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Staging a Cultural Collaboration: Louise Lightfoot and Ananda Shivaram's First Indian Dance Tour of Australia, 1947–1949

AMIT SARWAL and DAVID WALKER

One of the most highly stylized of the Indian forms of dance-drama, Kathakali has also received the greatest amount of attention on the global stage. We argue that its international exposure began with the performances of Ananda Shivaram, as managed by the Australian impresario Louise Lightfoot, in a landmark intercultural collaboration. From 1947 to 1949, Shivaram, along with an ensemble of Australian dancers, successfully toured Australia, adapting a range of Kathakali dance-dramas to performance in an international context. Lightfoot organized and publicized the tour, translated texts, and explained the art of Kathakali—virtually unknown—to excited Australian audiences. Using newspaper reports, advertisements, program brochures, and promoter's notes, we chart the performer's and the impresario's journeys, how they fostered intercultural understanding, and how Shivaram became a cultural ambassador for India.

The Government of India's Ministry of Culture has reorganized eleven dance forms in a composite category called *Shastriya Nritya* (Indian classical dance)—*Bharata Natyam*, *Kathakali*, *Kuchipudi*, *Manipuri*, *Kathak*, *Mohiniyattam*, *Odissi*, *Sattriya*, *Chhau*, *Gaudiya Nritya*, and *Thang Ta*—while the Sangeet Natak Akademi (The National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama) recognizes only eight of these forms.¹ These eleven Indian classical dance forms originated in diverse traditional religious, folk, or musical theaters of the past. Nevertheless, over the years key techniques—in particular *mudras* (gestures) and *rasas* (emotions), mentioned in Bharata Muni's *Natyasastra* and Nandikeshwara's *Bharatarnava* (two ancient Indian

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treatises on the performing arts)—have been incorporated into all these forms alike.*

Among these dance forms, *Kathakali*, with a training period that can last for eight to ten years, is considered to be one of the toughest and most highly stylized of the classical dance-drama techniques.² Involving the unfolding of stories in dance or dance-drama, *Kathakali* originated from *Krishnanattam* (Sanskrit plays in praise of Lord Krishna) and *Ramanattam* or *Attakatha* (Malayalam plays in praise of Lord Rama) in the coastal state of Kerala during the seventeenth century. Incorporating several elements from other popular regional and ritualistic art forms, *Kathakali* is noted chiefly for (1) being an all-male domain (even female roles are played by men); (2) the variety and range of characters from noble heroes to demons; (3) religious themes concerning the victory of good over evil; (4) epic stories drawn from the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Puranas*; (5) attractive makeup, which can take from four to six hours to apply to main characters; (6) elaborate costumes, ornaments, and crowns; and (7) well-defined facial expressions using the eyebrows, eyeballs, cheeks, nose, and chin, as well as body gestures and movements attuned to offstage spoken narrative, music, and percussion sounds (usually cymbals and a gong).[†] *Kathakali* does not include any onstage dialogue at all and, for this reason, dance critics, such as Phillip Zarrilli, have compared it, in terms of poetics and aesthetic pleasure, to the Chinese Opera and Japanese *Noh*.³

Zarrilli notes that the “heyday” of *Kathakali* in Kerala occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century, under the royal patronage of Uthram Thirunal Maharaja, a connoisseur, writer, and stage performer himself. After the death of Uthram in 1861, with the shifting socioeconomic order in Kerala, certain changes took place, especially among young people. Education in English language, literature, and culture grew, and people looked down upon native art forms. Nationalist and caste-based, sociolegal reform movements arose,

* Bharata’s *Natyasastra*, written during the period between 200 BCE and 200 CE, is considered the fifth *Veda* (Sanskrit scripture). Containing 6000 *slokas/sutras* (verse stanzas) on the theory of *bhavas* (feelings) and *rasas* used in classical performing arts (theater, dance, and music), it has had a key influence on classical playwrights and dancers. According to this treatise, God Brahma, the Creator of the World, invented the art and science of classical dancing and then taught it to the most reverend sage Bharata, who passed on this art to divine beings and humans to enlighten them. Other Indian art dance forms yet to be recognized as classical dance are *Andhra Natyam*, *Vilasini Nrityam/Natyam*, and *Kerala Natanam*.

† The male-oriented nature of *Kathakali* can be contrasted with *Mobiniyattam*, performed solely by women in Kerala. While *Kathakali* represents the heroic, *Mobiniyattam* puts a strong emphasis on the expression of grace and erotic emotions. See Guru Rao Bapat, *Re-scribing Tradition: Modernisation of South Indian Dance-Drama* (Shimla: IIAS, 2012), 55; Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011), 62–63.

such as that sponsored by the Nayar Service Society.* Moreover, successors of Uthram at the Travancore court showed little interest in *Kathakali*. All of these changes resulted in a slow decline of patronage. Alluding to this waning royal patronage, Chitra Panikkar asserts that later rulers were more interested in encouraging “Carnatic music and dances by women” and soon “disbanded” the palace *kaliyogam* (troupes) and restricted *Kathakali*’s performances to the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple at Thiruvananthapuram (also known as Trivandrum). Although they felt indifferent to *Kathakali*, they continued with it merely because “they did not want to discontinue a tradition.”⁴

