Dr Anita Ratnam

Neo Classical and contemporary dancer and choreographer

Anita Ratnam is best described as an’ intersectionist’ – an artiste whose work weaves through the many disciplines of dance, theatre, feminist issues and resistance. A PhD in Women’s Studies from the University of Madras, India, Ratnam is seriously engaged wtih the imaging of Indian and Asian women via the prism of performance.

With award winning work in the field of Television in the USA throughout the 1980s when she produced and hosted her own weekly television series on India in New York, Ratnam describes herself as a” contemporary classicist” whose solo work re-imagines notions of what is sacred and secular from within the framework of her life and experience.

Ratnam’s many solo and group choreographies have been of a collaborative nature. Working with theatre directors ( Dipankar Mukherjee, Pangea World Theatre,Minneapolis), Richard Armstrong (New York University), visual artistes (photographer Cylla Von Tiedemann, Toronto) and Asma Menon ( painter, Chennai) costumes and visual designer Rex ( Toronto) and Sandhya Raman ( New Delhi) writers Joy Harjo ( Albuquerque, USA) and Shobita Punja ( New Delhi) and choreographers Hari Krishnan ( indance, Toronto) and Mark Taylor ( Dance Alloy, USA).

This interdisciplinary method of working with many artises has giben Ratnam’s productions a new edge in her performative structures challenged the role and space, for mature women as performing artistes in a global world fuelled by youth and celebrity. Her ability to connect through storytelling, musical theatre and gesture to a wide variety of audiences has enabled international assignments and diverse spaces like Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, Korzo Theatre in The Hague, Substation, Singapore, Newark Museum and Peabody Essex Museum in the USA.

Anita Ratnam also visits academic environments like Wesleyan University, Columbia University, Mount Holyoke College, Barnard College, University of California in Irvine and Riverside, Rice University, University of Chicago, Fordham University, Middlebury College – all in the USA. In addition she has lectured at Universitas Catholica, Santiago, Chile, University of Capetown, South Africa, Goldsmiths College and Roehampton University in London, UK and Arts University in Kyoto, Japan. In these settings, Ratnam interacts with students of dance, theatre, mythology and religion. Ratnam’s dissertation was on the role of women in the reconstructed performance of the original 13th century theatre ritual KAISIKA NATAKAM in Southern Tamilnadu.

Anita Ratnam is a widely sought speaker on women’s issues relating to South Asia and has been repeatedly honoured and awarded for furthering the profile of Indian contemporary dance around the world.

Ratnam serves on several national and international cultural boards. She is a voting member of the Dance Critics Alliance, USA, a member of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, Italy and is on the Executive Board of the Sangeet NataK Akademi, New Delhi, India’s apex cultural body as well as a member of the ICCR selection committee on contemporary dance for international festivals.