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Bharatanatyam production in NJ sets new standards with $2K donor-seat contributions

The November performance explores Maharashtra's Varkari tradition while bringing Indian classical dance and scholarship to diaspora audiences.

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MAULI – A Timeless Tradition

A Bharatanatyam production to be held on Nov. 15 in Middlesex, New Jersey, is drawing attention to the scale of patronage for Indian classical performing arts, with donor-seat contributions reaching $2,001 per seat.

The production, MAULI – A Timeless Tradition, is conceived and performed by internationally acclaimed Bharatanatyam scholar Kalaimamani Bala Devi Chandrashekar.

The event will support the Vitthal Rukmini Temple initiative and feature students from the Shree Padma Nrityam Academy of Performing Arts (SPNAPA), founded and directed by Chandrashekar.

The performance explores Maharashtra's centuries-old Varkari Bhakti tradition, drawing on the devotional poetry, philosophy and teachings of its saint-poets. Through Bharatanatyam, the production aims to bring the regional tradition to audiences in the United States and connect Indian cultural heritage with contemporary artistic expression.

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The organizers have expressed that donor-seat contributions reaching $2,001 is an indication of the financial support audiences are willing to extend to Indian classical arts. They also claimed that this may be among the highest individual donor-seat contributions associated with a Bharatanatyam presentation.

Chandrashekar has developed 12 thematic productions rooted in Indian philosophy, literature and cultural traditions. Her work combines classical Bharatanatyam technique with research and interpretation of India's intellectual and spiritual heritage.

She has performed more than 300 times in over 40 countries, including presentations at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in 2018 and 2024, and at India House during the Paris 2024 Olympics.

An affiliated scholar at the University of Pennsylvania's South Asia Center, Chandrashekar has also delivered lectures and presentations at universities and academic institutions, including Princeton University, Columbia University, Rutgers University and IIT Madras.

For the Indian-American community, the New Jersey event brings together classical dance, cultural preservation and philanthropy. The presentation also reflects the role of diaspora audiences in supporting performances that draw on Indian regional traditions and make them accessible to wider audiences.

The performance is scheduled from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. (local time) on Nov. 15 at the High School Auditorium, Middlesex, New Jersey.