Commenting on the changes taking place in Kerala and their economic impact on *Kathakali*, Panikkar further observes that some troupes and artists were driven “to the streets where, knowing no other profession, [they were] reduced to sheer penury.”⁵ In the early twentieth century, with the decline in court patronage, the disbanded artists migrated and created new troupes. These smaller troupes wandered in search of new patrons in smaller towns and villages. Although there was almost a total collapse of the feudal patronage structure, the art form still sustained itself; landlords regularly adopted troupes as status symbols, although for shorter periods of time.⁶

The Indian nationalist movement (1890–1947) promulgated a reaffirmation of local traditional values while focussing on some art forms as national.⁷ Seeing the sad state of Kerala’s cultural treasure, Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon (1878–1958), a staunch nationalist, decided to protect and revive *Kathakali*.[†] Poet Vallathol, with the help of Mukund Raja, decided to use the system of *gurukulam* (residential school) along with a new management method based on the model of ballet companies; he started Kerala Kalamandalam on land gifted by the government of Kochi on the banks of the River Bharathappuzha on the Malabar Coast of Kerala. In fact, the revival of *Kathakali*, and its acceptance as a recognizable part of the Indian national performing arts tradition, parallels that of *Bharata Natyam* achieved by Rukmini Devi at Kalakshetra in Chennai in the first half of the

* Also known as the Nair Service Society, it was established in 1914 by Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai for the social advancement and welfare of the Nair community. The Nairs or Nayars were historically a military caste, but a confrontation with British colonial forces in 1808–1809 led the British to limit Nair participation in combat. After the Travancore War, the Raja kept only some Nair battalions in a police capacity, dismissing the others. Some of these warriors displaced from the field of battle became well entrenched in the art of *Kathakali* and showcased their martial skills and male ethos symbolically onstage. This also explains why emotions like *vira* (heroic) and *raudra* (furious) dominate *Kathakali* performances. See D. P. Ramachandran, *Empire’s First Soldiers* (Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2008).

† Vallathol, along with Kumaran Asan and Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, was one of the triumvirate poets of modern Malayalam language. A great admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, Vallathol was also a nationalist poet, who wrote a series of poems on the Indian freedom movement and Communist ideology, and against caste restriction, feudal tyrannies, and sociocultural orthodoxies.

twentieth century.* The sole purpose of Kalamandalam was to revive the art form, providing support to artist-teachers and training new students without depending on one person's or a wealthy house's patronage. In the 1920s, this institute ran as a registered society and faced a shortage of funds. But, it also attracted the best artists; hence, Poet Vallathol organized fundraising shows all over India and Ceylon (renamed Sri Lanka in 1972) to renovate and strengthen Kalamandalam. In 1941, the institute was taken over by the Government of Kochi, but Vallathol remained its President and Artistic Director.† *Kathakali* artists trained at Kalamandalam, such as Ananda Shivaram, Chathunni Panicker, and Kalamandalam Gopi (born Govindan Nair), realizing that they could not depend on government funding and local shows or patronage any more, started looking for new audiences, connoisseurs, and impresarios outside India and Ceylon (see Figure 1).

Kathakali has been marketed by many agents for diverse reasons. Of all the traditional Indian dance forms, it has received the greatest attention on the global stage, predominantly through the performances of Ananda Shivaram and his Australian impresario Louise Lightfoot. The subtle expressions of a performer's face; the very slow movements of the body; elaborate costumes and makeup; and the refined process of acting, along with experimental changes that have modernized the form, have enabled it to gain recognition worldwide.⁸ Furthermore, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, colonialism, nationalism, and orientalism came together in various combinations to make this traditional South Indian performing art a

* Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris*, 144. Originally known as *sadbir*, a dance style performed by the *devadasis* (temple dancers), the Indian classical dance form of *Bharata Natyam* owes its current name to E. Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi Arundale. Rukmini Devi, married to Australian theosophist G. S. Arundale, lived in Sydney during the 1920s. In 1928, Rukmini Devi met Anna Pavlova and travelled on the same ship to Australia. Pavlova's students taught Rukmini Devi ballet and the great ballet dancer inspired her to discover and revive the Indian classical dance form. In the mid-1930s, Rukmini Devi introduced new "symbolic phraseologies into the structure" of *sadbir* and made it into *Bharata Natyam*. Soon, with the inspiration and collaboration of other artists, she became a leading exponent and a reviving spirit of *Bharata Natyam* at her institute Kalakshetra in Chennai, which brought the form to the global stage. In 1966, she toured Australia with her Indian Dance Company and school (Kalakshetra) and participated in the Perth Festival. See also Janet O'Shea, *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007); Purushottama Bilimoria, "Traditions and Transition in South Asian Performing Arts in Multicultural Australia," in *Culture, Difference and the Arts*, eds. Sneha Gunew and Fazal Rizvi (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), 116; Purushottama Bilimoria, "Indian Dance," in *Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia*, eds. John Whiteoak and Aline Scott-Maxwell (Sydney: Currency Press, 2003), 330; Bapat, *Re-scribing Tradition*, 55; Leela Venkataraman, *Indian Classical Dance: The Renaissance and Beyond* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2015).

† In the mid-1950s, the Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, provided some funding to the institute. In 2006, after periods of uncertainty under government administration, the University Grants Commission (UGC) accorded Kerala Kalamandalam the status of Deemed University for Art and Culture.



