

SPEAK: TAP & KATHAK UNITE

MAR 22–24 / 7:30 PM

Ensemble

Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Michelle Dorrance,
Rachna Nivas, Rina Mehta

Allison Miller, *Drums and Composer*

Carmen Staaf, *Piano*

Tabari Lake, *Bass*

Jayanta Banerjee, *Sitar and Composer*

Vaibhav Mankad, *Vocals*

Satyaprakash Mishra, *Tabla*



SPEAK: Tap & Kathak Unite at The Broad Stage made possible in part by a generous gift from Ann Petersen and a grant from the California Arts Council.

There will be no intermission.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Indian Kathak dance and American tap dance, continents and ages apart, share parallel stories of struggle and perseverance. They come together in this sensational collaboration that is rhythm, poetry, storytelling, music and dance. SPEAK carries forward the legacy of iconic artists like Pandit Chitresh Das, Dr. Jimmy Slyde and James Buster Brown, while bringing to the forefront the voices of powerful female artists. Joined by the world's leading Indian classical and jazz musicians, SPEAK promises to thrill, provoke and move your spirit.

CAST

Rina Mehta (Kathak)
Rachna Nivas (Kathak)
Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards (Tap)
Michelle Dorrance (Tap)
Jayanta Banerjee (Sitar)
Vaibhav Mankad (Vocals)
Satyaprakash Mishra (Tabla)
Allison Miller (Drums)
Carmen Staaf (Piano)
Tabari Lake (Bass)

CREW

Lighting Designer/ Technical Director:
David Robertson
Production Manager: Elka Samuels Smith
Company Manager: Navneet Bal

SPECIAL THANKS

Ann Petersen & Lesley Pam,
The Esper A. Petersen Foundation
California Arts Council
Elka Samuels Smith,
Divine Rhythm Productions

ACT I

Maya

A call to the warrior goddess Durga and Kali, the goddess of creative destruction

Sam Yug, Rina Mehta and Michelle Dorrance

Kathak and Tap come together seamlessly in this piece created in a rare 9.5 cycle

ACT II

Thaat, Rachna Nivas

A traditional kathak piece highlighting the dynamic movement and rhythmic compositions characteristic of Kathak dance

Kirwani, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards & Michelle Dorrance

Tap and Indian classical music meet and get acquainted in this piece composed in Raag Kirwani

Nirupana, Rachna Nivas and Rina Mehta

Kathak and Jazz meet and get acquainted in this piece based on Kathak Yoga, a technique that explores the layering of polyrhythms

Tap Solo, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards

A traditional tap solo highlighting the essence of Tap dance

ACT III

Chalan, Indian and Jazz Bands

Hindustani classical music and Jazz music come together to create an entirely new sound and music

One, Full Cast

Kathak, Tap, Hindustani classical music and Jazz weave together in this finale exploring the concepts of difference and oneness

BIOS

DORMESHIA SUMBRY-EDWARDS is a two-time Bessie Award winner (as performer and choreographer), Princess Grace Award and Astaire Award winner for Best Female Performer in *Broadway's After Midnight*. Additional Broadway credits include the Tony Award winning productions of *Black and Blue* and *Bring In Da'Noise, Bring In Da'Funk*. Dormeshia was integral to *Noise/Funk's* International Tour (dance captain/principal) and performed as special guest for GRAMMY® Recording artist Fantasia, and for International Jazz Day at The Kennedy Center, collaborating with the legendary Al Jarreau and Dee Dee Bridgewater.

Film and TV credits include "TAP" with Gregory Hines, Spike Lee's "Bamboozled" (Assistant Choreographer/actress), "The Rise and Fall of Miss Thang" (Best Lead Actress nomination), Superstars of Dance (representing the USA), Tops Commercial, and onscreen coach for MTV's *Made* to name a few. Dormeshia was also the tap advisor for Dance Magazine and the face of Capezio's national tap campaign. Choreography credits include Michael Jackson's *Rock My World*, The Cotton Club's *Sophisticated Ladies*, The Blues Project (co-choreographer/co-creator), and Jacob's Pillow debut *And Still You Must Swing* with leading collaborators Jason Samuels Smith, Derick K. Grant and Camille A. Brown (named *The New York Times'* The Best of Dance 2016).

