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PRESENTS

SWISS INDIAN FINE ARTS ASSOCIATION · ZÜRICH



दशावतार

DASHAVATAR

A Contemporary Kathak Magnum Opus

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

Guru Dr. Pali Chandra

KANTONSSCHULE ZÜRCHER OBERLAND (KZO) WETZIKON

PALI CHANDRA PRODUCTIONS

Welcome

Dear friends and guests, welcome to an evening where ancient wisdom meets contemporary movement — where ten divine incarnations speak to the struggles and aspirations of our time.



DASHAVATAR IN PERFORMANCE · PALI CHANDRA PRODUCTIONS

This booklet is your companion for the evening. It introduces the tradition the work stands on — the *Nātyashāstra* and the classical form of Kathak — before turning to the story of the ten avatars of Vishnu, the artists who bring it to the stage, and the schedule of the evening.

Dashavatar is presented by the Swiss Indian Fine Arts Association in collaboration with Pali Chandra Productions, at Kantonsschule Zürcher Oberland (KZO) Wetzikon. We are grateful you are here.

THE ANCIENT FOUNDATION

Nātyashāstra

The Scripture of Performing Arts

The Nātyashāstra, attributed to the sage Bharata Muni (c. 200 BCE–200 CE), is one of humanity's oldest and most comprehensive treatises on the performing arts. Encompassing theatre, dance, music, and dramaturgy, it establishes the principles that still animate Indian classical dance today.

At its heart is the concept of rasa — aesthetic emotion — distilled into nine states: love, joy, wonder, courage, peace, anger, sorrow, disgust, and fear. A skilled performer does not merely execute steps; they evoke these states in the audience, creating a shared experience of heightened consciousness.

The treatise also describes abhinaya — the fourfold art of expression through body, speech, costume, and inner feeling — the expressive bedrock of Kathak.

> *"Where the hand moves, the eye follows. Where the eye goes, the mind follows. Where the mind goes, feeling awakens. Where feeling awakens, rasa is born."*

— NATYASHASTRA, BHARATA MUNI



THE CLASSICAL FORM

Kathak

The Dance of Storytellers

Kathak — from the Sanskrit katha, story — is one of India's eight classical dance forms. Born in North Indian temple precincts, it evolved through wandering kathakas who narrated legends through movement, mime, and music.

Under Mughal patronage it absorbed Persian elegance: an upright torso, intricate footwork, and spinning chakkar turns that blur the boundary between earth and cosmos. Three principal gharanas emerged — Lucknow, Jaipur, and Banaras — each with a distinct aesthetic voice.

Today Kathak continues to evolve — absorbing yoga, movement science, and intercultural dialogue — while remaining anchored in its rhythmic integrity and narrative soul.

ELEMENTS OF KATHAK

TATTKAR · CHAKKAR · ABHINAYA · TUKRA · TIHAI · TODA · GAT BHAV · HASTA MUDRA



CHAKKAR — THE SPINNING TURN

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

DASHAVATAR

The Ten Incarnations of Lord Vishnu

Dashavatar draws from the ancient Puranic narrative of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu — the preserver of cosmic order — reimagined through a bold contemporary lens.

Each avatar manifested at a moment of cosmic crisis. From Matsya who preserved knowledge through the great deluge, to Kalki — the avatar yet to come — the narrative arc traces evolution itself: biological, civilisational, and spiritual.

In Dr. Pali Chandra's vision, each avatar becomes a mirror, inviting every audience member to recognise within themselves the responsibility to become the avatar our world needs today.

MUSICAL ARCHITECTURE

Ten distinct ragas and ten talas, each precisely aligned to the emotional nature of its avatar — set to Sanskrit lyrics in a synthesis of Carnatic and Hindustani music.

10	10	1h15	80+	22
AVATARS	RAGAS & TALAS	RUNNING TIME	ORIGINAL MUSICIANS	ORIGINAL DANCERS

> *"Dashavatar is not only a retelling of myth, but a reflection on human agency, continuity, and transformation. This work is an invitation to recognise the avatar within each of us."*

— DR. PALI CHANDRA



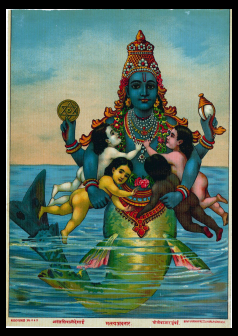
दश · दस · दश

The Ten Avatars

१	Matsya	THE FIRST AVATAR
२	Kurma	THE SECOND AVATAR
३	Varaha	THE THIRD AVATAR
४	Narasimha	THE FOURTH AVATAR
५	Vamana	THE FIFTH AVATAR
६	Parashurama	THE SIXTH AVATAR
७	Rama	THE SEVENTH AVATAR
८	Balarama	THE EIGHTH AVATAR
९	Buddha	THE NINTH AVATAR
१०	Kalki	THE TENTH AVATAR