FIGURE 1 Ananda Shivaram in full *Kathakali* costume (February 1948). © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

global art form.⁹ In this article, using newspaper reports, advertisements, program brochures, and promoter's notes related to Ananda Shivaram's historic Australian tour, we chart the sensational and fascinating journey of Indian classical dance in Australia and the making of renowned *Kathakali* exponent and cultural ambassador Louise Lightfoot.

INDIAN DANCE IN AUSTRALIA

In 1947, Ananda Shivaram (1916–2001), the renowned *Kathakali* dancer and teacher, was one of the first Indian artists to tour Australia.¹⁰ Born in the upper-caste *Nair* community of Kerala, Shivaram commenced his *gurukulam* (residential school) training at the age of six under the guidance of his father, Gopala Panikker, a learned master of dancing and acting.¹¹ In 1929, impressed by Shivaram's performance at the Chittur Sreekrishna Temple, Vallathol Menon and Mukund Raja offered him free training in *Kathakali* at Kerala Kalamandalam. As a young man, Shivaram performed in India and Ceylon with Indian dance troupes, but he desired to go abroad and establish himself as an exponent of *Kathakali* in Europe. He tried to arrange for a solo tour of Western countries but the intervention of the Second World War ruined his plans.¹²

In the late 1930s, Shivaram met the Australian ballet teacher Louise Lightfoot (1902–1979), who was studying *Kathakali* at Kalamandalam. Shivaram was one of the teachers assigned to coach Lightfoot in her training. A trained architect by profession, Lightfoot had faced initial obstacles in translating her passion for dancing into a calling. Marion Griffin, wife of famous architect Walter Burley Griffin, had encouraged Lightfoot's "natural talent and love of dance" while she was working as an apprentice at Griffin's office in Melbourne and Sydney.¹³ During Pavlova's first tour of Australia in 1926, Lightfoot found Pavlova's experimentation with various dance forms a "revelation."¹⁴ Inspired by the dance *Grand Russian Ballet*, Lightfoot envisioned bringing experimental ballet to life in Australia. Lightfoot was also impressed by the performances of Rukmini Devi and Uday Shankar during the late 1920s and early 1930s respectively.*

In the 1920s, many influential performers from the West turned to India for inspiration and experimentation. Fernau Hall, dance critic for *The Daily Telegraph*, notes that the Indian temple dance made a strong impression

* As an art student in London in 1920s, Uday Shankar was discovered by Anna Pavlova performing Indian dances at charity events. He later made his own impact, creating a strong stage impression on the Western world by his fusion of Indian dancing, painting, and music. The first Indian woman dancer to attain international fame was Miravati Devi, who made an appearance in London theaters in 1932 performing folk, fishermen, and gypsy dances.



FIGURE 2 Louise Lightfoot and Mischa Burlakov. © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

on the Western world as early as 700 CE in Spain and then on nineteenth-century European ballet choreographers, who, unprepared to incorporate elements of Indian dance into ballet, restricted themselves to suggestive movements—unlike American choreographers of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Adding to this view, Professor Ralph Yarrow observes that many of these practitioners felt something was “missing” or “lacking” from Western art and theater—something “psychospiritual, technical, aesthetic or a combination of them all.”¹⁶ Like many of her European and American counterparts—Pavlova, Ruth St. Denis, Sol Hurok, Esther Luella Sherman (aka Ragini Devi), Martha Graham, Jean Erdman, and La Meri among them—Lightfoot decided to recreate Indian pieces with her dance partner, Mischa Burlakov, for an Australian audience (see Figure 2).

In the mid-nineteenth century, at the great Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia held in Melbourne (1866–1867), Australians saw Indian curios, art products, colorful clothing, and paintings representing scenes of grand Indian

palaces and bazaars, along with travelling gypsy dancers from India. In the early twentieth century, Australians saw only visiting foreign companies that performed full-length ballets and a vulgarized form of Hindu dance. Hence, Indian classical dance in its vital form was virtually unseen and unknown. Prior to Lightfoot's intervention, in Sydney or Melbourne, most theatrical novelties or ballet works alluding to Indian settings, stories, or characters were replete with exoticism and stereotypes aimed at Western audiences. Such works included the ballets *The Indian Maid* (1835) and *The Sultan's Choice* (1858), and the musical operas *A Moorish Maid* (1905), *The Golden Threshold* (1907), *Cora, the Temptress* (1915), and *The Rajah of Shivapore* (1917)—all “orientalist [spectacles] ready for consumption.”¹⁷ Undoubtedly, early Australian representations of Indian culture onstage and in radio productions, as well as on film, suffered from the influence of European imperial-colonial representations.¹⁸ Moreover, Australians who travelled to colonial India as *sabibs* (elite Western visitors) were primarily shown performances by *nautch* dancers—women “performing a shadow of degenerated forms of *Kathak*” in North Indian towns.¹⁹ Lightfoot would play a major role in changing all that.

