

# PART THIEF, PART DISCIPLE

*blurring the line between musician and dancer*



the show

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This discipline-breaking collaboration between dancer-choreographer Cynthia Ling Lee and pianist-composer David Cutler combines music and movement in unconventional ways. North Indian rhythms transform into nonsensical English slang, a classical pianist turns into an unruly comic-book super-hero, and the line between dancer and musician becomes increasingly blurred throughout the course of the evening. The diverse works of the program cross cultural as well as disciplinary borders, with unique vocabularies that draw on the traditions of North Indian classical kathak, American postmodern dance, jazz music, and western contemporary classical music.

This show was made possible with generous support from Taipei Artist Village, Kuandu Arts Festival, Duquesne University, and the Swarthmore Project: Time and Space to Make Work.

### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Minimum playing space: 20 ft by 25 ft
- Sprung wooden floor
- High quality grand piano (minimum 6 feet in length). Must be tuned immediately before the performance.
- Boundary microphones for rhythmic footwork
- Theatrical lighting suitable for dance

### VIDEO EXCERPTS:

<http://vimeo.com/channels/partthiefpartdisciple>





## the artists

DAVID CUTLER balances a varied career as a jazz and classical composer, pianist, educator, arranger, conductor, collaborator, concert producer, author, blogger, consultant, speaker, advocate, and entrepreneur. In all these pursuits, he works to push boundaries while connecting with new audiences. His book *The Savvy Musician* ([www.savvymusician.com](http://www.savvymusician.com)) helps musicians 1) build a career, 2) earn a living, & 3) make a difference. A multi-dimensional composer who listens to a colossal range of styles, Cutler's eclectic output reflects this musical world. With a vocabulary ranging from beautiful lyricism to rhythmic sophistication and bizarre juxtapositions, his music has been commissioned and performed by artists such as the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Classical Orchestra of Milan, Repertory Symphony Orchestra, LAVIE Singers, Korean Chamber Ensemble, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, Boston Brass, Airmen of Note Air Force Big Band, singer Nancy Wilson, trumpeter Sean Jones, clarinetist David Krakauer, harpist Jung, and saxophonist Benny Golson.

Cutler's playing is as wide-ranging as his composing, stretching what it means to be a pianist. Performances regularly incorporate improvisation, humor, audience interaction, choreography, technology, costuming, unique collaborations, and secondary instruments. The concerts he produces often defy expectations, interfacing music with dance, film, actors, costumes, stage design, and visual artists. Dr. Cutler studied at the University of Miami, Hochschule für Musik (Vienna, Austria), Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University. He teaches at Duquesne University, where he also serves as Coordinator of Music Entrepreneurship Studies. [www.trunkmusic.org](http://www.trunkmusic.org)



CYNTHIA LING LEE instigates thoughtful, friction-filled dialogues between American postmodern dance and North Indian classical kathak. Her intercultural, interdisciplinary choreography has been presented throughout the United States and Asia at venues such as Dance Theater Workshop (New York), Asia Society (New York), Painted Bride Arts Center (Philadelphia), Asian Arts Initiative (Philadelphia), REDCAT (Los Angeles), Highways Performance Space (Los Angeles), Taman Ismail Marzuki (Jakarta), Taman Budaya Cultural Center (Padang), Kuandu Arts Festival (Taipei), Tsoying Dance Theater (Kaohsiung), Chhayanaut (Dhaka), India International Centre (New Delhi), Natya/STEM (Bangalore), ICCR (Kolkata), and Chandra-Mandapa: Spaces (Chennai). Cynthia is a member of the Post Natyam Collective ([www.postnatyam.net](http://www.postnatyam.net)), dedicated to critical and creative approaches to South Asian dance; her other artistic collaborators have included choreographers Sheetal Gandhi (dance-theater), Ery Mefri (West Sumatran); musicians David Cutler (jazz/new music), Paul Livingstone (Ragajazz), Loren Nerell (Indonesian/electronic); and visual artists YaYa

Chou (sculptural installation) and Carole Kim (multimedia 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)

## what the press says...

“A playful take on how cultures interact and collide with hilarious consequences...blended rhythms, sensual, seamless movement patterns, and humour.”  
-Kathakali Jana, The Telegraph, 28 August 2010

“The musical anchor...is pianist David Cutler, who calls his arrangements and compositions ‘trunk music’ because they juxtapose ‘unrelated items that find themselves side by side.’ The result is at times harmonious, at times agitated and always entertaining.”

