

Vibrant, fast moving and graceful. Both deploy powerful, rhythmic footwork; both use the arms and upper body with elaborate, sinuous beauty. Both are forms of music-making as well as dance in their rapid movements of the feet and clapping of hands.

Kathak is one of the nine classical dances of India originating in North India in the 3rd century and performed in temples as a way of narrating mythological stories (Kathaa meaning story). Flamenco origins are thought to be in the Roma migration from Northwest India to Spain between 9th and 14th centuries and later performed by Gitanos (Gypsies) in Andalucía, Spain as a way of expressing their life's struggles. The two art forms have striking similarities, complementing each other in the music, movement, and the moods they display.

Royal Opera House, Mumbai in association with **Avid Learning** presents **Crossroads: An Indo - Spanish Dance Ensemble** with *Kathak Exponent Aditi Bhagwat* and *Flamenco Artist Bettina Castaño*. Two powerhouse genres of dance and music, two gifted experimental artists and musicians come together and exploring the timeless connection between the two dance forms. Accompanying them are **Shruti Bhawe** on *Vocals and Violin*; **Swapnil Bhise** on *Tabla* and **Emmanuel Simon** on *Percussion* to create a cross-disciplinary dialogue that transcends cultural boundaries and language barriers making the evening a multi-dimensional melange of arts.

Collaborations between traditional dance artists representing styles from different parts of the world are occurring at an ever more rapid pace. Flamenco is implacable, abstract, self-absorbed. Kathak is witty, storytelling, full of facial expression and mime-like gesture. The duet between the two is a real thrill to the confrontation of their movement styles, and to their borrowings from one another. Moving mostly in sync, they embrace, whirl away from one another, duel with their feet, then slow their bodies into elegant, curving shapes.

Flamenco is an art form which includes singing, guitar playing, dance, handicapping, finger snapping and vocalisations. Any part of the body; even the teeth – emitting raucous cries and shrieks; with heeled feet rigorously pounding the floor, can be used as a rhythm generator; always appearing in control of every tiny shift of weight, every gestural decision, often seeming to be improvising — at moments. Whereas, in Kathak, a barefoot dancer wearing *ghungroos* (ankle bells), is a more elusive presence. The movements of whirling, stamping movement can seem boneless, adding whiplashing curves, and feet stamp out nuanced rhythms. But the specificity of kathak is the art of *abhinaya* (the subtle facial expressions and gestures) that is an essential element of the form. In addition, both Flamenco and Kathak have Indian and Muslim cultural and religious influences.

Despite being over 8,000 kilometres away, kathak and flamenco share many visual and musical similarities. Live music and complex rhythmic cycles are central components to both art forms. The music consists of rhythmic percussive beats, which is occasionally combined with counting in Spanish, similar to the kathak "*bols*" that playfully mark the musicianship and rhythmic skills of the dancer. The dance forms are paired with each other with a focus on highlighting the unique nature of kathak-flamenco collaborations and how nostalgic narratives are perpetuated across continents to serve different functions.

The meeting point in this conflicting-complementing dance form is fascinating, as they come together to dance in perfect harmony or move away to do their own thing, the lines begin to blur, sparks fly and boundaries dissolve. It's a celebration dance and music, featuring a unique combination of flamenco and the Indian classical dance form Kathak.

The Royal Opera House, Mumbai provides a unique platform in the city for people to encounter the breadth of the performing and visual Arts. In keeping with the legacy of this institution, where even in our early days we've showcased theatre, dance, cinema and music, we are keen to support and showcase unique events that defy easy categorization and blend the traditional with the contemporary, and find synergies between the arts in fascinating ways. We always seek to include more people in the conversation and now known as the City's Cultural Crown Jewel and we feel so privileged.

Join us for a gracefully compact, yet rapier-like performance celebrating a shared heritage of two cultures – from northern India and southern Spain.

When: 17th February 2024 | 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Where: Royal Opera House, Mumbai

Tickets: www.insider.in (Rs. 399 onwards)

Press Email: [ayeshah.dadachanji \(ayeshah.avid@gmail.com\)](mailto:ayeshah.dadachanji@avidlearning.com)

ARTIST BIOS:

ADITI BHAGWAT

Aditi began rigorous training in the Jaipur style of 'Kathak' dance under Padmashri Dr. Roshan Kumari with strict discipline and ethics at the tender age of 4yrs. She has also received the able guidance of Kathak exponent Smt. Nandita Puri and Tabla virtuoso Pt. Yogesh Samsi. Having secured a masters in Psychology, Aditi did her masters in Kathak dance from the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya.