In 1929, with the help of Rukmini Devi, Lightfoot performed Pavlova's *Hindu Wedding*—which contains a *nautch* dance.* Following the success of this and other endeavors, Lightfoot continued to perform sporadically in theaters, private studios, or monthly meetings of various women's clubs over the next decade. Lightfoot's studio also became a meeting place for visiting artists and dancers.²⁰ The main dancers and regular performers at these meetings included Moya Beaver, Trafford Whitelock, Bette Ainsworth, Gwen Ainsworth, Dorothy Evans, and Sylvia Evans. Lightfoot choreographed and produced several other ballets in the 1930s, sometimes from memory of productions seen in Australia, but more often from descriptions she read in books and magazines.²¹

To learn more about emerging dance styles and to secure the rights to perform a number of new ballets, Lightfoot visited London and Paris with Burlakov in 1937. In Paris, she was particularly impressed by the performance of the Russian émigré ballet teachers and Shankar's Indian Dance Company.²² Here, in the “new home” of Russian ballet,[†] Lightfoot and Burlakov found composer's scores for ballets of their choice and also had the privilege of attending classes in modern dance, Spanish dance, and Hindu dance.²³ Lightfoot told *Woman's Weekly* that, inspired by Shankar, she intended to

* The word *nautch* is an Anglicized version of *naatch* (*nritya*), which means “dance” in Hindi. Performed by *nautch* girls, the dance form became popular during the Mughal and British East India Company period.

† In Paris, ballet technique had declined markedly by the early twentieth century. The Ballets Russes was noted for the high technical standard of its dancers, who had been trained classically at the great Imperial schools in Moscow and St. Petersburg. These trained teachers elevated the standards in dance technique and contributed to the success of the Ballets Russes in Europe.

create a new form of Indian ballet on her return to Australia.²⁴ With this in mind, on her way back from Europe, Lightfoot made a short excursion to India.

When she arrived in Bombay (now Mumbai), Lightfoot instantly “fell under the spell of India.”²⁵ She recorded this strange experience in her journal:

A very strange thing happened to me as we neared the shore of India and were standing on deck watching the figures on the wharf grow more distinct. I had never had any special interest in India. My heart was set on Europe, and to this end I had saved money for years past. I had not even inquired whether our boat would call at an Indian port on the way. I was amazed then at this flood of feeling which now came over me—ecstasy, anticipation, reverence, yearning—a bursting sensation as though my whole body would dissolve into vibrations to throb in tune with myriad others radiating towards me over this great unseen land of India. I turned and ran down to my cabin. Seizing my diary I wrote excitedly “The climax of my life has arrived.”²⁶

Lightfoot found the Indian men to be “marvellous dancers” and purchased a lot of Indian dance costumes for her ballet company. Burlakov and the students begged Lightfoot to come home and she reluctantly returned to Australia. On the ship, Lightfoot freely “socialized with handsome Indians,” to the “displeasure” of most of the white passengers.²⁷ She experienced social pressure building around her during these conversations, but sidestepped it by focusing on choreographing steps for Indian ballets.

Soon after her return in early 1938, Lightfoot and Burlakov produced their last joint recital, which included Lightfoot’s own “authentic” version of *The Blue God*, a dance-drama about Indian gods and goddesses, at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music (see Figure 3).²⁸ According to Moya Beaver, a former student and later acting principal (1930s), of the Lightfoot-Burlakov School and a ballerina of the First Australian Ballet Company, going to India to learn a new dance form and then coming back to Australia to promote it was something that no Australian woman had ever done before.²⁹

Lightfoot decided to become more knowledgeable about various authentic Indian classical dances and choreography, so that she could present her experimental dance practice in a vivid and hitherto unrevealed form and style. In 1938, she dissolved her partnership with Burlakov, packed her bags, and went back to Kerala. In the next half decade Lightfoot lived in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, learning the different techniques of *Kathakali* and *Bharata Natyam*. At Kalamandalam, Lightfoot studied *Kathakali* in depth. Alan Seymour, an Australian journalist, described Lightfoot’s diligent study in Kalamandalam:

