

# Study Guide For Teachers

## Ramya Ramnarayan In Traditions of India

presented by

Young Audiences

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### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Born in Hindu temples more than 2,000 years ago, Indian dance is in equal measure movement, mime and music. Adorned with beautiful costumes, jewelry and makeup replicating temple sculpture, Ramya Ramnarayan and her dancers will bring students a beautiful and expertly danced program, evoking the profound emotions and complex rhythmic patterns that bring this ancient and mystic art form to life.

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Learn mythological stories and characters of Indian history
- Be exposed to a classical music and dance form which is over 5,000 years old.
- Participate in an interactive quiz. Students are asked to define the gestures and the body language, including emotions.
- Be able to follow dance even if they do not understand the language.
- Be introduced to the history and art of storytelling.
- Keep track of time for one portion of a piece through clapping.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

India is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. It has achieved phenomenal socio-economic progress during the last 60 years of its independence. India has become self-sufficient in agricultural production and is now the tenth largest industrialized country in the world. With one foot steeped in rich traditions and the other fervently striding into the entrepreneurial e-age, India embraces its diversity with unmatched serenity. Spread in an area of 3.28 million square kilometers, India is comprised of 28 states such as *Punjab*, *Maharashtra*, *Haryana*, and *Goa*, and seven union territories.

In India, dance has been used both as a vehicle of worship and as an expression of profound emotions. The origins of Indian dance are shrouded in the mist of antiquity. The bronze figurine of a dancing girl discovered in the 4,000 year old ruin of Mohenjo-Daro is the world's earliest evidence of dance. Bharata Natyam is a South Indian dance style – there are seven total in India.

The Indian dance structure is the oldest and the most comprehensive system in the world. It is a traditional art, an oral tradition which has been passed from generation to generation. Born in the Hindu temples, it is devotional in spirit, yet possesses a highly stylized and sophisticated technique. Indian dance utilizes a vocabulary of classical steps to create complex rhythmic patterns and with the language of gesture it conveys various themes, ideas and concepts to the audience.

During the program, an explanation of what takes place in the dance will be given. During one piece, the story is narrated in the background in English. Stylized hand gestures and body movements are the sources of communication.

## BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Look at a map of India and note where it is in relation to the U.S.
2. Have students read moral stories of India. The magazine “Chandamama” is an excellent source for these tales.
3. Get the music teacher involved! Have students learn about traditional Indian musical instruments, and listen to carnatic music.

## VOCABULARY WORDS

BHARATHANATYAM – a rhythmic and emotionally expressive dance of South India

CARNATIC MUSIC – South Indian music

SANSKRIT – ANCIENT Indian language, vital to Bharathanatyam

## AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Following the performance, the artist will have provided students with a coloring sheet. Students can color the dancers as they remember them, including the colorful costumes, make-up and jewelry.
2. Have students select stories from the performance that they enjoyed. Discuss them. Did the stories leave them with something to think about? What, if any, lessons were learned from the stories?
3. Get the visual arts teacher involved! Have students create their own visual images from their selected stories.

## ARTIST INFORMATION

Smt. Ramya Ramnarayan is a Bharathanatyam (Indian Classical Dance) performer, teacher and choreographer. She is the Artistic Director of Nrithyanjali Institute of Dance and conducts dance classes in Cranbury, NJ and Allentown, PA. Ramya serves as an adjunct professor in the dance department of Rutgers University.

Ramya has choreographed and staged several solo and group dances. She has performed at prestigious venues such as Asian Arts Initiative, Philadelphia Art Museum and Lincoln Center.

Every year, Ramya’s students visit India and perform during the music and dance festival at prestigious venues in Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and other major cities.

## RESOURCES

[www.musicindiaonline.com](http://www.musicindiaonline.com) – search for carnatic music

*Chandamama* magazine – available in English

[www.thakita.com/](http://www.thakita.com/) - commercial min-encyclopedia on **Bharata Natyam**. Contains video clippings, text, illustrations, glossary.

<http://www.webonautics.com/ethnicindia/dances/bharata/natyam.html> - **Bharatanatyam** is a relatively new name. It was earlier known as Sadir. The contemporary form of **Bharatanatyam** evolved during the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century.