She is an 'A' graded artist of the Doordarshan Kendra, impaneled with the Indian Council of Cultural Relations and has received the title of 'Nalanda Nritya Nipun' from the Nalanda Dance and Research Academy, Mumbai. She is a TEDx SereneMeadows 2021 speaker and has conducted workshops in Storytelling through expression dance for Summertime at Prithvi Theatre and the TPot Theatre Fest.

With a strong foothold in traditional Kathak dance, Aditi has experimented with the traditions of Jazz and world music. Aditi collaborated with Flamenco exponent Bettina Castaño and Jazz artists Dallas Smith and Susan Mazer from USA on her recent venture 'Crossroads' in association with the Consulate of Spain in Mumbai.

Aditi received the OneBeat fellowship which was an initiative of the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Under this fellowship Aditi collaborated with 32 musicians from all over the world. Aditi featured as a 'foot percussionist' from India and successfully combined Indian rhythms and Kathak bols (syllables) through her feet and ghungroos. Aditi deeply loves and respects the rich cultural heritage that our country is adorned with. She is indebted to her Gurus for introducing her to this beautiful culture of Kathak dance and classical music.

BETTINA CASTAÑO

Most flamenco dancers fascinate with their blinding technique, so pure and clean, as smooth as a diamond. Others with the intensity of their interpretation, expression, through the gift of using a traditional phrase, which the listener or spectator has heard thousands of times before, to say something new. Others impress with their willingness to take a risk – for example when they choose a bold Zapateado tempo, or create unusual, exciting timbres with the foot. Bettina Castaño does all of this and much more. For example, she experiments with world music - distancing herself a little from traditional flamenco - integrates these elements, finds her way back, and fascinates the flamenco world. She is one of the most amazing new generation flamenco dancers in Sevilla. Her seemingly inexhaustible wealth of choreographs and her huge dance repertoire motivate her to create a special type of performance

The conception, her wealth of ideas, and her arrangements appear so, that every programme constantly alternates instrumental performance and dance pieces.

SHRUTI BHAVE

Shruti Bhave is a skilled Indian classical violinist and vocalist from Mumbai, India. Shruti was born into a musical family and trained from a young age as a singer before taking up the violin. She has a wealth of collaborative experience, both in India and abroad, having toured internationally with the interdisciplinary collaboration FlamencoKathaa, as well as with popular Bollywood singers Sonu Nigam and Jawed Ali. Shruti is a member of the well known all-female ensemble Indiva and has released her own solo recordings, including a cover of a popular Bollywood song, "Dil Diyan Gallan", that has attracted over 3 million views online. Back in Mumbai, Shruti regularly performs everything from classical, fusion, Bollywood and indie music as a live and session musician.

SWAPNIL BHISE

Swapnil Bhise is a much appreciated Mumbai-based tabla artiste known for his artistry. He studied under Chandrakant A. Bhosekar, Praveen Karkare, and Yogesh Samsi. He has completed the tabla Visharad course at the Akhil Bhartiya Gandharva Vidyalaya. Swapnil has received several prizes like the gold medal at the All India Inter-University Association, Youth Festival, National level. He has performed on Indian television and AIR. He has also provided tabla accompaniment to several vocalists, instrumentalists and dancers and has also presented solo recitals.

EMMANUEL SIMON

Emmanuel Simon, initially trained as a Western classical pianist, is nowadays a professional percussionist and a versatile musician, having gathered over the years extensive knowledge, both practical and academic, in classical and contemporary Western music as well as in Latin, West-African and Indian Classical music fields. Settled in India since 2011, as a session musician and band leader of the Latin-jazz band The Latination, he has collaborated with many different artists for studio and TV recordings as well as live performances and toured all over India and South Asia in many prestigious auditoriums and festivals.

He is currently a full-time faculty and professor at School of Performing Arts, NMIMS University, Mumbai.