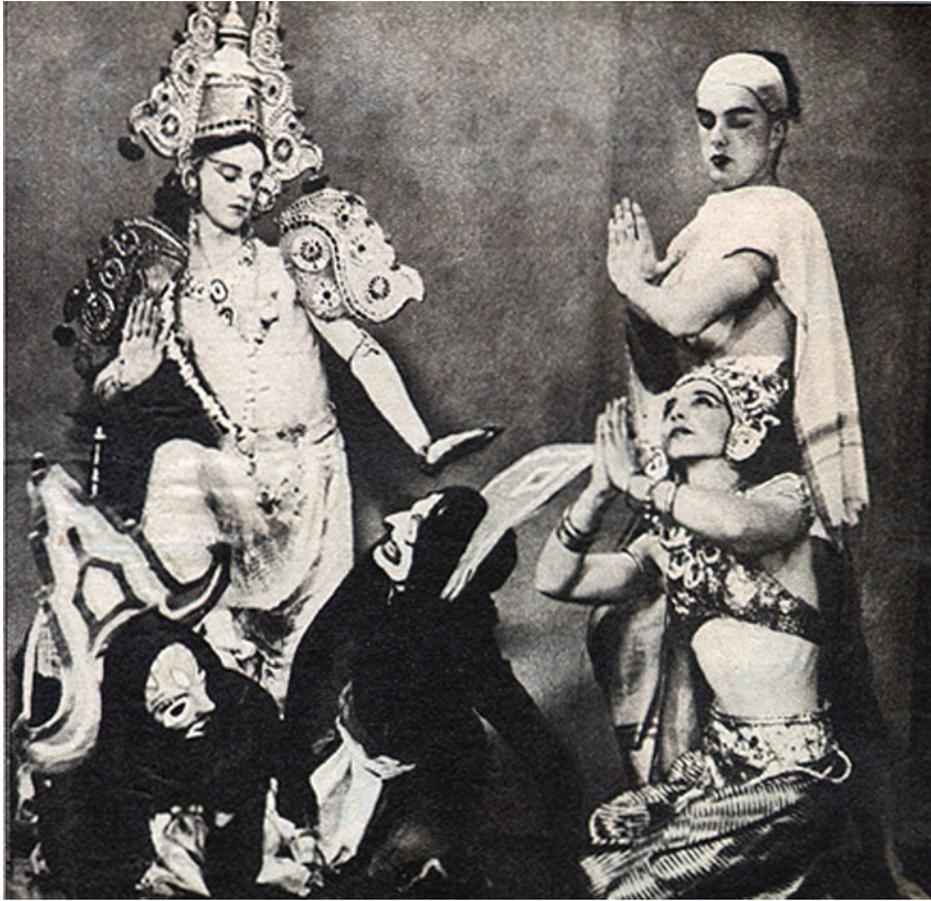


FIGURE 3 Production still from *The Blue God* (1938). © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

The religious tradition and the deep spiritual content of Indian dance had an over-whelming effect upon her, and characteristically, she determined to learn everything she could about this profoundly exciting dance art. . . . [Lightfoot] absorbed its technique and emotional content until she was as conversant as possible with the background, traditions, and living spirit of Indian dancing.³⁰

Lightfoot was elated by the whole experience of learning *Kathakali*, with its multiple dimensions of poetry, song, acting, and dance, and soon she made appeals not only to the British in India, whom she taught to appreciate the Indian dance, but also to Indian parents, whom she encouraged to allow their sons and daughters to study dance. She taught classical ballet to children of the British Raj and also became a publicist of Indian dance troupes and



FIGURE 4 Louise Lightfoot (sitting, third from the right) and Ananda Shivaram (sitting, fourth from left) with an Indian Dance Troupe in Kerala. © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

soloists by organizing tours for troupes in South India and Ceylon (see Figure 4).

Lightfoot saw that *Kathakali*, one of the great dance forms of India, was also far less popular than *Bharata Natyam* or *Kathak*, for example. Some of the reasons for its limited appeal, both for Indian dancers and the handful of Western dancers who have embraced the form, are its complexity as a dance language and the time and dedication involved in training as a *Kathakali* artist. Based on her own experience in learning this art form in Kerala, Lightfoot remarked:

Training for *Kathakali* is a trial of strength. . . . No European dancer would care to rise at 4 every morning to practise two hours of eye movements near a little lamp in the darkness. Or to sit for another two hours clapping out intricate rhythms based on bars of five and seven, and other difficult beats. Or to deliberately submit to the painful oil massages necessary to limber the body. They groan and weep over those massages, and they have to memorise the stanzas of the vocal accompaniment to

over a hundred all night ballets. That goes on for eight years, then the real dancing begins.³¹

Lightfoot also realized at a very early stage that, apart from its rigorous training and intricate rhythms, *Kathakali* would never be “adopted entirely by Western dancers” and audiences because it “wouldn’t suit them,” with all its deeply rooted religiocultural background, as a dance form.³² She observed that it was a quite new subject for Australians as well despite the proximity of the two nations: “We are so close to India here, [yet] we know comparatively nothing of the art of this great ancient land. It is not our fault exactly. We are not educated to think that there is anything of particular interest for us in this neighbouring country.”³³ Hence, she believed the best course of action would be to infuse the Indian rhythms of this symbolic art with Western dance and vice versa. Here Lightfoot’s knowledge and training in architecture, sculpture, and painting helped her in the elaborate planning of costumes, ornaments, and stage design for a global audience.

In a world full of distrust and political antipathy, witness to the devastation of the Second World War, Lightfoot was mesmerized by her tutor Shivaram—his personality, his excellence in dance, and his spiritual attachment to *Kathakali*. She always thought of Shivaram as the very epitome and “embodiment of the Indian spirit of dancing.”³⁴ As friendship and mutual respect between them grew, Lightfoot dreamed of bringing Shivaram to Australia, seized by the idea that “her own country must see Shivaram.”³⁵ In an interview with Seymour in 1948, Lightfoot explained her reasons for bringing the Indian *Kathakali* dancer to Australia:

The World in its present tortured state desperately needs people of goodwill, people who offer enlightenment and a creative way as an answer to the contemporary mania for destruction and violence. . . . [A]rt and artists can forge strong links between the peoples of all countries, assisting to promote understanding and mutual goodwill, in place of the national distrust which nowadays so largely prevails.³⁶

Lightfoot believed that dancing, for Shivaram, meant far more than entertainment: “It is considered an approach to God . . . the real meaning of beauty and the true function of art in life.”³⁷ Realizing that their audiences were uninitiated, they sought to make Shivaram’s performances of *Kathakali* popular and to distill the whole experience of watching Indian dance-drama into a cathartic one. Their goal was to communicate the ideas of Hindu spirituality embedded in *Kathakali*, while removing some of the complex religious context associated with it.³⁸

