

March, 2-4, 2017

WE SINFUL WOMEN

Company: The Kathak Ensemble & Friends
Venue: Danspace Project - St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery
Location: New York, NY

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Photo: Darial Sneed

THE KATHAK ENSEMBLE & FRIENDS PRESENT "WE SINFUL WOMEN"

Contemporary Dance With Indian Influence Based on the Urdu Feminist Poetry Collection

Eight Poems – Six Dancers – Commissioned Music

DANSPACE PROJECT, NYC - MARCH 2 THROUGH MARCH 4 AT 8PM

The Indian dance performance collective [The Kathak Ensemble & Friends](#) returns to New York this spring in an all new Indian-influenced contemporary dance work speaking to the universal repression of women. Based on the eight groundbreaking (Pakistani) Urdu poems first published in 1990, *WE SINFUL WOMEN* will premiere at [Danspace Project](#), St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, 131 East 10th Street, Thursday, March 2 through Saturday March 4 at 8pm, with an artist Q/A following the performance on Friday, March 3. *

Created by Kathak Ensemble & Friends Artistic Director [Janaki Patrik](#), the work will feature six female dancers and original commissioned music by two-time Canadian Grammy winner and composer [Kiran Ahluwalia](#).

In *WE SINFUL WOMEN*, Janaki Patrik seeks to give voice, through melody and movement, to the words of the female Urdu poets Ishrat Aafreen, Kishwar Naheed, Zehra Nigah and Fahmida Riaz. Protesting the suffocating repression in their physical and emotional lives, these poets courageously wrote with both confrontational anger and ecstatic lyricism.

According to Ms. Patrik, "I was first introduced to *WE SINFUL WOMEN* while at Columbia University studying Indic languages, and the poems resonated. I tried to create a work not about the polish and speed of classical Kathak, but about women's fierce assertion of their selfhood. Each poem projects it's own distinct mood - humorous, sad, ironic, romantic, tongue-in-cheek, triumphant. Musical accompaniment is similarly unique for each poem: *COUNTERCLOCKWISE* starts with the sound of a tape rewinding; *JURAT* is sung in the intimate style developed in a 19th Century mehfil (gathering); *IMAGE/Reflection* is structured like a question-answer straight out of North Indian classical music.

"This is not classical Indian dance. And the poets do not consider their texts "feminist" poetry either. Instead the dance, poetry and music join in expressing what it is to be a woman - her tender feelings, her pride, her resistance to efforts to destroy her selfhood, her sadness at consistent denigration by those in power - whether political or religious - who made it impossible for her to worship, love, create and even live with an open heart," she said.

According to composer Kiran Ahluwalia, "for each poem I listened to Janaki's ideas of the type of movement that it suggested to her, the images that she associated with it, and the mood that it elicited for her. This is a daring project and it is challenging to put such politically charged text to dance and even to music - but Janaki has unique ideas for the poems and her vision inspired me in composing the melodies and rhythms."

First published in 1990 in Lahore, Pakistan, and in 1991 in London, the poetry collection *WE SINFUL WOMEN* (edited by Rukhsana Ahmad) gave a glimpse of the situation in which women had few rights, and their dance and poetry were considered blasphemous. The production embodies the outrage and tenderness encapsulated in the concentrated language of poetry and dance.

KATHAK has its roots in North Indian village storytelling. It's vocabulary of gestures and facial expressions are perfectly suited to representing the emotions and situations in these poems.

* Artist Q/A following Friday, March 3 performance moderated by Gauri Viswanathan, Columbia University Professor of Humanities.

"... Multiculturalism never had it so good." - The Washington Post.

THE KATHAK ENSEMBLE & FRIENDS "WE SINFUL WOMEN"

DANSPACE PROJECT - ST. MARK'S CHURCH IN-THE-BOWERY, 131 East 10th Street, New York, NY 10003

March 2, 3, 4 at 8pm

\$22 General | \$15 Members

More info and Tickets: <http://www.danspaceproject.org/calendar/community-access-the-kathak-ensemble-friends/>

Tickets by Telephone (866) 811-4111 Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$25 (cash or check only), pending availability.

THE KATHAK ENSEMBLE & FRIENDS is presented as part of Danspace Project's Community: ACCESS series, which provides subsidized off-season rental opportunities for Danspace Project community members.

ABOUT [THE KATHAK ENSEMBLE AND FRIENDS](#):

The Kathak Ensemble & Friends and its arts-in-education unit, CARAVAN, communicate the richness of Indian culture through its arts, most specifically through the classical North Indian dance style Kathak, its storytelling techniques (katha) and its accompanying Hindustani music. The Ensemble also creates its own innovative repertoire, in which Kathak interacts with familiar American arts forms, demystifying unique details of Indian culture and engaging audience members in a journey of the imagination, revealing exotic other-ness as a variation on the common theme of human-ness.

ABOUT [JANAKI PATRIK](#), FOUNDER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR:

Janaki Patrik has been trained in Kathak classical North Indian dance, principally by Pt. Birju Maharaj, as well as in music and dance idioms of her native United States. She studied technique, repertoire and choreography for a decade at the Merce Cunningham studio, supported by a studio scholarship. Since poetry lies at the foundation of Kathak technique, repertoire and performance practice, Janaki has acquired facility in many of the major languages and dialects of North India, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Braj and Maithili.

She was awarded a Senior Research Fellowship from the Fulbright Foundation in 1988/89 to study the poetry of the Kathak dance repertoire, and an American Institute of Indian Studies Language Fellowship to study Hindi in India in 1994. In 2008-09, her studies of Kathak curriculum and pedagogy in India were supported by an American Institute of Indian Studies, Senior Performing Artists Fellowship.

Choreographer: Janaki Patrik with the Dancers

Composer: Kiran Ahluwalia

Dancers: Aditi Dhruv, Kanushree Jain, Megha Kalia, Romanee Kalicharran, Bharathi Penneswaran, Saloni Somani

Lighting designer: Kathy Kaufmann

Female Vocal: Kiran Ahluwalia

Male Vocal: Samarth Nagarkar

Sarangi: Pt. Ramesh Misra

Tabla: Nitin Mitta

Bansuri flute, clarinet & saxophone: Steve Gorn

Rubab: Quraishi Roya

Frame drum: Rich Stein

English recitation of poems: Manoshi Chitra Neogy, Kiran Ahluwalia, Samarth Nagarka

Consultants in Urdu Language & Literature: Professor Tahira Naqvi, Professor Frances Pritchett

Assistant in sourcing costume materials from India: Rani Khanam

The Poems (in program order):

First Prayer of My Elders

Compromise

Image

O God of Heaven and Earth

Saropa by Jurat

Anticlockwise

Migration

We Sinful Women

WE SINFUL WOMEN - by Kishwar Naheed

It is we sinful women

who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear robes

who don't sell our lives

who don't bow our heads

who don't fold our hands together.

It is we sinful women

while those who sell the harvests of our bodies

become exalted

become distinguished
become the just princes of the material world.
It is we sinful women
who come out raising the banner of truth
up against barricades of lies on the highways
who find stories of persecution piled on each threshold
who find that tongues which could speak have been severed.
It is we sinful women,
Now, even if the night gives chase
These eyes shall not be put out
For the wall which has been torn down
Don't insist now on raising it again.
It is we sinful women
who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear robes
who don't sell our lives
who don't bow our heads
who don't fold our hands together.

The Kathak Ensemble & Friends
131 East 10th Street
New York, NY, 10003
866-811-4111
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Schedule
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