



1317 Crease Street
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267-324-5917
<http://www.usiloquydance.org>

Shaily Dadijala biography

Shaily Dadijala was born in 1978 in Bardoli, India. At the age of 9, she felt called to study Indian classical dance Bharatanatyam and to become a dancer.

Ms. Dadijala founded Usiloquy Dance Designs in 2008; she is the Artistic Director, choreographer and Principal Dancer. She completed her B.A. in Dance specializing in Bharatanatyam from the *Bruhad Gujarat Sangeet Samiti*, India (1988-1994) and 2 year training in Hindustani Classical Music from 1987 to 1989. Ms. Dadijala choreographed and performed at several dance competitions and festivals in India between 1990 and 1996.

After moving to the USA in 2000, Ms. Dadijala taught in Queens, NY for a year before commencing Bharatanatyam classes in Levittown, PA in collaboration with the township recreation department in 2005. These classes with 3 levels of learning are currently taught in center city Philadelphia. Apart from the ongoing classes, Ms. Dadijala's teaching assignments have included workshops and Master classes at the Thomas Jefferson University and Temple University in Philadelphia and Desales University in Center Valley, Pennsylvania. In the fall of 2009, Ms. Dadijala was invited to design the curriculum and teach at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Ms. Dadijala's choreography and performing work has included three evening length works of Bharatanatyam for Usiloquy. Primary among special commissions have been the Philadelphia Geographical Society Festival of India, the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts and the Experience Asia festival at the College of New Jersey. The original works have been performed at The Queens Museum Theater in New York, The Kimmel Center for the performing Arts and the Painted Bride Arts Center in Philadelphia. Her work has been supported by the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the Samuel S.Fels Fund and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. She is also a recent recipient of the Leeway Foundation's Art and Change Grant.

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An Interview with Shaily Dadiala of Usiloquy Dance Designs about their upcoming performance "Chandroutie" at the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA)

by Robert Abrams
March 29, 2011

Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts
3680 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215 898 3900

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Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts
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215-546-PIFA
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The Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA) is a sponsor of ExploreDance.com.

Chandroutie will be performed May 1, 2011. Tickets are \$18 each.

Robert Abrams: What is your role in the show?

Shaily Dadiala: I am the director, choreographer and one of the 8 dancers. This production is very close to my heart. I conceived it after hearing of the actual accounts of my grand mother in law Sukhrajie, who was abducted as a child from India and brought to Guyana and her daughter Chandroutie, my mother in law who worked on a rice farm while raising 12 children. Over the years, I have been fascinated by the practice of music and customs by the Indo Caribbean community that are rooted in ancient India, almost untouched by the hundreds of years and thousands of miles between them.

RA: Please describe the performance you will present at PIFA.

SD: *Chandroutie* is an evening length Bharatanatyam work set on music of the Indo Caribbean Diaspora, premiering in collaboration with PIFA at the Annenberg Center. An exploration of movement based on music styles not traditional to Bharatanatyam, *Chandroutie* pays tribute to the little known community that traces its ancestry to indentured workers brought from India to Guyana, Trinidad and Suriname by the East India company in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The audience will be led through the life of the protagonist Chandroutie in 4 dance segments. Beginning with a solo set on a piece in the Dhrupad music genre, the next segment depicts the intense life of a farm worker in those times. Reaping, sowing, child birth and cultural celebrations are supported by props and visual projections. There is a Jazz piece sung by Indo Caribbean artist Ruth Osman and a celebratory conclusion on raucous drum beats called *Tassa*.

Costumes have been custom made by Michelle Yeager incorporating aesthetic sensibilities of a bygone era while honoring the South Indian origin of traditional Bharatanatyam attire.

RA: In your art that you are presenting at PIFA, what is unexpected?

SD: The fact that there is a classical Indian dance ensemble practicing a very traditional technique while building new contexts and presenting original works that appeal to every member of the society, right here in Philadelphia is unexpected!

RA: What is "new" about the art you are presenting at PIFA?

SD: It is literally new in the sense it is a premiere. Besides, the Indo Caribbean Diaspora and their customs, like many other close knit communities, have not been talked about enough. For the viewer familiar with Indian classical dance, *Chandroutie* is an opportunity to examine the intricacies of Bharatanatyam in a different light. A dance form with a 2000 year old legacy, Bharatanatyam is very regimented in terms of music accompaniment, attire, format and content. While staying within the framework that governs the nature of traditional movement, *Chandroutie* plays with unusual story lines and music styles. So there is something new and exciting from every perspective.