In going to India for training and then returning as an accomplished impresario, Lightfoot demonstrated the quintessential Australian trait of “initiative,” according to Seymour; “moreover, unlike many Australians in the

theater world who [had] gone abroad [particularly to the U.K., U.S.A., and Europe] and forgotten to come back, she . . . devotedly, and with passionate sincerity, attempted to bring something of culture, enlightenment, and international goodwill to the Australian people.”³⁹ For his part, Shivaram, who was trying to reach out to a wider audience and to establish a niche for himself in the dance world, cynically told an Australian journalist his reasons for looking toward the West: “Indian dancing used to be a most lucrative profession but since the advent of Scotch whiskey dancing is becoming less popular with the wealthy Indians, and more and more Indian dancers are looking to the Western world for occupation.”⁴⁰ As we have seen, the reasons for the decline in the patronage of *Kathakali* had to do with the political economy of colonial relations, extending far beyond the “advent of Scotch whiskey.”⁴¹ Shivaram’s allusion to “Scotch whiskey” can be read as a symbol of exploitative colonial relations that had led to the popularity of Western dance forms or Western-influenced (corrupted) *nautch* dance among Indians.

Dance historian and theorist Uttara Asha Coorlawala has argued that such an open appeal on the part of Indian artists represents a hunger for “international exposure” and a desire to achieve “dignity” or a sense of cultural identity for India—“a battered nation emerging from centuries of economic and cultural exploitation.”⁴² International acclaim has often improved the reception of many Indian dancers in India. Coorlawala asserts that, even today, dancers who are celebrated abroad and gain international exposure often “return to a new level of acceptance and respect for their art within India,” as their dance, which has been approved by critics and audiences abroad, is now “perceived as epitomizing the highest values of Indian culture.”⁴³

Lightfoot persuaded Shivaram to experiment, to create shorter versions of dance-dramas, and to adapt ancient *Kathakali* works to modern tastes with her Hindu Dance Group in Australia. In 1947, she brought Shivaram to Australia and became his great publicist by painstakingly organizing, publicizing, and explaining the art form to audiences through her well researched lectures and commentaries. She also single-handedly controlled hundreds of other tasks associated with event management (see Figure 5).

STAGING THE FIRST CULTURAL COLLABORATION

On hearing that Lightfoot was bringing a Hindu dancer to Australia, her mother sent her an SOS message: “On no account bring a coloured gentleman with you! You would be very much misunderstood.” Shivaram arrived and by the end of his visit he was a star liked by everyone. As Lightfoot told the story, some ladies swooned: “That hair! Those eyes! And those TEETH! Oh! . . . profound.”⁴⁴ Shivaram, then twenty-six years old, performed in major

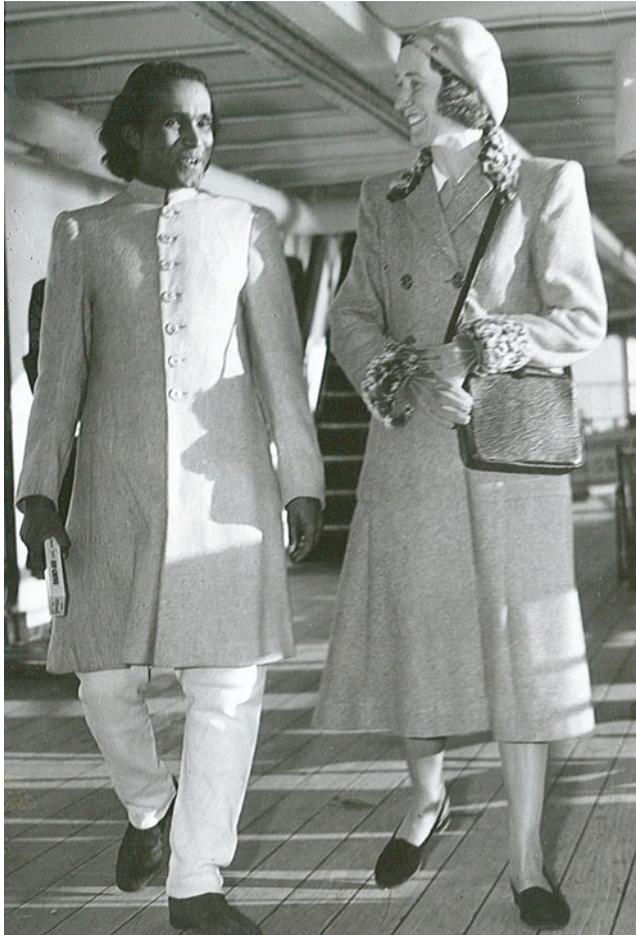


FIGURE 5 Ananda Shivaram and Louise Lightfoot. © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

Australian cities: Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, and Perth. Overwhelmingly characterized by the Australian media as an “exotic Hindu temple dancer,” Shivaram nonetheless found his visit labelled a “unique” and “rare opportunity” from “the most expressive artist” of India.⁴⁵ In short, he was celebrated as a visiting cultural ambassador.