With over 30 years touring the world, she also spent 11 years as Michael Jackson's tap instructor. Throughout her career Dormeshia has established high standards for the art form of tap performance, choreography and instruction, where there is an emphasized balance of musicality, technicality, grace and

presentation. She specifically credits her teachers and mentors Paul & Arlene Kennedy for giving her the foundations to succeed across diverse platforms.

MICHELLE DORRANCE is a New York City based tap dancer, choreographer, director and teacher, and the Founder/Artistic Director of Dorrance Dance. Mentored by Gene Medler, she grew up performing with his North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble and has since performed in Savion Glover's *ti dii*, Derick Grant's *Imagine Tap!*, Jason Samuels Smith's *Charlie's Angels/Chasing the Bird*, STOMP, company work with Manhattan Tap, Barbara Duffy & Co, JazzTap Ensemble, Rumba Tap; and original work by legends Dr. Harold Cromer and Mable Lee.

Recent highlights include CBS's *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*; *The Royal Variety Show*; a high-fashion short film for Tabitha Simmons; collaborating and performing with inspirations, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Derick Grant, Toshi Reagon, Nicholas Van Young, Ephrat Asherie, Damian Woetzel, Lil' Buck, Bill Irwin, Tiler Peck; and choreographing commissions for The Martha Graham Dance Company and The Guggenheim Museum.

A 2017 Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellow and 2015 MacArthur Fellow, Michelle is humbled to have been acknowledged/supported by United States Artists, the Joyce Theater, New York City Center, the Alpert Awards, Jacob's Pillow, the Princess Grace Foundation, Crain's New York, the Field, American Tap Dance Foundation and the Bessie Awards. A passionate educator, Michelle holds a BA from New York University, teaches on faculty at IFTRA, Broadway Dance Center and as a guest

artist at universities, festivals and arts organizations throughout the world. She wishes to credit the master hoopers with whom she studied in her youth for constant inspiration and influence.

RACHNA NIVAS is a leading artist, educator and activist in Indian classical dance, bringing a relevant voice to Kathak. Deemed “charismatic” and “revelatory” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Rachna is a fierce and passionate performer, displaying the depth of her 17-year training under legendary master and icon Pandit Chitresh Das. She is a founding artist of the Leela Dance Collective, an artist-owned and artist-led arts organization, producing powerful works through the collective creativity of trailblazing women in Kathak.

Rachna was principal dancer with the Chitresh Das Dance Company for 15 years and received two nominations for an Isadora Duncan Dance Award while performing worldwide in productions such as *Shiva*, *Sita Haran*, *Pancha Jati*, *Darbar*, *Shabd* and many more. Some of the most notable venues she has toured include Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, Cal Performances at UC Berkeley, REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/Cal Arts Theater) and Getty Museum in Los Angeles, National Center for Performing Arts in Mumbai, National Institute of Kathak Dance in New Delhi, Shaniwarwada Festival in Pune and International Kriya Yoga Congress. Her original solo work, “Meera”, was featured at the ODC Walking Distance Festival in San Francisco and at Salvatore Capezio Theater in New York City. Rachna is currently touring her latest collaborative work, SPEAK, bringing together leading women in kathak and tap and bridging Indian and Black-American/African art and heritage. Her works have

been funded by National Endowment for the Arts, Zellerbach Family Foundation, California Arts Council and Alliance for California Traditional Arts.

As Dean of the Chhandam School of Kathak, Rachna has also been instrumental in building one of the world’s premiere Indian arts institutions, advancing a globally renowned pedagogy. She is artistic director of the Chhandam Youth Dance Company, shepherding excellence, leadership and creative discovery amongst teens. Rachna currently splits her time between San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City and Mumbai, becoming one of the most sought-after teachers of her generation. Rachna’s broader vision is to raise awareness, through kathak dance, of the rich philosophies of the Indian subcontinent, and for it to be a tool for empowerment and social change.

RINA MEHTA brings to the art form of Kathak, classical dance of North India, a singular voice and vision. An artist and an entrepreneur, she displays on and off the stage her depth of training with legendary Kathak master, Pt. Chitresh Das, an unshakeable grounding in tradition and a pioneering spirit. Described as “regal” and “brilliant” by critics, her performances and artistic work are paving a path forward for the legacy of Pt. Chitresh Das and Kathak dance itself.

