda Productions, Durfee Foundation, Network of Ensemble Theaters, Bootleg Dance Festival, Khmer Arts Academy, City of Santa Monica, Sea and Space Explorations, and our individual donors.





## *THE POST NATYAM COLLECTIVE*

The Post Natyam Collective is a multinational community of dance artists, scholars, and organizers critically and creatively engaging with South Asian dance forms and aesthetic concepts. Located in various places such as Europe, South Asia, and the U.S., Post Natyam Collective members share an online creative process that gives rise to varied artistic products. Every Post Natyam Collective member is steeped in South Asian and other movement forms, but the training of each member is unique. Collectively, their training includes Bharata Natyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, yoga, and contemporary dance. In addition to dance, their artistic range includes creative writing, music, scholarship, and theater. Drawing upon these diverse tools, the Post Natyam Collective produces contemporary South Asian dance work that innovatively engages with tradition, probing theoretical and political issues with aesthetic rigor.



The work of Post Natyam Collective members has been presented internationally at venues such as Adyaya (Bangalore); ArtSensAsian Project 06 (Munich); Asian Young Choreographers Project (Kaohsiung); Dancing in the Margins Festival (Los Angeles); Diasporadics (New York); the Indonesian Dance Festival (Jakarta); Masala, Mehndi, Masti!! (Toronto); the Other Festival (Chennai); REDCAT (Los Angeles), The Roxy (Prague); and with Nitin Sawhney in the World Electronica Festival at the Hollywood Bowl (Hollywood).

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

### LEAD ARTISTS



**CYNTHIA LING LEE** (choreographer/performer) instigates thoughtful, friction-filled dialogues between American postmodern dance and North Indian classical kathak. Her work has been presented throughout Asia and the United States at venues such as Dance Theater Workshop (New York), Asia Society (New York), Painted Bride Arts Center (Philadelphia), REDCAT (Los Angeles), Taman Ismail Marzuki (Jakarta), Taipei National University of the Arts (Taipei), India International Centre (New Delhi), and Chandra-Mandapa: Spaces (Chennai). In addition to working with the Post Natyam Collective, Cynthia has collaborated with choreographers Sheetal Gandhi (dance-theater), Ery Mefri (West Sumatran); musicians David Cutler (jazz/new music), Paul Livingstone (Ragajazz); and visual artist YaYa Chou (sculptural installation). Cynthia was the recipient of a 2002-3 Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, a 2006 Asia Pacific Performing Arts Exchange Fellowship, a 2008 Swarthmore Project Residency, a 2010 Taipei Artist Village Residency, and a 2010 Durfee ARC Grant. Some of her most influential teachers and mentors include Simone Forti, Eiko & Koma, Judy Mitoma, Bandana Sen, Kumudini Lakhia, Anjani Ambegaokar, and the contact improvisation community. Cynthia holds an MFA in choreography from UCLA. [www.cynthialinglee.com](http://www.cynthialinglee.com)

**SHYAMALA MOORTY** (choreographer/performer) is a choreographer, writer and performer whose interdisciplinary performance work is influenced by her training in Bharata Natyam (with Malathi Iyengar and Medha Yodh), contemporary western dance, theater, and yoga. She is a co-founder of the Post Natyam Collective and has toured their collaborative show, "Meet the Goddess," in Europe, India and the United States. She also is a company artist with TeAda Productions where she has created two solo shows: RISE, acclaimed as a "tour de force" by the LA Times (1/17/04), and "Carrie's Web," which incorporated aerial dancing. Shyamala has also performed with Great Leap, the Rangoli Foundation and as a soloist and principal dancer for the Aman International Folk Ensemble. Shyamala holds an MFA in choreography from UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures and has taught at UCLA, Cal Poly Pomona, Cerritos College, Cypress College, Rio Hondo College, and West LA College. Shyamala has received two Durfee ARC grants and a Long Beach Arts Council Professional Artist Fellowship.



# ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

## COLLABORATORS

**SANDRA CHATTERJEE** (long-distance choreographer) is a choreographer and cultural studies/performance studies scholar who combines her interests of choreographing, writing, and organizing. In her choreography she draws on her training in classical Indian dance - Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam - Polynesian dance, modern/postmodern dance, and yoga. She is a recipient of the Hawaii State Dance Council's Choreographic Award and Cultural Preservation Award and holds a PhD in Culture and Performance from UCLA. As an independent choreographer she primarily performs in India and Europe, creating solo work, working with the Post Natyam Collective, and engaging in collaborations with artists such as Eko Supriyanto (Surakarta), P. Senthilkumar (Vienna) and Aditi Biswas (New Delhi). She has been a visiting scholar teaching at UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures and has completed a diploma in Arts and Organisation in Vienna, Austria (University of Vienna and Institut für Kulturkonzepte). [www.sandrachatterjee.net](http://www.sandrachatterjee.net)

**RAVINDRA DEO** (musician/composer) has several musical compositions to his credit and has scored for dance and film. He is a senior disciple of tabla artist Shri Ramesh Kumar Bharati and also studied tabla under Professor Abhiman Kaushal while completing a degree in Ethnomusicology from UCLA. In addition to his work with the Post Natyam Collective, Ravi has collaborated with a variety of artists including taiko musician Bryan Yamami, bharatanatyam dancer Ramya Harishankar, carnatic vocalist Aditya Prakash, jazz trumpeter Tom Terrel, and intercultural composer Derrick Spiva Jr. A native of Long Beach, California, Ravi regularly accompanies local musicians and dancers and has toured nationally as a member of the esoteric space-Klezmer ensemble, The Rabbinical School Dropouts.

**MONA HEINZE** (dramaturg) has worked as a dramaturg on theater and dance pieces with directors including Donald Byrd, Karen Coonrod, Cheryl Faver, Janie Geiser, Nataki Garrett, Mira Kingsley, Irene Lewis, Jackson Phippin, L. Kenneth Richardson, Martha Swetzoff, Eve Shapiro, Stan Wojewodski and playwrights Michael Henry Brown, Marion McClinton, Eric Overmyer, and Carl Hancock Rux. Her translations and adaptations include Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *The Sinking of the Titanic*, Marieluise Fleißer's *Purgatory in Ingolstadt*, and Brecht's *The Visions of Simone Machard*. A German Fulbright scholar, Mona received an MFA in Dramaturgy from Yale and an MFA in Performing Arts Management from Brooklyn College, where she taught from 1992 until 1996. For the last fourteen years she has been a faculty member of the School of Theater at the California Institute of the Arts, where she teaches courses in dramaturgy, play analysis, performance analysis,



## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

adaptation/translation, witnessing, and critique modalities. Since 2000, Mona has served on the board of the Flintridge Foundation, primarily in the areas of ensemble theater and community services.

**CAROLE KIM** (multimedia artist) is an interdisciplinary artist with a focus on live video performance and performance-based video installation. She has collaborated with new music improviser/composers such as Nels Cline, Carl Stone, Wadada Leo Smith and Jesse Gilbert; choreographers Oguri, Grisha Coleman and Stephanie Nugent. Recent performance and exhibition venues include the Museum of Contemporary Art-Los Angeles; REDCAT/Disney Hall; the Getty Center; Springwave Festival/LIG Performing Arts Hall (Seoul, Korea); Decibel Festival (Seattle); the Stanford Jazz Festival; Issue Project Room and Engine 27 (New York); Arts, Media and Engineering Program at Arizona State University (Tempe, AZ), and the Knitting Factory (LA). Her single-channel work has been screened at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Trampoline: Platform for New Media Art (Nottingham, England), ArtSonje Center (Seoul, Korea), plus numerous festivals in Brazil, Australia, Japan, Germany, England, Estonia and Latvia. [www.carolekim.com](http://www.carolekim.com)