The promotional flyer for his very first program asserted boldly that Shivaram was a “famous and much travelled Hindu dancer.” For the Australian audiences, the flyer highlighted Shivaram’s performances as

a rare opportunity for those who cannot visit India to see some of the treasures hidden in remote villages of that country; exquisite hand-worked costumes and ornaments of ancient design, fantastic head-dresses,

beautiful designs of coloured make-up, dance techniques based on laws two thousand years old, acting by means of a special face-technique and gesture-language, the like of which is not found in any other part of the world.⁴⁶

A journalist from the Australian newspaper *The Age* (April 29, 1947), helped to spread the word, declaring,

If you would fall under the spell of a brilliant Hindu dancer, Shivaram, and his company of European devotees, a visit to St. Peter's Eastern Hill this week should be well worthwhile. Dancing to Oriental music, Shivaram brought something to Melbourne last night which is a compound of beauty, mystic and transcendental symbolism and the ritual of the Brahmins in divertissements and the *Kathakali* dance drama.⁴⁷

Shivaram's first major show was organized at the National Theatre in Melbourne under the patronage of then Indian High Commissioner to Australia, Sir Raghunath Purushottam Paranjpye (see Figure 6). The Indian media saw this collaboration between Shivaram, Lightfoot, and other Australian Ballet artists as a much awaited "cultural union between the Orient and the Occident."⁴⁸ Artlover Madras, pseudonym for a dance critic of the *Indian Express*, enthusiastically reported Shivaram's success:

A new era has arisen and India has to take the lead in constructing union of the different races of the world. It is only by instilling an artistic sense into the minds of the masses that the mental outlook of nations can be broadened and in this great task Ananda Shivaram guided by his able and enlightened impresario has achieved a signal success.⁴⁹

Artlover Madras was quick to add that even the dance critics of the Australian *Bulletin* felt the same way about Indian dance—"had there been no White Australia, the Australian ballet would have progressed much by closer association with Hindustan."⁵⁰

The Argus (April 29, 1947) first reported the initial practice and training sessions of the ballet *Indira Vijayam* at the National Theatre. Dressed as Lord Indra (the god of rain and lord of heaven in Hinduism), Shivaram commanded the journalist's attention:

Students of the ballet and ballet enthusiasts generally will be interested in the performances of Indian dances which Shivaram, first Indian artist to visit Australia, is giving this week at the National Theatre. . . . Costumes and music add to the richness of the performances, but whether dancing the modern Indian style or the *Kathakali*—ancient Indian style—it is Shivaram who dominates everything. There is graceful movement not only in his nimble feet, but also in his weaving arms and fingers, supple neck, and large, expressive eyes.⁵¹

NATIONAL THEATRE MOVEMENT
OF AUSTRALIA
(Under Vice-Royal Patronage)
Founder and Hon. Director: GERTRUDE JOHNSON.
has pleasure in presenting



Shivaram... Dancer



FIRST INDIAN
ARTIST TO VISIT
AUSTRALIA

Under Patronage :
Sir Raghunath Paranjpye,
Indian High Commissioner
in Australia.

At the
**NATIONAL
THEATRE**
EASTERN HILL
Opposite
St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Mon., April 28, to Sat., May 3, 1947

By arrangement with Miss Louise Lightfoot (Sydney choreographer, who has recently returned from studies of the dance in India), Mr. Shivaram, famous and much-travelled Hindu dancer, will give recitals with a supporting group of fifteen dancers.

This season of Indian ballet will be a unique event of the greatest cultural and international importance. Its educational value cannot be overestimated, for we Australians know almost nothing of our near neighbour India.

Mr. Shivaram's performances are a rare opportunity for those who cannot visit India to see some of the treasures hidden in remote villages of that country; exquisite hand-worked costumes and ornaments of ancient design, fantastic head-dresses, beautiful designs of coloured make-up, dance-technique based on laws two thousand years old, acting by means of a special face-technique and gesture-language, the like of which is not found in any other part of the world.

Mr. Shivaram spent his early youth as a temple-dancer performing the ancient Sanskrit dance-drama "Kathakali" in the temples and palaces of India. His theatrical performances, based on this ancient art, are a revelation to the West.

BOOKING will be at Allan's Booking Office, Collins Street, from **TUESDAY, 22-d APRIL.** **PRICES** are 7/6 — 5/- — 3/-

FIGURE 6 Promotional advertisement (May 1947). © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

Noted theater and ballet critic Geoffrey Hutton, writing in *The Argus* (May 3, 1947), took obvious pleasure in Shivaram's performance. He observed that Indian dancing was not just "a museum piece" for students of art

to appreciate, but rather that any ballet lover would find “rare excitement” in Shivaram’s “exquisite” performance.⁵²

The extensive notes, commentaries, explanations, and interpretation of the art of *Kathakali* that Lightfoot provided for the public were a “valuable aid.” Drawing on her own experience, she made the “fascinating grace, spectacular beauty and historical charm” all plainly understandable.⁵³ Amazed by the hard work and time-consuming makeup technique, the correspondent of the *Sun Women’s Magazine* (April 9, 1947) remarked that Shivaram had “brought most of the make-up components with him, and was preparing them in the ancient Indian style by grinding colored stones with a pestle, and mixing them with coconut oil.”⁵⁴

As the tour proceeded, Lightfoot and Shivaram simplified the makeup by using flower-based colors for regular performances.* They also divided the *Kathakali* dances into parts, so that they could be easily presented on the modern stage with live English commentary and original recordings of *Kathakali* music. This music, performed by orchestras from the temples of Kerala, incorporated the *manjira* (small cymbals); *chenda* (drum); *idakka* (hour-glass drum); and *shuddha madalam* (drum). In relation to Shivaram and Lightfoot’s bold experiments in *Kathakali*, Unnikrishnan observes that Shivaram concentrated on the *nritha* (dance) aspect rather than the elaborate costumes or makeup.⁵⁵ For his international recitals, as can be seen in *Peacock Dance*, Shivaram was interested in delivering character-based emotions using well-designed body movements, without the use of cumbersome costumes and makeup.