RA: What is the connection between your show at PIFA and Paris between 1910 and 1920?

SD: There is a very strong spiritual connection between *Chandroutie's* showing at PIFA and the Paris of the early 20th century. Paris was an artist haven, an incubator of novel works and collaborations. There were dancers practicing Indian dance at those times that found patronage in Parisians and art inspired by the sub continent created that exists still to date! In fact, we are doing a series linking Paris and South Asian arts on our Facebook page inspired by PIFA. For Usiloquy, PIFA is simultaneously opening two doors- one exposing the magnificent history of the Indo Caribbean Diaspora and the other nurturing new, investigative approaches to an ancient dance form.

RA: If audience members were seeing your PIFA show for the second time, what should they pay special attention to in order to enhance their appreciation of your art?

SD: There is just one showing of *Chandroutie* at PIFA. If the audience were to see it again later in the season, hopefully they will notice the details in the choreographic patterns and how all the links between the music, the characters, the costumes and the dancers all relate to each other.

RA: Does your art have an activist message?

SD: Yes.

RA: What message are you trying to communicate?

SD: The main idea that we are trying to communicate is awareness of how immigration and assimilation shapes identities and makes new sub cultures within a culture. We need more open dialogue and exchange between people of the country of origin and their Diasporas on every level, especially artistic practices and traditions. There is a 250,000 person strong Indo Caribbean community in Queens, NY, with a very active arts and culture scene. Hopefully, this will prompt us all to look for such avenues right around us!

RA: Do you work with schools or children?

SD: Yes.

RA: Please describe your educational work.

SD: Apart from ongoing weekly classes offering 3 different levels of study, we conduct age specific workshops and demonstrations and intergenerational workshops for area organizations and education institutions. In the past, we have done lecture-demonstrations with supplementary audio-visual materials, master classes and interactive sessions.

RA: What else would you like people who are thinking about purchasing a ticket to your show to know about your art?

SD: Come see us, we promise you will leave enriched and entertained! Usiloquy is America is a nutshell-our ensemble is multi cultural, united by the passion of studying a deeply intricate, ancient dance form and making it relevant in a contemporary context. Percussive footwork, hand gestures, delightful music and beautiful costumes all in one hour. There will be a post show Question and Answer session and we will love to hear from you!

To purchase a ticket to this show, go to www.pifa.org/events/980191598.

To purchase tickets to all PIFA dance events, go to www.pifa.org/events?bucket_id=1.

For more information about Usiloquy Dance Designs, go to www.usiloquydance.org.

To join Usiloquy on FaceBook go to www.facebook.com/group.php?v=wall&gid=82235782505

To follow PIFA on Twitter, go to www.twitter.com/PIFAPhilly.

To "Like" PIFA on FaceBook, go to www.facebook.com/PIFA.Philly.

People making Chandroutie possible...

Director & President

Shaily Dadiala

Shaily founded Usiloquy Dance Designs in 2008; she is the Artistic Director, Choreographer and Principal Dancer. After completing her B.A. in Dance specializing in Bharatanatyam from the *Bruhad Gujarat Sangeet Samiti*, India (1988-1994) and 2 year training in Hindustani Classical Music from 1987 to 1989, Shaily choreographed and performed at several dance competitions and festivals in India between 1990 and 1996. After moving to the USA, she taught in Queens, NY for a year before commencing Bharatanatyam classes in Levittown, PA in collaboration with the township recreation department in 2005. These classes with 3 levels of learning are currently taught in center city Philadelphia. Apart from the ongoing classes, Shaily's teaching assignments have included workshops and Master classes at the Thomas Jefferson University and Temple University in Philadelphia and Desales University in Center Valley, Pennsylvania. In the fall of 2009 Shaily was invited to design the curriculum and teach at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Her choreography and performing work has included three evening length works of Bharatanatyam for Usiloquy. Primary among special commissions have been the Philadelphia Geographical Society Festival of India, International Cultural celebration at the Community College of Philadelphia and the Experience Asia festival at the College of New Jersey.