TEN INCARNATIONS · TEN RAGAS · TEN TALAS



AVATAR १ · THE FIRST AVATAR

Matsya

As chaos unfolds and the great flood threatens all of creation, Matsya, the divine fish, guides the boat to safety, carrying life towards a new beginning. Through elephants, deer, lions, peacocks, flora and fauna, the story honours the beauty of the natural world, reminding us that every living being is worth protecting. Out of fear, hope is born.



AVATAR २ · THE SECOND AVATAR

Kurma

As the Devas and Asuras churn the cosmic ocean in search of the nectar of immortality, Vishnu appears as Kurma, the divine tortoise, supporting Mount Mandara on his back and making the impossible possible. But when greed takes over and the Asuras seek to seize the nectar, Vishnu appears once again as Mohini, the enchanting form, ensuring that the elixir reaches the Devas and restoring balance.



AVATAR ३ · THE THIRD AVATAR

Varaha

Hiranyaksha, empowered by a boon from Brahma, unleashes chaos and drags Mother Earth into the depths of the cosmic ocean. Vishnu incarnates as Varaha, the divine boar, diving into the waters to defeat the demon and lift the Earth back to safety. Through courage and strength, Varaha restores what has been lost.



AVATAR ४ · THE FOURTH AVATAR

Narasimha

Prahlada's unwavering devotion to Vishnu enrages his father, Hiranyakashipu, who believes himself to be the most powerful and cannot accept his son praying to another god. In his fury and arrogance, he unleashes destruction to prove his power. Narasimha, half man and half lion, emerges to defeat him and protect Prahlada — reminding us that justice will always find a way to overcome evil.



AVATAR ५ · THE FIFTH AVATAR

Vamana

Vamana, the humble dwarf, approaches the mighty King Bali, whose power and pride have grown immense. Through three cosmic strides, Vamana reclaims the three worlds, destroying the king's ego and reminding us that true greatness lies in humility, not pride.



AVATAR ६ · THE SIXTH AVATAR

Parashurama

When the sacred cow that sustains Sage Jamadagni's family is taken by the greedy King Kartavirya Arjuna, injustice reaches its peak. When the king kills Parashurama's parents and steals the cow, Parashurama is consumed by grief and righteous anger. He takes up his divine axe and rises against the corrupt rulers, cleansing corruption and restoring justice.



AVATAR ७ · THE SEVENTH AVATAR

Rama

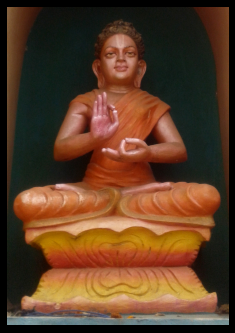
At the Swayamvara of Sita, Rama lifts the great bow and wins her hand. Later, after fourteen years of exile, Ravana's deception leads to Sita's abduction. Rama sets out to rescue her and ultimately defeats Ravana in battle, restoring peace and reminding us that duty, courage and virtue can overcome evil.



AVATAR ८ · THE EIGHTH AVATAR

Balarama

Balarama, bearer of the divine plough, brings life and prosperity to the land. In our story, he guides the waters of the Yamuna towards the farmlands, allowing them to flourish. He represents strength rooted in the Earth and harmony between humanity and nature.



AVATAR ९ · THE NINTH AVATAR

Buddha

Born Prince Siddhartha, he is unable to bear the suffering he sees and leaves the palace in search of an answer. Through meditation and deep inner reflection, he attains enlightenment. Buddha reminds us that compassion and self-awareness can lead us beyond suffering and towards peace.



AVATAR १० · THE TENTH AVATAR

Kalki

Kalki is the final avatar, yet to come. As the Kali Yuga reaches its end and darkness prevails, Kalki will arrive to destroy evil and restore balance. We do not know exactly what form Kalki will take, but the promise of Kalki remains a promise of renewal — that after darkness, a new age will begin.

THE EVENING · KANTONSSCHULE ZÜRCHER OBERLAND (KZO) WETZIKON

Schedule

17:00 — Doors open

Foyer opens at KZO Wetzikon. Please collect your programme and take your seats in good time.

