

SBDC NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024

Enriching education ~ nurturing talent ~ promoting innovation



Message from Sujata Banerjee MBE

Dance provides a holistic education that offers a multitude of transferrable skills. It helps nurture different types of intelligence that can help us in numerous ways both in our personal lives but also professionally.

Kinaesthetic intelligence is an important attribute that is enhanced through dance, which requires coordination, balance, dexterity and strength in equal measure and often simultaneously. Dance can also help enhance our musical, spatial and social intelligence with specific tailored teaching methods. Dance can also help keep us connected to our own cultural and personal identities whilst offering a glimpse into a diverse cultures. Indian classical dance forms teach us a lot about history, literature, mythology and religion beyond book learning.

At SBDC we remain committed to educating students in the beautiful artform of Kathak and believe that dance in all its forms can help us to become well rounded and more intelligent individuals.

*Sujata Banerjee MBE,
Director SBDC*



SBDC brings Kathak dance to schools

The SBDC team have had a busy January delivering our Arts Council England funded outreach program to primary schools in Barking & Dagenham.

Under the theme of rituals and festivals, the workshops were based around annual kite festival of Patang where Indians engage in flying kites, symbolising the awakening of the gods from their deep sleep. We delivered a total of 10 outreach days from pre school age to year 6.

Speaking about the workshop, Eastbury Primary School said-

'It was an engaging workshop for the children, and even the boys, who are usually quite reluctant when it comes to dance, were also fully involved and engaged. The dance instructor was brilliant. Thank you again!'



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Sujata
Banerjee
Dance
Company

Hemantika 2023: A festival of classical Indian Dance



Hemantika is SBDC's renowned festival of classical Indian dance and features an exciting four months of workshops, mentorship & outreach programs as well as mesmerising performances from some of the leading classical Indian guest artists. SBDC trustee Mehul Nathwani speaks about the 2023 Hemantika performances.

Hemantika 2023 was an opportunity to witness another spectacular series of dance performances, showcasing the range and depth of students, teachers and guest dancers of Sujata Banerjee Dance Company. The Indian classical disciplines of Kathak, Bharatnatyam and Gaudiya Nritya were all on display, along with a daring fusion of modern influences mixed into particular works.

The festival took place over 3rd November at Broadway Theatre Barking, 19th November at The Bhavan, and 25th November at Artsdepot Finchley. One of the three performances that impacted me the most were *Devi Aradhana* performed by SBDC's senior dancers and choreographed by Sujata Banerjee, punctuated by a riveting choreography that drew the crowd to their feet with tears in their eyes. The second was a deeply touching and thought provoking ensemble *Unknotting* performed by SBDC's level 2 dance group with a striking soundtrack by Preetha Narayanan and choreographed by Jaina Modasia & Showmi Das, which enthralled the audience from start to finish. The third was *Preyasi*; a solo choreographed and performed by brilliant guest artist Divya Ravi and karnatic vocalist Sharan Subramanian who put on a performance of poetry in motion.

As the curtain settled on this year's festival, it was clear to me that Hemantika's ability to challenge preconceived ideas about classical dance, to communicate powerful dialogues through the medium of motion, and to cross the boundaries of age, background and our personal stories, is stronger than ever.

- Mehul Nathwani, Trustee of SBDC



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SBDC company dancers' mentorship program with award winning choreographers

Thanks to Arts Council England Funding, one of the highlights of Hemantika this year was the opportunity to provide a choreographic mentorship program to SBDC pro dancers with two celebrated choreographers, Tanushee Shankar and Rosemary Lee. Using their new choreographic skills, the pro dancers were given the task to create new work with SBDC students and present at Hemantika day 3 at Artsdepot Theatre. Here we catch up with the SBDC pro dancers on the experience...

Working with a large group and having a shorter amount of time choreograph than I'm used to was quite challenging, but having two of us working together meant that we could split the groups up and work on different things, making it much more manageable. It taught me to work better under pressure and plan ahead to make efficient use of our time in the studio with the dancers.

Tulani Kayani Skeef

What was most challenging part about the process?

Anything you learned that you never thought about before?

The mentorship programmed really highlighted the different responsibilities and skillsets required when working as a choreographer. For instance, ability to adapt when working with students from a background of different abilities and ages or even when working with a musician to create music for your piece. I felt that through this experience I was really able to understand how to combine a concept and bring it alive through music, costume and lightening- *Jaina Modasia*

To see the idea translate from paper to performance . Choreographing on our students was something very special and performance day is always exciting, the music coming together with the lighting and costume was amazing.

Mithun Gill

What was the most exciting part?



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Youth Group Update

Youth Group works with award winning choreographer Jose Agudo

In the summer term of 2023, as a youth group member I was told that we will be mentored by Jose Agudo. I read about him and was in awe of his mastery over diverse forms such as flamenco, contemporary and Kathak but what really intrigued me was a line from his website about his style - 'We invite spectators and participants alike to be moved in every sense – physical, emotional, and cerebral' In our training, we truly experienced this. In building the piece we shared ideas, connected the music with emotions and challenged ourselves with new types of movements. We loved the process of learning with Jose as much as the opportunity to perform it in SBDC's annual showcase Hemantika. After much discussions we called the piece, 'The Herd'. As a group we felt a sense of collective pride in how far we had come, but Jose also challenged us to realise how far we have to go - something that our guru Sujatadi always reminds us too!

Noyonika Kochhar, youth group dancer

Youth Group and choreographer Vidya Patel

Creating new work with celebrated choreographers is one of the unique benefits of being part of SBDC youth group. They are currently busy in the studio creating new work with the highly acclaimed Vidya Patel- we can't wait to see the end product!



Left: SBDC youth group performing The Herd at Hemantika in Artsdepot Theatre

Exciting News!

SBDC Youth Group will be performing at the Youth Group Dance Platform at The Place on Saturday 10th February.
For tickets, click [here](#).





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Spotlight

Spotlight is a unique SBDC initiative which showcases the work of SBDC students who have shown extraordinary commitment, dedication and consistent progress in their dance. Last year's spotlight was on Jaina Modasia. Here she shares how being part of Spotlight has changed things for her.

**Next Spotlight is on Tulani Kayani Skeef
on Sunday 17th March @6pm,
St.Cuthberts Church Hall (HA0 3QY).
Tickets are £8 and available on the door.**



Having the opportunity of spotlight last summer was an invigorating experience. Training towards the performance not only kept me physically and mentally challenged but allowed me to reconnect with some unique and challenging compositions that Sujata didi had taught me. Performing with live music has always been a passion of mine however Didi had highlighted how structuring the performance and explaining the compositions in a particular way is essential for the audience to connect with you and travel on the journey with you, this made the process a little bit more challenging as Sujata didi did not want to sit in the rehearsals so that she can watch it at the spotlight for the first time.

I feel grateful to have had the opportunity of spotlight and feel that it's a great initiative that SBDC offers to give students the opportunity and challenge of performing pure Kathak in an intimate Mehfil like setting.





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Sujata Tells

Stay tuned to Sujata Tells podcast for conversations with top dance artists, benefits of dance, impacts of dance training and much, much more.

Available on Spotify



Stills from Hemantika 2023 ©Aleksandra Warchol