Rina is a founding artist of the Leela Dance Collective, which brings together leading artists from around the world to advance a collective vision for Kathak. Rina’s original works include SPEAK, a kathak-tap collaboration; “Chandanbala”, the story of the revered Jain saint interpreted through the Kathak tradition; and “Son of the Wind”, the story of India’s mythological hero, Hanuman, brought to life through

dance-drama. She has received funding to create and tour her works by such prestigious institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Prior to her work with the Leela Dance Collective, Rina was a principal dancer with the Chitresh Das Dance Company, performing and touring with the company's critically acclaimed productions including *Shabd*, *Pancha Jati* and *Sita Haran* across the United States and in India. She has received the Alliance for California Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant and twice been nominated for an Isodara Duncan Dance Award for Company performance as part of the Chitresh Das Dance Company. She has performed at such prestigious venues/festivals nationally and in India as REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/Cal Arts Theater), Meany Hall for Performing Arts (University of Washington), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, UCLA's World Festival of Sacred Music, Tata Theater/ NCPA in Mumbai and the Shaniwarwada Dance Festival in Pune, as a soloist and with the Chitresh Das Dance Company.

Rina's work is grounded in the belief that Kathak dance can be a powerful tool for empowerment and social change. She is the recipient of the prestigious Fulbright award and researched the effectiveness of Kathak dance education as a social intervention in underprivileged communities in Mumbai, India. Rina's most ambitious initiative is The Leela Endowment, the first and only initiative of its kind, aimed at providing the financial infrastructure necessary for dancers to thrive and continue to advance India's rich artistic heritage.

ALLISON MILLER is a NYC-based drummer/composer who engages her deep roots in improvisation as a vehicle to explore all music. Described by critics as a charismatic and rhythmically propulsive drummer with melodic sensibility, Miller has been named "Top 20 Jazz Drummers" in *Downbeat Magazine*. Her band, Boom Tic Boom, is a 2014 recipient of Chamber Music America's "Presenter Consortium for Jazz Grant" and is proudly sponsored by Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation. As a side-musician, Miller has been the rhythmic force behind such mainstream artists as Ani DiFranco, Natalie Merchant, Brandi Carlile, Toshi Reagon, the Meredith Vieira Show and Late Night with Seth Meyers; and her jazz skills have been embraced by everyone from organ legend Dr. Lonnie Smith and vocalist Patricia Barber to avant-garde trailblazer Marty Ehrlich and Ben Allison.

"Boom Tic Boom has a razor-sharp precision that recalls classic drummer-led ensembles of 50 years ago—the music of Art Blakey, Art Taylor and Max Roach come to mind—but Ms. Miller's band works from a diverse sonic palette that is unmistakably contemporary." – Martin Johnson (*The Wall Street Journal*.)

– "...Miller's craftiness as a percussionist is met by her ingenuity as a composer and group conceptualist." – *The New Yorker*.

SATYAPRAKASH MISHRA is the son and disciple of critically acclaimed tabla artist, Pandit Kalinath Mishra of the Benares Gharana. Satyaprakash's versatility and range makes him a sought-after accompanist amongst India's most renowned dance and music artists. He has performed and toured nationally and internationally with the likes of Pt. Chitresh Das, Padmashri Sunayana

Hazarilal, Padmashri Suresh Wadekar, Smt. Sitara Devi, Shankar Mahadevan and Anup Jalota. His performances have been featured at prestigious venues around the world such as the National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco) and Green Music Center (Sonoma, CA).

A rising star, Satyaprakash is increasingly seen performing the tabla solo as well as the tabla jugalbandi (a duet performance that features two soloists) with his father in some of India's most prestigious festivals including Saptak, Harrivallabh, Chakradhar, Kala Ghoda to name a few. An artist and entertainer alike, Satyaprakash's style is marked by technical prowess and sophisticated layakari on the one hand and accessibility and universal appeal on the other. His performances and work aim to bring to the forefront the uniqueness of the Benares Gharana, a school of tabla that emphasizes the instrument's raw power, its poetic potential and the intricate relationship between dance and percussion. When he is not performing, Satyaprakash is working as an educator, training a new generation of students in the art of tabla through classes and workshops.

