

Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company

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Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company to Present Internationally Reknowned Kathakali Dancers from India in “An Evening of Kathakali: Kiratham”

Ancient Form Incorporates Dance, Exotic Masks, Elaborate Costumes, Live Music, and Enough Gore and Drama to Make a Greek Drama Look Tame

Washington, DC—March 24, 2005—Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company, along with USHAS Entertainment, will present “An Evening of Kathakali: Kiratham” at the Ernst Theater at Northern Virginia Community College on Saturday, April 9 at 6:00 p.m. Kathakali, a dance form from Kerala, South India, taps into the theatrical aspect of Indian dance and features a synchronized blend of several forms of artistic expression, including literature, music, painting, acting, dance, and percussion. The integration of, and interaction between, these art forms sets Kathakali apart from classical western theatre, which often depends heavily on a narrative text to convey a story and to impact audiences.

Like early Shakespearean Theater and Noh from Japan, Kathakali has traditionally been taught to and performed by only men. Men performed both the male and female roles and made drag a high-art long before other cultures because the dancers take on caricaturized and archetypal gender roles. Even the male characters wear heavy make-up and use “drag” as a performance tool and aesthetic. Kathakali was also only taught to direct heirs and by people who practiced the Hindu religion, so was a closely guarded cultural and familial asset. In the past few years, Kathakali schools have been receptive to all dance students interested in this form and slowly women and dancers from other faiths have begun learning this form as well. The DC performance will feature Hyder Ali, one of the first Muslim performers to successfully break into this art form.

Kathakali make-up and costumes are very detailed and elaborate and take 4-6 hours to complete. Elaborate masks and head dresses are molded onto the faces of the dancers, giving them a larger-than-life personality. These masks also accentuate the elaborate facial expressions and eye movements of the dancers which are both very important to the performance. No other dance or art form compares to Kathakali, though it is along the lines of Noh and Kabuki classical forms and similar to the contemporary Butoh dance theater format.

According to Daniel Phoenix Singh, artistic director of Dakshina, “If you can only fit one Indian dance event on your calendar, this is the event that you should attend. All the performers are icons in their own right and visiting the U.S. from India this spring. We work very hard to present other dance companies as part of our season and we are very honored to be able to present the Kathakali performance in the DC area.”

Dakshina’s Spring Celebration of Dance is made possible by financial support from the National Endowment for the Arts, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Dakshina’s Founding Sponsors, and friends of Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company. For more information about Dakshina or any of the events in the Spring Celebration of Dance, please visit www.Dakshina.org.

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About Dakshina

Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company is a young dance company that performs and presents Indian forms, such as Bharata Natyam, and Modern dance, mirroring the multiple identities of second generation South Asians. The company combines the arts with social justice issues both by incorporating the themes into their work and through partnerships with local community centers and schools.

The vision of Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company is to explore and present dance in its complexity and multiplicity, celebrating tradition while constantly creating new vocabularies in movement and dance, evolving to newer and higher standards.

About Daniel Phoenix Singh

Daniel Phoenix Singh is the Artistic Director and President of Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company. Singh completed an MFA in Dance, along with a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies, from the University of Maryland. He obtained a Laban Movement Analyst Certificate from the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, NYC. He finished his undergraduate work in Dance and Computer Science at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Singh continues his Bharata Natyam training with Guru Meena Telikicherla of Nrityanjali, MD with whom he has studied for several years. He has had the opportunity to work with the leading exponents of the art form including Guru Adayar K. Lakshman, Guru C.V. Chandrasekhar, Guru Jaya Chandrasekhar, and Guru Banumathi.

Singh's most recent explorations in dance include the Cuban/Colombian variations of Salsa and Merengue with Javier Varela and Shawn Malone. He is currently on the faculty at Joy of Motion, Maryland Youth Ballet, and Results the Gym. Singh is active in KhushDC, a Washington D.C. organization serving the South Asian LGBT community and its friends, and he is also working on setting up a youth outreach dance program with DARE. His works have been the critic's pick in the *Washington City Paper* and the *Washington Post*. The Voice of America will be profiling his dance company in the summer of 2005.