Michelle Yeager

Michelle has been studying and performing with Usiloquy since 2005. After receiving her BFA from the University of the Arts in ceramics; Michelle apprenticed and then became employed by The Moravian Pottery and Tileworks in Doylestown where she currently works. Michelle's true passions lie in dancing, performing, and costume making. Michelle is a teacher and performer of American Tribal Style Belly dance. She trained at the Penland School of crafts as a scholarship winner and is the in house costume maker for Usiloquy Dance

Designs and Archedream for Humankind.

Paramita Datta

Paramita began her dance education in India before joining Usiloquy in 2007. She trained for 5 years in Bharatanatyam from the *Rajarajeshwari* School of Dance in Mumbai. During the course of this training she choreographed and performed in groups and solos in Bharatanatyam and Indian folk styles.

Mansi Bhagwate

Mansi comes from a family abound with writers and performers. Integrating her Bharatanatyam training with social activism, she organized and choreographed performances for youth organizations Blue Ribbon Movement and Child and You, amongst other in India. A former guest columnist to the *Times of India*, Mansi continues to advance her passion and experience as a Bharatanatyam performer, writer and Occupational Therapist.

Varnana Beuria

Growing up in various places over the world, Varnana's initial impressions formed watching her mother, a professional Odissi dancer. She began her Bharatanatyam training in Sri Lanka and gained experience performing dances based on *Rabindra Sangeet*. A former contributor to the Daily Pennsylvanian, Varnana creates art based on the ancient Indian method of *Kalamkari* and is the chef of Chhaya café.



World Dance Extravaganza 'Grihani', 2008

Photo © & courtesy of Lisa Schaffer



Chaat' at the Painted Bride Art center, 2009

Photo © & courtesy of Sarah McKay



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Fact Sheet

Contact: Shaily Dadiala, President and Artistic Director, Usiloquy Dance Designs
Phone: (267) 324-5917
Email: shaily@usiloquydance.org
Website: <http://usiloquydance.org>

Usiloquy: 1. an ensemble; the opposite of soliloquy; many voices
2. "We People" (phonetic Punjabi)

Year Founded: 2008

Performance Venues: Annenberg Center
North Philadelphia Arts and Culture Alliance
Philadelphia Magic Gardens
Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Kimmel Center
The Painted Bride
Wilmington Opera House

Educational Outreach: The Franklin Institute,
Philadelphia Free Library
The Philadelphia Zoo

Funders: Philadelphia Cultural Fund
Pennsylvania Council of the Arts
The Samuel Fels Fund

- danceJournal - <http://philadelphiadance.org/blog> -

PIFA REVIEW: Chandrouite

Posted By [Dance Journal Staff](#) On May 3, 2011 @ 7:17 am In [Reviews](#) | [No Comments](#)



[1]

by *Kat Richter for The Dance Journal*

Fingers dyed red and splayed wide like a fan, three dancers carve across the stage in a series of slow, sustained, flex-footed lunges. We may not know their story— who knew there was such a thing as the Indo Caribbean Diaspora?—and we may not recognize their movements—indeed, few can *pronounce* Bharatanatyam correctly—but somehow we understand. This is “Chandrouite,” the latest from Usiloquy Dance Designs.

Subtitled “A Voyage Beyond Kala Pani,” the concert, which premiered Sunday night at the Annenberg Center, pays tribute to the thousands of Indians who were sent to labor on Caribbean sugar plantations between 1838 and 1917. Known as “Coolies,” they kept the musical traditions of Northeast India alive and it was in this theme of survival that Artistic Director Shaily Dadijala found her inspiration.

In “Vani,” four dancers interpret the life of an Indo Caribbean farmer. Through a series of precise hand gestures called “Mudras” and percussive footwork, they mime the work of a field hand, of childbirth and of motherhood. There’s nothing revolutionary here—traditional costumes, pastoral theme—but then we get to the music. Throw in a few steel drums and an overlay of African rhythms courtesy of the Caribbean Music Group and suddenly the Western ear “gets it.”

“Rain” continues in this vein, with four dancers dressed in cotton skirts as “Creole Indians.” This is not Dadijala’s term but rather one of many displayed during a slide show of archival images. With a nod to Guyana, the piece combines spoken word with heavy but simultaneously feminine movements, syncretism embodied.

Despite the concert’s ambitious themes and eclectic assemblage of music, few dancers aside from Dadijala and principal dancer Paramita Datta really stood out. With her exacting eye movements and complete mastery of seemingly impossible isolations, Datta is a dancer one could watch all day.

