



PRESS RELEASE
21 October 2021

Banyan Tree: South Asian Dance 2000-2020

Friday 5 – Saturday 27 November 2021
Departure Lounge, 64 Bute Street, Luton
Admission free

Opening event: Thursday 3 November 2021, 5-9pm, with introductions to the exhibition at 5.30pm and 7.30pm, and portraiture sessions 6-7pm.

Banyan Tree celebrates the remarkable dance artists who have contributed their unique vision to South Asian dance in the UK, principally through the lens of photographer **Simon Richardson**. The exhibition is organized by Luton-based Kadam Dance and will coincide with the premiere of Kadam's Dance's new work [*Songs of the Heart*](#) at Hat Factory Arts Centre on 12 November.

The exhibition includes portraits of the current generation of dancers, mostly captured live in performance, highlighting both movement and inner stillness; the young generations being introduced to dance; and surprises, such as when the lens is turned to the audience in a dementia-friendly performance.

The last two decades have witnessed the diffusion of South Asian forms across multiple spaces. Forms that evolved in Indian temples have found new spaces from theatres to city squares, museums and even swimming pools! The images in this exhibition tell the story of the contemporary makers and performers and those from whom they have inherited the forms.

Simon Richardson has photographed dance and performance for the last twenty-five years, with a particular focus on, and passion for, South Asian classical dance. His involvement with Pulse Magazine, the dedicated magazine for South Asian dance and music, has brought him into contact with that community throughout the UK and he has photographed many dance companies and individual performers.

Photographer Simon Richardson said: 'What has always struck me about South Asian dance is the strength and energy of the dancers, the glorious movement and the sound of the bare feet slapping on the floor. Over the last twenty years I have seen South Asian dancers perform and create in all manner of places, in all sorts of costume and with utter fearlessness: classical forms that can embrace the present and be relevant today.'

The exhibition also includes photographs by Vipul Sangoi, Nirvair Singh and Yaron Abulafia.

Sanjeevini Dutta, Director of Kadam Dance and Editor of Pulse Magazine, said:
'This is the largest and most ambitious exhibition of South Asian dance in the UK. It was a hard task to reduce the enormous contribution of dancers down to forty images.'

Banyan Tree is supported by the Heritage Fund and is the first exhibition of South Asian dance of this scale with a national focus. This showing concludes a tour that has included London Bhavan and Curve Leicester.

For further information and press images please contact:

Hazel Foxon, Hazel Foxon Arts Communications Email hazel@foxon.org or tel 07801 234930 (not for publication)

Notes to Editors

Visitor information

Departure Lounge, 64 Bute Street, Luton LU1 2EY

Open Thursday – Saturday 1.00pm– 6.00pm, and by appointment Admission free

Telephone 01582 878100

www.departure-lounge.org.uk email: gallery@departure-lounge.org.uk

Songs of the Heart by Kadam Dance is at Hat Factory Arts Centre on 12 November 2021 at 7.30pm. Tickets available at www.culturetrust.com

Kadam Dance is a Luton based arts charity www.kadamdance.org.uk which started in Bedford in 1995, teaching and promoting South Asian dance. It became the publisher of *Pulse* the dedicated magazine for South Asian dance in 2002. Kadam produces and tours new work, specializing in Odissi, one of the six classical Indian dance styles. On 12 November, to link in with the Departure Lounge performance, Kadam present's *Songs of the Heart* at the Hat Factory.

Pulse - South Asian Dance UK is the dedicated publication for the sector, in print form from 2002 to 2017 and on-line at www.pulseconnects.com since 2018 aims to inform, connect and critique, highlighting cutting-edge practice. It believes that the ancient art forms of classical Indian dance and music are ever evolving and adapting to new contexts and this resilience is celebrated in the pages of Pulse.

Producer Sanjeevini Dutta:

Sanjeevini Dutta has been the Director of Kadam since 1995 and became the Editor of Pulse magazine in June 2008. She holds a Masters in Psychology and Social Work from Bombay University. She trained in odissi dance with Shankar Behera and worked extensively as a freelance dance artist giving workshops to schools and communities throughout the UK.

Departure Lounge was set up in Luton 2010 initially organising a series of international contemporary art exhibitions in empty shops. With a particular emphasis on photography and portraiture, we curate an independent programme of exhibitions and commissions with the support of The Culture Trust Luton and, on a project-by-project basis, Arts Council England and other funders.

The Culture Trust Luton is an arts and cultural charity providing exceptional and meaningful engagement with museums, arts centres, libraries and public art for the people of Luton and beyond. The Culture Trust aims to deliver exemplary public engagement with arts and culture through its locally relevant and nationally important arts and cultural programmes, whilst actively nurturing creativity and artistic talent.