18:00 — Concert begins

Introduction by Guru Dr. Pali Chandra — a spoken introduction to the Dashavatar narrative, placing the ten incarnations in their mythological and contemporary context, explaining the musical architecture, and inviting the audience to reflect on the avatar within.

18:15 — Dashavatar — The Dance

Performed by Dr. Pali Chandra and her dancers. Ten continuous chapters — one per avatar — each with its own raga, tala, and movement vocabulary, bound into a single seamless arc of cosmic evolution.

19:30 — Concert ends

Curtain call and closing words.

19:45 — Programme ends · Dinner to take away

A take-away dinner is served. Guests are warmly invited to meet the artists in the foyer before departure.

THE TEN CHAPTERS, IN ORDER

MATSYA · KURMA · VARAHA · NARASIMHA · VAMANA · PARASHURAMA · RAMA · BALARAMA · BUDDHA · KALKI



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

Guru Dr. Pali Chandra



Pali Chandra, is an Indian choreographer, dance educator and artistic director who propagates dance education through various channels. She has established several studios specialising in Kathak training programs in the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, India and Switzerland. She has played a crucial role in taking Kathak to a global audience unaware of its existence.

Her productions represent some of the most extraordinary tales from folklore, seamlessly transitioned into a palatable avatar for a modern audience. Her foray into the digital world revamped the entire classical dance multiverse, revolutionizing the whole concept of a gurukul.

She belongs to the Lucknow gharana, having trained under Guru Vikram Singhe, Kapila Raj and Ram Mohan Maharaj, and holds the Lachhu Maharaj Award for exceptional mastery of abhinaya. She is a committee member of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and a graded artist of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Founder of Gurukul Studios, with academies in Zürich · Dubai · Bengaluru, each training dancers from foundation through advanced professional levels.

- Dual PhD · Dance Education
- 50+ years · Kathak mastery
- ISTD—UK Syllabus Co-Author
- Founder, Gurukul Studios
- Zürich · Dubai · Bengaluru

SELECTED PRODUCTIONS

DASHAVATAR · ANEKA — IDENTITIES DANCING WITHIN · THE COMPLETE GITA GOVINDA · RAMLEELA · CIVILIZATION TO NATION · MUGHAL-E-AZAM · KANYAKUMARI

THE CHOREOGRAPHIC METHOD

The Pali Chandra Technique

The Pali Chandra Technique is where tradition listens to the body. Born from Kathak and shaped by science, it honours rhythm, form, and feeling while protecting the dancer's physical and emotional well-being.

Crafted through decades of lived experience across continents, it allows classical authenticity to breathe into contemporary movement without compromising the purity of the form.

It integrates anatomical awareness, injury prevention, and somatic intelligence alongside rigorous classical training.



MOVEMENT SOURCES

- Kathak · Classical Foundation
- Yoga · Breath & Alignment
- Tai Chi · Flow & Stillness
- Indian & Chinese Martial Arts
- Contemporary · Ebb & Flow
- Acrobatic Fundamentals

THE THREE PILLARS

- Rhythm — Precision of tattkar
- Form — Classical integrity
- Feeling — Authentic abhinaya

> *"Where tradition listens to the body"*

MUSIC COMPOSERS

The Musicians



B Shivarama Krishna Rao

MUSIC COMPOSER · ARUNA MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

Sivaramakrishna Rao hails from a distinguished family of musicians and began his musical training at the age of seven under his father, B. Sudarsana Rao. He later became a disciple of the eminent sitar maestro Ustad Ahmed Hussain Khan. A child prodigy, he was honoured by the Governor of Tamil Nadu in 1990 and appreciated by former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao.

He has performed internationally across major festivals, captivating audiences worldwide with his imaginative, sensitive, and deeply artistic sitar playing.



DC Venkatesh

MUSIC COMPOSER · SUR PRODUCTIONS

Venkatesh D C popularly known as Venky D C is a renowned Tabla player, Music Composer, Music Educator & a Multi-Instrumentalist. He is also a Playback singer-Song writer, Music Arranger, Keyboard Player & an Audio Engineer. He currently heads a music production company named SUR Productions.

His recent playback singing in the blockbuster hit cinemas ‘Kantara’ & ‘Sarkari hiriya prathamika shaale’ has brought him to the limelight & gained many accolades.

TRAINED UNDER THE PALI CHANDRA TECHNIQUE

The Dancers



Aarna Raney

KATHAK ARTIST · DUBAI

10+ years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Grade 6. Completed Rang Manch Pravesh in Kerala (2023). Performed at Expo 2020 Dubai and the Indian Consulate. Internationally across UAE, India, and Switzerland.