It is not until the final piece, “Tassa,” that we get the splendor usually associated with classical Indian dance. In sumptuous, jewel-toned costumes designed by principal dancer Michelle Yeager, the company takes the stage like an exhalation: solid, relieved, steady. Their silken pleats rustle as they bend into deep plies and spring into angular poses like a quintet of grasshoppers. They dart across the stage, their feet striking the floor like fingers striking a keyboard. Their energy is in their restraint, their strength coiled and the nine-minute meditation leaves the audience in a trance.

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Review: Usiloquy Dance Design

Nov 17th, 2012 | By Kat Richter | Category: What Kat Saw



Photo Credit: Kat Muscianesi

by Kat Richter for The Dance Journal

The first thing you notice about the dancers of Usiloquy Dance Design, who performed their Diwali Program as part of the Asian Arts Initiative's monthly Open Mic last night, is how very un-Indian most of them look. Yes, they're wearing rich, saffron colored tunics and their fingers are painted with the traditional red altha, but they're as diverse as the audience (which includes both experienced slam poets and first timers).

Herein lays the beauty of the company. Founded in 2008 by choreographer Shaily Dadijala, Usiloquy utilizes the technique of Indian classical dance to push the envelope. The costumes are more modern, the music more international and the choreography, although rooted in the vocabulary of Bharatanatyam, is anything but ancient.

The performance comprised six works, including excerpts from *Chaat*, created in 2009, and *Chandroutie*, which premiered during PIFA in 2011. The first two pieces, *Mahaganapathim* and *Alarippu*, gave the dancers the chance to show off their technical skill. In *Mahaganapathim*, dancers Mira Adornetto, Christine Campbell and Julie Meyers played a precise ball/heel pattern with their feet while maintaining an enchanting, lyrical fluidity in their upper bodies. Although there were several long pauses that detracted from the impact of the work, the creative staging was both effective and unexpected.

In *Alarippu* Dadijala and company dancer Mansi Bhagwate darted their eyes from side to side as they sunk to the floor. I'm always amazed by the many movement patterns embodied by a single dancer in forms like Indian classical dance and flamenco—the lower body seems to inhabit one sphere while the upper inhabits another—but Dadijala and Bhagwate took this to a new level with the nuanced movements of their eyes and chins.

Rain was every bit as moving as it was in PIFA, although the dancers' timing was a bit off last night. Written by poet Mahadai Das and sung by Ruth Osman Rose, the music spans several different cultures and genres of music. Dadijala's choreography juxtaposed traditional movements with the more modern score; the result was gestural and prayer-like yet not stilted.

Dadijala's solo, *Salt*, shook things up a bit. For starters, it was performed to rock music. Secondly, it was inspired by the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and Ghandi's legacy of non-violent protest, as demonstrated by the salt march of 1930. In an emerald green tunic and white sash, Dadijala began facing upstage, her arms forming a diagonal line. She knelt down, leaning forward as she crossed her hands behind her back. At times her palms were flat, extended outward as if to say "stop" but by the end of the piece, they were folded together to mimic the flight of a bird.

The evening's final piece, *Chaat*, was set to a commission by Philadelphia duo Amrita. One of the greatest difficulties when it comes to introducing new audiences to Indian classical dance is the music; to the untrained ear, it seems atonal and even arrhythmic at times but *Chaat* was upbeat—even a bit funky—and it had the

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audience bopping along in their seats. Usiloquy is to be applauded for its efforts to bridge the gap between traditional dance and modern audiences, and for doing so with such sensitivity, creativity and gusto.

Kat Richter is a freelance writer and teaching artist. She is also the co-founder of The Lady Hoofers, Philadelphia's only all-female tap company, and holds with an MA in Dance Anthropology. Her work can be found at www.katrichter.com.



Tags: Chaat, Shaily Dadiala, Usiloquy Dance Design

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Steven Weisz: Thank you for calling our attention to this. The correction has been made and our sincere apologies.

anonymous: Alexandra Hughes was the stripper "manna" not Caralin Curcio.

PA Ballet's Midsummer Creates Midwinter Magic (2)

Kat Richter: Not this time, no, but that's the beauty of a blog. You're free to add your two cents 😊

Dan: no mention of the Orchestra?

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