CARMEN STAAF is a pianist and composer known for her strength in a wide variety of musical settings; she has performed everywhere from the Village Vanguard during John Zorn's Masada week, to Lincoln Center as a guest soloist with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis, to recording as an accordionist and vocalist on the GRAMMY®-winning album "*Pecados y Milagros*" by Mexican singer Lila Downs. Currently she is a fellow at the prestigious Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance at UCLA, where she studies

with Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock.

Originally from Seattle, Carmen has played throughout the United States and abroad at venues such as the Village Vanguard, Carnegie Hall, the Playboy Jazz Festival, International Jazz Day in Paris and many others in Europe, Latin America and India. She was the winner of the 2009 Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Pianist Competition and recently her Standards Reimagined Sextet performed at the Litchfield Jazz Festival.

Carmen is a faculty member at the Stanford Jazz Workshop and the Litchfield Jazz Camp, and taught in the Piano Department at Berklee College of Music in Boston from 2005-2009. She also taught jazz piano alongside Dafnis Prieto and Ferenc Nemeth at Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music near Chennai, India. Carmen completed the dual degree program at Tufts University (BA in Anthropology) and New England Conservatory (BM in Jazz Performance) after deferring for a year to study music in Cuba. Staaf recently recorded her new sextet album featuring kora master Foday Musa Suso; the album is due out in the fall.

VAIBHAV MANKAD has trained under Agra Gharana tradition from Guru Shri Rajesh Kelkar. He has completed Masters in Hindustani Classical Vocal from Mumbai University. Vaibhav started performing professionally at the age of 15 and has been performing with several renowned artists like Pandita Uma Dogra, Smt Nandita Puri, Pandit Birju Maharaj, Shri Rajendra Gangani and many more. He has performed in several countries which includes USA, UK, France, Sri Lanka, Oman, UAE etc. He also specializes solo singing in Semi classical, Gazals, Sufi and devotional Music. In his illustrious career, he has not only been performing but

also like a 'Guru' has been spreading the knowledge of Hindustani music through his teachings. He has been teaching music for 15+ years. Currently Vaibhav resides in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He is currently an artist-in-residence with the Leela Dance Collective, teaching music classes to students of the Leela Young Artists Academy and the Chhandam School of Kathak.

JAYANTA BANERJEE is an upcoming young Sitarist from Kolkata, India. He was born into a musical family in 1974 and started learning Sitar from Sri Amit Prosonno Mukherjee, Prof Santosh Banerjee, late Pandit Robi Chakroborty and Dr Rajeeb Chakroborty. His Guru trained him with strict discipline and sincerity of purpose at a tender age. He has given performances as a soloist and accompanist in the United States, UK, Germany, Spain, Holland, Poland, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Malaysia, Hawaii and Bangladesh. Jayanta has performed with some of the world's greatest Indian classical Dancers and Musicians: Pandit Chitresh Das, Pandit Birju Maharaj, Dr L Subharamonium, Pandit Rajan & Sajan Mishra, Pandit Kumar Bose, Pandit Swapan Chawdhuri, Pandit Anindo Chatterjee, Ustad Sabir Khan, Pandit Bhawani Shankar and Pandit Ramesh Mishra. He regularly accompanied Pandit Chitresh Das for his performances throughout India and tours with him internationally as well. In addition to being a sitarist, Jayanta is also a successful composer and arranger, having composed and arranged for many of India's renowned musicians and dancers.

Says Jayanta: "My approach to music is largely intuitive and spontaneous. My audiences feel good while listening and witnessing my performances and I feel fulfilled."

TABARI LAKE Born on the island of St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, he began his musical exploration on the steel drums in the second grade. He came through the VI's public school system playing the clarinet and tuba, as well. In high school, Tabari decided that the bass was the instrument for him and he pursued it as such. Tabari attended the Interlochen Arts Camp during the summers of 2010 and 2011, where Rodney Whitaker introduced him to the double bass. Tabari then received a scholarship from Interlochen to further his classical and jazz studies at the academy from which he graduated in 2012. Tabari received Bachelor degrees in Performance as well as Contemporary Writing and Production from Berklee and his Masters in Contemporary Performance (Production Concentration) at Berklee in Valencia, Spain.

Tabari has performed with Terence Blanchard, Dion Parson, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Tia Fuller and Sting amongst others.