

2021–2022 Artist in Residence: Bijayini Satpathy

Image: Bijayini Satpathy. Photo by Paula Lobo

Wednesday, May 4 at 1:30 pm
Saturday, May 14 at 2 pm and 3 pm
Sunday, May 15 at 2 pm and 3 pm
Saturday, May 21 at 2 pm and 3 pm
Performances in galleries throughout the Museum

Choreographed and performed by **Bijayini Satpathy**
Music composed by **Bindhumalini Narayanswamy**

This performance is made possible by The Arnhold Fund for Dance Innovation at The Met and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Notes on the Program

Odissi is at once traditional and modern. Rooted in the cultural habitat of the eastern Indian state of Odisha, Odissi today has been recreated for proscenium spaces, moving away from the temple sanctums, royal courts, village squares, and entertainment salons in which it was once performed. Contemporary Odissi practitioners at best share fractured connections with the form's cultural origins. This lands Odissi at a crucial historical threshold, between its traditionally coded structures and the myriad possibilities beyond them. As the 2021–22 MetLiveArts Artist in Residence, Bijayini Satpathy expands her Odissi experience towards new vistas from this very threshold.

Bijayini's inspiration for this project are particular galleries at The Met. In her danced interventions, she engages with each site's architecture as well as its ancestry, stories, legends, and aesthetics that are so different from Odissi's. Beyond Odissi's complex body language, Bijayini also makes a focused attempt to draw from *charis*, a movement pedagogy derived from the Sanskrit dramatic treatise *Natyashastra* (200 BC–200 AD). The text prescribes 16 ways to move the legs along the ground and 16 ways to move them elevated, away from the ground. Bijayini highlights and heightens these scriptural movements by threading them through Odissi's more regional vocabularies. During her residency, Bijayini has also researched the anatomical bases of the *Natyashastra's* movements under the mentorship of her movement anatomy guru, Irene Dowd.

For these site-specific creations, Bijayini collaborated with music composer Bindhumalini Narayanswamy, who has decidedly moved the soundscape away from traditional Odissi music and into unconventional spaces. Inspired by the sentimentality embedded in each of the spaces, Bindhumalini has freely drawn from sounds of nature and everyday life, Indian musical instruments, and also melodic textures from other cultures outside India.

Program

Wednesday, May 4 at 1:30 pm
The Met Cloisters, Gallery 06,
Chapter House from Notre-Dame-de-Pontaut

The Prayer

An exploration of the body in prayer, this sequence has been created especially for the Chapter House at The Met Cloisters, and is inspired by the site's meditative architecture. The music evokes a haunting stream of prayers, resonating calls, and chants drawn from Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, and Gregorian traditions.

Saturday, May 14 at 2 pm and 3 pm
Galleries 459 and 460, Islamic Art

Taru

Taru is Sanskrit for tree. Inspired by non-figurative ornamentation and the interlacing of simple geometrical patterns in Islamic art, this performance is an abstract exploration of the body as it creates and becomes design in space. The piece is set to a *tarana*—a musical pattern from the north Indian Hindustani style of music that is highly influenced by Persian music traditions.

Sunday, May 15 at 2 pm and 3 pm
Gallery 924, Modern and Contemporary Art

Antaranga

Against Sam Gilliam's chromatically striking and texturally dynamic drape painting *Carousel State*, Bijayini explores the Greek poet Sappho's Fragment 31. Punctuating words with movement, she wrestles with the multiple dimensions of love in a choreographic sequence that is at once arresting, freeing, and devastating. The title of the piece, *Antaranga*, means "inner" or "intimate."

Saturday, May 21 at 2 pm and 3 pm
Gallery 217, Astor Chinese Garden Court

Naino

In this piece, a courtyard within a scholar's garden in the city of Suzhou, China inspires a narrative exploration of a poem by Kabir, a 15th-century Indian mystic claimed by both Hindu and Islamic traditions. The poem is worldly and spiritual as it employs intimate, erotic speech that is typical to both the Sufi way of Islam and the Bhakti tradition of Hinduism. The speaker invites the beloved into their eyes, and from there into their inner landscape. The ideal here is to become one with the divine by taking in their magnificent vision.

This presentation sincerely acknowledges and marks my gratitude to the Mahari temple dancers and young Gotipua dancers of Odisha, whose contributions have made Odissi as loved and rich as it is today.

— Bijayini Satpathy

Artists

Bijayini Satpathy, choreographer and performer
Bindhumalini Narayanswamy, composer
Poorna Swamy, dramaturgy
Irene Dowd, anatomy research guide
Brigitte Singh, costume advisor
Niti Bagchi, Greek literature advice
Claudia Norman, manager and producer
Elaine Lipcan, tour strategy and consultant
Masoom Parmar, India coordinator and costume production assistance

Bijayini wishes to thank Tracy Strauss for being her host in New York during this residency.

About the Chapter House from Notre-Dame-de-Pontaut at The Met Cloisters

The chapter house was the daily meeting place in most European monasteries and convents. The monks or nuns sat on the stone bench around the walls, as business was discussed each day and a chapter of the Rule of Saint Benedict, the official code of monastic behavior, was read. The location next to Cuxa Cloister preserves the relationship of the chapter house to the cloisters in a typical medieval monastic plan. The architecture of the chapter house features typical Romanesque characteristics, notably the rounded arches, thick walls, small windows, and heavy rib vaults.

The abbey at Pontaut, founded in 1115 as a Benedictine monastery, housed a Cistercian community after 1151. The abbey was damaged during religious wars of the 16th century. In 1791, the monastic buildings were sold to a local family, and the chapter house was converted into a stable; it was sold in 1932 and brought to New York.

The plastered vaults and the floor tiles of the reconstructed chapter house are modern.

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