

## **Ancient forms exploring contemporary issues: An Idea Named Meera**

*Myth, Culture, Literature and its relevance to today-an exploration through dance and multi-media.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company** presents a dance and multimedia production with renowned danseuse and choreographer **Mallika Sarabhai of Darpana Academy in: An Idea Named Meera**. In this dance production, Dr. Sarabhai explores the role of myth and reality in Indian literature. Dr. Sarabhai questions why the Indian icon Meera's devotional songs permeate all strata of society in ways unheard of for Indian Women. Why is the idea of Meera so resonant in everyone? Was she a person or a myth? An idea or a dream? In this multimedia performance piece, Mallika Sarabhai explores through dance, music, theater and media imagery what makes Meera relevant to us today. This performance is a fundraiser for the Center for Non-Violence in India.

Famous for many years in India as a classical dancer, she first came to the attention of the world as a stage actress for her highly acclaimed performance in Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata*. The only Indian in this multi-national epic production, she played *Draupadi* and performed the role over 5 years in both the French and English stage versions, the film and the television version. With her smoldering beauty, mellifluous voice and sensual elegance she dazzled audiences with her brilliant and moving portrayal of the wife of the five Pandava brothers.

Frequently using humor to address serious issues, she imbues her art with strong and positive affirmations to try to raise the consciousness of her audiences, creating ripples of awareness that lead to change—particularly the empowerment of women. In this production of Meera, Sarabhai will be joined by Daksha Mashruwala. An accomplished Odissi dancer, Daksha Mashruwala works to create awareness and propagate Odissi dance and music along with other traditional art forms; she has choreographed and presented internationally on diverse themes.

Dr. Sarabhai's works are unique in their commitment to aesthetic/artistic perfection while staying deeply committed to social justice issues such as poverty, dowry deaths, female infanticide, rape, non-violence, ecology, and gender/caste disparities. Under her leadership, Darpana Academy created the "Center for Non-Violence" the first organization in India to connect social justice work with the arts. She is one of the few artists in India to take her works to the slums (ghettos) of India; more importantly she develops her work based on the issues that surround the slum (ghetto) dwellers. In the slums (ghettos) the audience members often become part of the performance, when they join in for an impromptu story telling of some of the injustices they face during Sarabhai's performance. Thus, her performances enable the audiences to voice their concerns and she often helps to organize their self-empowerment efforts as well. Her eloquent and impassioned fight for justice through the arts has not gone unnoticed. She has been praised for her strong leadership and

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has even been placed under house arrest when she spoke out against the tacit government policies that oppress the minorities in India.

Undaunted, Dr. Sarabhai continues her work in the arts and human rights, she says her choreography “stems out of a desperate need to talk about an issue. That is the engine of my work. It is my role as an artist to instigate uncomfortable discussion.” She dedicates her drive and her background in theater, dance, and music to constantly challenge the status quo. Dr. Sarabhai uses her knowledge of ancient art forms and traditions of India to address current realities in India.

Tickets for “An Idea Named Meera” are \$50 for VIP Reserved Orchestra Seating, \$25 for General Admission. On the day of the performance the VIP reserved orchestra seating tickets will be \$60.00 and the general seating tickets will be \$30.00 at the door (cash or checks only). Tickets are available online at [www.dakshina.org](http://www.dakshina.org). The Duke Ellington School for the Arts is located at 3500 R Street NW in Georgetown. Parking garages are available in several public parking venues in Georgetown.

Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company explores dance in its complexity and multiplicity, celebrating tradition while constantly exploring new vocabularies in movement and dance, evolving to newer and higher standards. Our ultimate goal is to frame dance as a system of communication, one that transcends boundaries, cultures, and time. Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh & Company promotes international dance and theater forms to all communities within the District of Columbia. We engage in dance not only as a means for aesthetic and artistic growth, but also as a vehicle for social change and community development. Programs of Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh and Company are supported by the DC Commission for the Arts and Humanities. Additional information is available at [www.dakshina.org](http://www.dakshina.org).

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