**KEDAR LAWRENCE** (technical director/lighting designer) is an underground film and lighting artist who recently relocated to Los Angeles from San Francisco. Some of Kedar's recent productions have included Jump/Cut (Lighting Designer), Dogsbody (Technical Director), Nocturnal Butterflies (Lighting Designer/Technical Director), Fury Factory Theatre Festival (Technical Director/Festival Manager) and Scrap-Soup (Lighting Designer). His camera and lighting work in film has been screened at the San Francisco International Film Festival, the Santa Cruz Film Festival, and the Sacramento International Film Festival among others. Kedar was awarded a Lighting Artists in Dance grant from Dancers' Group in 2009 for his work in Nocturnal Butterflies with choreographer Erika Tsimbrovsky.

**LOREN NERELL** (musician/composer) has written music for film, theater, dance, and interactive multi-media. He has performed with the Kronos Quartet; recorded seven albums of original work; appeared on several compilations such as *Dali: The Endless Enigma*, *Soundscape Gallery 3*, and *Weightless, Effortless*; and has made guest appearances on recordings such as Steve Roach's *Artifacts*, Paul Haslinger's *World Without Rules*, Djam Karet's *Collaborator*, and L. Subramaniam's *Global Fusion*. He spent several months in Java and Bali studying native styles of gamelan music, some of which he has performed with the Los Angeles-based gamelan dance/music group, Burat Wangi. Loren received a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology and Geography from Cal Poly Pomona and a Master of Arts degree in Ethnomusicology from UCLA. His thesis is on the ceremonial gamelan music of Bali called Ielambatan.





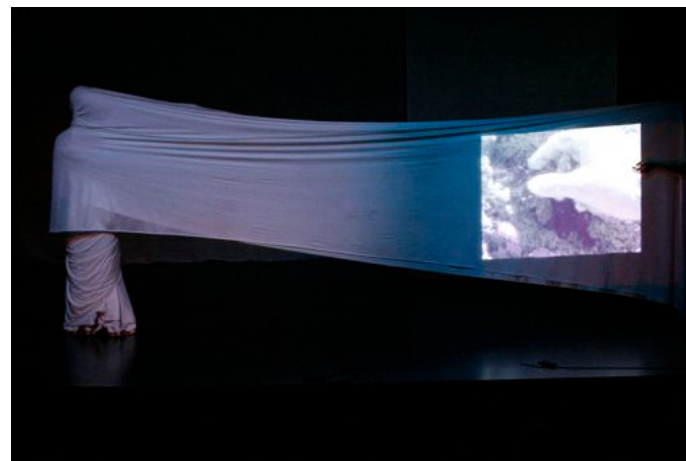
## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

**SANGITA SHRESTHOVA** (dance-media artist) creates work that exists between dance, film and new media. Sangita Shresthova is a Czech/Nepalese dancer and media scholar who studied Bharata Natyam, Charya Nritya (Nepalese Dance), Bollywood Dance, Kalaripayat and contemporary dance techniques alongside her professional training at Princeton University, LSE and MIT where she received the Council for the Arts Wiesner award for her work in dance and new media. She choreographed for Constanza Macras/DorkyPark production "Big in Bombay," and her film, *Dancing Kathmandu*, was a curtain raiser at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival. Sangita is the Co-Founder and Programming Director of the Prague Indian Film Festival and holds a Ph.D. from UCLA. [www.bollynatyam.com](http://www.bollynatyam.com)

**ANJALI TATA** (long-distance choreographer/performer) creates contemporary Indian dance drawing from Bharata Natyam, hatha yoga, and modern/postmodern disciplines. A disciple of Viji Prakash, Anjali toured the U.S. and India with the Shakti Dance Company from 1992-96 as a principal dancer and also taught at the school from 1992-2003. She began her choreographic experimentation with contemporary Indian dance in 1999; her work has been presented at festivals and venues such as Artwallah, World Festival of Sacred Music, Hollywood Bowl, Highways Performance Space, and Japan America Theatre. Anjali received her MFA from UCLA's Department of World Arts & Cultures in 2002. She moved to Kansas City in 2004 and teaches dance and yoga in the Kansas City area. She worked with renowned artist David Rousseve in his latest production, *Saudade*, which toured during the 2008-2009 performing arts season.