-Janie Caves McCauley, The Greenville News, 8 December 2010

“...the high point of the program was Cynthia Lee’s performance of her ruddha (rude, huh?) from 2007. Lee, a Los Angeles-based Chinese-American who has studied and taught in Thailand, India and Taiwan as well as Indonesia and many American cities, calls her piece ‘a series of “false translations” of traditional kathak’ rhythms and syllables into bizarre and silly English gossip. It also fused postmodern movement with kathak postures and steps, and broke the stage’s fourth wall as Lee headed up the stairs from the stage into the house, taking a seat and repeating her text conversationally to those around her. Her rhythmic movements resembled martial arts forms; she hammered on the floor with her feet...Lee’s horde of words and movement is rich and diverse, and I look forward to seeing more of her work.

-Elizabeth Zimmer, Dance Theater Workshop blog, 26 July 2010

“Comic antics included pianist David Cutler's use of Ping Pong balls to deaden the strings ...Cutler uncorked a twisted version...that combined elements of rock and jazz in a style reminiscent of Frank Zappa”

-Tom Ineck, Lincoln Journal Star, 11 December 2010

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

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

“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

“excessively artful essay in self-conscious postmodern dialogue with Kathak tradition.”

-Alastair Macaulay, New York Times, 6 June 2010

“...sharply etched that the art of body movements can speak against any form of subjugation, linguistic or political. And in doing so, Cynthia also broke several barriers of genres and styles, classical and contemporary, Indian, American or Chinese. For, she effortlessly mixed abhinaya with idiosyncratic postmodern movement, Kathak syllables with nonsensical English gossip. "Rude, huh?" she says. Brilliant, we respond.”

-The Times of India (Kolkata), 30 August 2010

“intensive footwork and complex rhythms... a purist Kathak aficionado’s delight”

-Ashfaque Swapan, India West, January 2007

# teaching

## WORKSHOPS

### **Rhythm and Movement**

Cynthia and David co-teach this interactive workshop on understanding and embodying rhythm through movement and vocalization. Drawing on the rich traditions of American jazz and Indian dance/music, we will get physical, funky, and precise in our rhythm-bodies. No experience required.

### **Music-Dance Collaboration**

Cynthia and David co-teach this hands-on workshop for musicians and dancers, in which participants will learn to find common ground, push past their comfort zones, and translate compositional concepts across disciplines.

### **Contemporary Kathak**

Cynthia's class combines training in North Indian classical kathak and postmodern release technique with the exploration of movement material that lives between the two forms. Footwork, vocalizations, and full-bodied dance-soundings toe the line between movement and music, allowing dancers to produce and understand rhythmic structures with mathematical precision and emotional clarity.

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

In this choreography laboratory, Cynthia invites participants to integrate principles of South Asian dance – rhythm, body music, gesture, storytelling, and facial expression – through their own creative explorations.

## LECTURE DEMONSTRATIONS

### **Part Thief, Part Disciple: Collaborating Across Borders**

Cynthia and David break down the collaborative compositional process behind *Part Thief, Part Disciple*, sharing the challenges, artistic strategies, and delights of working between disciplines and cultures.

### **Re-Imagining the Arts: Challenging Conventional Wisdom to Discover Innovative Success Solutions**

This provocative presentation by David Cutler – one of the leading voices on arts career and entrepreneurship training -- shows how artists bold enough to question widely accepted assumptions increase success and discover hidden opportunities in our quickly changing world.

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



## contact us

For booking and other inquiries, please email us at [cynthialinglee@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialinglee@gmail.com).

For more on Cynthia's work, please visit [www.cynthialinglee.com](http://www.cynthialinglee.com).

For more on David's work, please visit [www.trunkmusic.org](http://www.trunkmusic.org) and [www.savvymusician.com](http://www.savvymusician.com).



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