Anagha Nair

DANCER · UAE

12 years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Advanced Level 1. Performed at World Festival of Indian Dance in Greece and the 360° immersive 'Amore' at Theatre of Digital Art, Dubai.



Ananya Sathish

DANCER · DUBAI

12 years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Advanced Vocational Diploma. Completed Rangmanch Pravesh debut. Known for women's empowerment works Kanyakumari and Khud Ki Khoj.



Harshita Mahesh

DANCER · DUBAI

12+ years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Vocational 2 with Distinctions. Premiered Ameya, her solo Rangmanch Pravesh. Performs works advocating women's empowerment and safety across UAE, India, and Greece.



Janhavi Thorat

DANCER · PSYCHOLOGIST · DUBAI

15+ years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Diploma (Distinction). Her work uniquely merges Kathak with psychological and social engagement. Choreographer for Ramleela at the Indian Consulate, Dubai. Performer and production manager for Aneka.



Leisha Solanki

DANCER · DUBAI

10 years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Distinction, Vocational 1. Recently performed Rangmanch debut. Featured in Still Dancing, raising awareness about Parkinson's disease. Performance experience across Dubai and the UK.



Maithili Patel

DANCER · EDUCATOR · NEW YORK

15+ years under Dr. Pali Chandra; first Distinction holder of the ISTD Vocational Diploma in Kathak. Rehearsal director for The Complete Gita Govinda. Now researching anatomical integration for injury prevention in classical dance. Created Dark Inside (2018), Rise (2020) and Quantum Dances (2025). Performed in USA, UK, India, Switzerland, Belgium, Lebanon & UAE.



Revati Mirchandani

DANCER · NETHERLANDS

20+ years under Dr. Pali Chandra; ISTD Diploma (Distinction). Member of Aneka international production team. Performed in UAE, UK, India, Netherlands, Switzerland & Kenya. Creator of Break Free, an online dance series focused on mental health.



Rishita Acharya

DANCER · HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

Currently training under ISTD, London. Known for emotionally resonant performances. Brings discipline, creativity, and resilience from dance into entrepreneurial ventures. Dedicated to movement as a powerful form of expression.



Saakshi Aswani

DANCER · DUBAI

Sakshi Aswani is a Kathak dancer and performer based in Dubai, balancing her passion for classical dance with running her family business. Trained in Kathak under Guru Dr. Pali Chandra and currently pursuing the ISTD syllabus. Performed at the Theatre of Digital Art (TODA), Dubai, as part of "Amore – 5 Stages of Love".



Swarashri Shridhar

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST · UAE

15+ years under Dr. Pali Chandra. AES Award Best Performing Artist 2025. Youngest ISTD Advanced Vocational distinction holder. Recognised by Funun Arts UAE as Youth Leader for Arts.

> *"Together, these dancers represent the global reach of Kathak today — united under one artistic vision, carrying ancient Sanskrit wisdom to contemporary global audiences."*

— DASHAVATAR · PALI CHANDRA PRODUCTIONS

ABOUT SIFAA

Swiss Indian Fine Arts Association

SIFAA began in 2020 as an online programme, bringing Indian classical music and dance to audiences in Switzerland at a time when stages were closed. In 2022 we moved in person, and we have presented around 50 programmes and concerts since.

We are a Zürich-based cultural and artistic organisation dedicated to promoting Indian arts and culture in Switzerland while fostering meaningful cultural exchange across communities.

Through concerts, festivals, workshops, and the SIFAA Magazine, we engage a growing and diverse audience across Zürich and beyond — Swiss residents, Indian diaspora families, students, artists, and cultural enthusiasts of all backgrounds.

OUR EVENTS & PROGRAMMES

Margazhi Mahotsav
Annual Carnatic & classical festival, December · Zürich

Chaitra Mahotsav
Spring festival · Adliswil/Zürich — From Bharatanatyam to Jazz

SIFAA Yuv Mahotsav
Youth & community festival with cultural awards

Heritage Holiday Camp
Indian arts education for children · Adliswil

Concert Series
Carnatic, Hindustani & classical music performances

SIFAA Magazine
Cultural journalism & community voice

STAY CONNECTED

Join our newsletter & community

www.sifaa.ch · @swissindianfinearts · Zürich, Switzerland

> *"Ten incarnations. Ten ragas. Ten talas. One truth — the avatar lives within each of us."*

— DASHAVATAR · PALI CHANDRA PRODUCTIONS