**SOUTH ASIAN NETWORK** (community partner) is a grassroots, community based organization dedicated to advancing the health, empowerment and solidarity of persons of South Asian origin in Southern California. Founded in 1990, the overall goal of SAN is to inform and empower South Asian communities by acting as an agent of change in eliminating biases, discrimination and injustices targeted against persons of South Asian origin and by providing linkages amongst communities through shared experiences. AWAZ Voices Against Violence is a SAN program committed to the empowerment of survivors of violence. It addresses issues of violence – including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, child sexual abuse, human trafficking, and elder abuse – within the community through outreach, education, case management, and advocacy.

[www.southasiannetwork.org](http://www.southasiannetwork.org)





## PRESS QUOTES

“Working from within Indian aesthetics and philosophy, the choreographers take the exploration of the body in postmodern directions, deconstructing it, subverting its gaze, questioning its stereotypes of femininity and restrictive social codes, and openly, though subtly, exploring female desire and pleasure. Their work as a collective, their use of new media to enable work across geographical distances and their collaborative spirit create the wave of the future and can serve as models for other twenty-first-century artists.”

- Ketu Katrak, *Contemporary Indian Dance: New Creative Choreography in India and the Diaspora*, 2011

“Sunoh! [Tell Me, Sister] portrays women’s experiences of being silenced, and finding voice, and asserts how women are supported by sisterly community. The commingling of the stories of courtesans from the past, of survivors of domestic violence in the present and of the artists’ own struggles with tradition, whether in learning a classical dance style with its own rigid codifications often limiting for women, or in dealing with trauma of violent childhoods, and adult marital relationships. The Post Natyam Collective attains a skilful interweaving of high aesthetic standards of performance along with a strong statement against contemporary forms of violence on women’s bodies.”

- Ketu Katrak, narthaki.com, 16 July 2011

“Their cutting edge explorations break through gender stereotypes, refuse exotification and disrupt strict dichotomies between East and the West.”

- Nita Vidyarthi, *The Statesman*, 5 October 2010

“...sharply etched that the art of body movements can speak against any form of subjugation, linguistic or political.”

- *The Times of India (Kolkata)*, 30 Aug 2010

"Ranging from the subtle emotions of contemporary abhinaya to unexpectedly funky transformations of classical Indian rhythms...[the Post Natyam Collective] sheds light on the notions of home, cultural hybridity, longing, and translation.”

- VR Devika, *The Times of India (Chennai)*, 1 January 2010

"...enriched the idiom of dance with their diverse experiences, varied dance styles, fluidity and grace, as they explored women-centric themes ranging from sensuality and shame to freedom."

2006

- Devika Natarajan, *The Hindu*, 6 December

"After seeing Post Natyam Collective's presentation, one of the members from the audience expressed her amazement at the empowered bodies of women and women power and energy and the healing quality of dance. "

- Dr. Sunil Kothari, narthaki.com, May 30, 2005

"Talk about fusion – not only did Bollywood meet rap meet performance art meet modern dance and bharata natyam but there was humor, depth and beauty to burn."

- Victoria Looseleaf, *Los Angeles Times*, January 2004



# TEACHING

The Post Natyam Collective's practice-based workshops foster creative approaches to choreography and movement practices as related to South Asian aesthetics. They embrace collaboration and explore progressive, critically engaging themes, while also integrating historical contexts and theoretical analysis. We share our approaches in a variety of settings, including academic, professional, and community contexts.

