

# SPIC MACAY

## Prerana Shrimali



**PRERANA SHRIMALI** • Senior dancer of Kathak from the Jaipur Gharana known for her grace & innovation • Received her training from Guru Shri Kundanlal Gangani • Equally competent in pure dance [Nritya] & expression [Abhinaya], she has endeavored to expand the Kathak repertoire by choreographing new & highly acclaimed compositions based on poetry - ancient, medieval & modern, by exploring the verses of Kalidasa, Amaru Shataka, Meera, Kabir, Padmakar, Ghalib & French poet Yves Bonnefoy • Fuses lyricism in virtuosity; blends expressiveness with new insights, invents new gestures & intensifies “abhinaya” with subtle imagination • Firmly believes in new & complex experiments within the tradition of Kathak • Widely travelled, both in India & abroad; has featured in all the major Indian & international dance festivals such as Khajuraho & Festival D’Avignon (France) dance • Is a senior Guru at Kathak Kendra (a professional institute) in Delhi & currently engaged in writing on Kathak; researching on ‘Kathak & Abstraction’ for which she has a Senior Fellowship from the Government of India • Received Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (2009) & Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1993)

**KATHAK DANCE** • Kathak is one of the 8 forms of Indian classical dance • Traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as Kathaakaars or storytellers. Also has traces of temple & ritual dances & the bhakti movement. From the 16th century onwards, it absorbed certain features of Persian dance & central Asian dance which were brought by the royal courts of the Mughal era • The name Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word katha meaning story. Kathaka in Sanskrit means he who tells a story, or has something to do with stories • There are 3 major schools or gharanas of Kathak: Jaipur, Lucknow and Varanasi • The structure of a conventional Kathak performance tends to follow a progression in tempo from slow to fast, ending with a dramatic climax. A short dance composition is known as a tukra; a longer one as a toda. There are also compositions consisting solely of footwork. The performer engages in rhythmic play with the time-cycle, splitting it into triplets or quintuplets • All compositions are performed so that the final step and beat of the composition lands on the ‘sam’ (pronounced ‘sum’ and meaning even or equal, archaically meaning nil or complete) • Most compositions also have ‘bols’ (rhythmic words) whose recitation also forms an integral part of the performance. This recitation known as padhant can borrow from the tabla (e.g. dha, ge, na, ti na ka dhi na) or can be a dance variety (ta, thei, tat, ta ta, tigda, digdig, tram theyi and so on) • Often tukras are composed to highlight specific aspects of the dance, for example gait and so on. A popular tukra type is the chakkarwala tukra, showcasing the signature spins of Kathak. Because they are generally executed on the heel, these differ from ballet’s pirouettes (which are properly executed on the toe or ball of the foot) • The spins usually manifest themselves at the end of the tukra, often in large numbers: five, nine, fifteen, or more, sequential spins are common. These tukras are popular with audiences because they are visually exciting and are executed at great speed • Aside from the traditional expressive or abhinaya pieces performed to a bhajan, ghazal or thumri, Kathak also possesses a particular performance style of expressional pieces called bhaav bataanaa (lit. ‘to show bhaav or ‘feeling’). It is a mode where abhinaya dominates, and arose in the Mughal court