## WORKSHOPS:

### **Abhinaya**

Experience the infinite possibilities in using the face and hand gestures to convey meaning. Dancers will learn the art of acting without words, and topics may range from translating poetic texts to free-writing and transposing personal stories, weaving them into the dance. Using the Navarasas (nine "universal" emotions) as a base, traditional approaches to abhinaya are refined and reimagined through mind-body practices such as butoh, somatic imagery, and Authentic Movement.

### **Contemporary Indian Dance**

Postmodern choreographic tools such as breath, space, time, and release are applied to the intricate rhythmic structures and movement vocabulary of traditional Indian dance forms.



### **South Asian Approaches to Choreography**

This choreography laboratory invites participants to integrate principles of South Asian dance – rhythm, body-soundings, gesture, storytelling, and facial expression – through their own creative explorations.

### **Tell Me, Sister: Healing through Self-Expression**

This workshop teaches methods to facilitate healing using artistic tools such as writing and movement-based explorations. These methods were developed through the Post Natyam Collective's process with survivors of domestic violence.

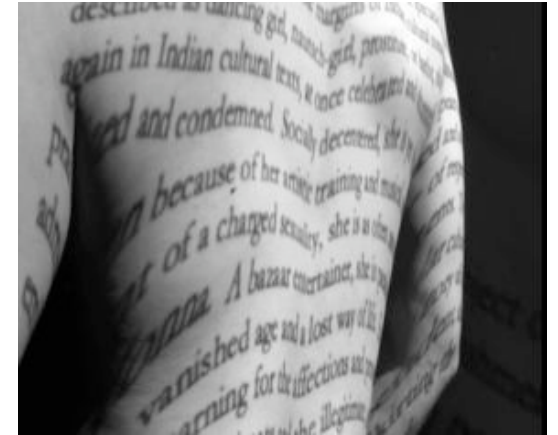
### **The Thinking Body, The Dancing Word**

What are the myriad ways that text and movement can color each other? In this workshop, we will explore intersections between postmodern and classical Indian dance's techniques of relating text and movement, drawing on the text-movement improvisation work of avant-garde improviser, Simone Forti.

# TEACHING

The Post Natyam Collective engages in scholarly research that reflects its critical, border-crossing approach to contemporary South Asian performance. Drawing on academic disciplines such as performance studies, dance studies, postcolonial theory, cultural studies, ethnomusicology, literary theory, gender studies, and film theory, our writing and scholarship view South Asian dance through the lens of our contemporary, globalizing realities while probing the historical erasures and aesthetic constructs embedded within our traditions.

Post Natyam's lectures and lecture demonstrations explore the intersections between scholarship and artistic practice. They generally include a brief performance component highlighting the theoretical topic.



## LECTURE DEMONSTRATIONS:

### **Blogging Choreography: Using the Internet to Collaborate Transnationally**

In today's globalized world, how does the use of Web 2.0 technologies redefine the possibilities of choreography? Using the working process of the Post Natyam Collective as a case study, we look at how internet tools open up possibilities for cross-border collaboration and artistic coalition while also reconfiguring the nature of choreographic process and product.



### **Gender, Sexuality, and Performance: The Female Body in South Asian Performance**

This lecture-demonstration takes a female-centered look at Indian dance's complex negotiations of gender and sexuality through performance, both historically and in contemporary times.

Starting with the historical courtesan's art of performing the erotic in both sacred and secular contexts, we then look at the Post Natyam Collective's contemporary re-envisionings of this legacy in "SUNOH! Tell Me, Sister."

Note: We can also develop workshops and lecture demonstrations for the needs and interests of a specific community.

## *CONTACT INFORMATION*

For booking inquiries, please email us at: [post.natyam@gmail.com](mailto:post.natyam@gmail.com).

For more information on the Post Natyam Collective, go to: [www.postnatyam.net](http://www.postnatyam.net).

Visit Post Natyam's online creative workspace at: [www.postnatyam.blogspot.com](http://www.postnatyam.blogspot.com).

To be added to our monthly newsletter, please send an email to [news@postnatyam.net](mailto:news@postnatyam.net).



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