Many skeptics considered these experimental dance-dramas “unusual work for a classical ballet company.”⁵⁶ However, others perceived the groundbreaking direction of the work: the collaborators had incorporated *Kathakali* dance into what previously had been a predominately European art form. In other words, *Kathakali* acted as “an invaluable asset” to the development of an “international art language—ballet.”⁵⁷ Lightfoot and Shivaram’s experimentation in the fusion of practices East and West and in making a classical Indian form accessible to uninitiated audiences, in this case Australians, was an overwhelming success. A journalist from *The Western Australian* (January 12, 1950) lavished praise:

The eloquence of gesture (even if its symbolism was not always understood), the flow of movement, the sure but often unobtrusive rhythm, the gorgeous costuming and the perfection of physical control could be at once appreciated. In all that was done there was colour, poetry and

* The materials that comprise traditional *Kathakali* makeup are obtained from natural substances: *Chenchilyam* powder and coconut oil (basic facial); mix of rice flour and lime (white); vermilion or red earth (red); *Manayola* mineral (yellow); powdered mix of *Manayola* mineral and Sapphire (blue); and gingelly oil’s soot or *kajal* (black).

form. Memories crowd in of the expressiveness of silver-pointed fingers, the flash of the eyes, the movement of bell-adorned ankles, of silhouettes on the backcloth. Yet it was when the element of mime was at its highest that the fullest appreciation was possible, and particularly, at least in the case of those uninitiated in Indian idioms, when there was the spoken word to help . . . it was more easily possible to comprehend the brilliant characterisations—of joy, fear, contemplation.⁵⁸

Audiences and critics were bowled over by the eloquence, expressiveness, and range of characterization of Shivaram's *Katbakali* performances. After his first tour, wherever he went in Australia, Shivaram attracted attention from journalists and the public as a picturesque figure with shoulder-length hair—a “short, slightly built man with flowing black hair, dressed in his national costume of all white” (see Figure 7).⁵⁹

The critical consensus was that the audiences had viewed the ancient temple dances as if on a “magic carpet”⁶⁰ ride, and the public left amazed by Shivaram's exceptional “grace of movement, subtlety of facial expression and aesthetic sensitivity together with an amazing simplicity of style.”⁶¹ His muscular control and facial expressions astounded the public: “His eyes perform figures of eight in their sockets, revolve clockwise and anti-clockwise, and then one clockwise and the other anti-clockwise. Eyebrows, eyelashes, cheek and neck muscles all work overtime in the expression of mood, accompanying intricate gestures to an evolved rhythm.”⁶² But beyond his refined technique, his imagination and vivid metamorphoses engaged spectators. *Spotlight* magazine noted that in his performance Shivaram took his audiences into “the realms of fantasy”:

We are the hermit awakening from his trance; the ferocious tiger, savage-eyed with bared teeth; we feel the grandeur of the surrounding mountains; see the trees grow in rippling of his expressive arms; watch with his wondering eyes; the delicate beauty of his hands in the unfolding lotus bud. His outstanding charm lies in that mixture of masculine virility and serene inner spirituality.⁶³

Previously unseen in Australia and now introduced by an obvious master of the form, *Katbakali* was embraced by attentive and enthusiastic audiences. Further, Shivaram's graceful dance movements were made easier to understand by Lightfoot's well-researched background commentaries and translations of the dance-dramas provided as short summaries through press releases and brochures that covered important aesthetic aspects and cultural contexts of the Indian ballets. The audiences grasped the secrets of the gestural language and the intricacies of body movement and responded with standing ovations and unparalleled applause.

Soon Shivaram was appearing alongside already established “brightly dressed musical ensembles” and in revues, such as *Stars and Garters* at the



FIGURE 7 Ananda Shivaram performing eye exercises. © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

Majestic Theatre. In this revue he joined comic Jimmy Wallace and musician John O'Connor to perform his colorful and exotic *Peacock Dance* (see Figure 8).⁶⁴

But in spite of all the success in this journey there was a price to pay. Within the four walls of a theater and surrounded by friends and fans, Shivaram did not know that Australia, although a former colony of England, had its own racial prejudices toward Aborigines and Asians. On May 13, 1947, newspaper headlines read: “Dancer Refused Room; Slept in Theatre”⁶⁵ and “Shunned because of His Colour.”⁶⁶ It shocked the entire art world in Australia, including Lightfoot, who had not imagined such prejudice would exist against a visiting artist.⁶⁷ Several attempts to obtain a room for Shivaram by Lightfoot and others failed as the “hotel and boarding-house proprietors objected to having an Indian as a guest.”⁶⁸ The newspapers reported:



FIGURE 8 Ananda Shivaram in peacock plumage (May 1947). Photograph by John Tanner. © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

Miss Louise Lightfoot, who brought [Shivaram] to Australia, said hotel accommodation in Adelaide was booked out so she had arranged for him to have a room in a boarding house. The landlady was willing to let the room *until she discovered his nationality*. Then she cancelled the booking, Miss Lightfoot said. Yesterday Shivaram still had nowhere to stay. Miss Lightfoot said she had found a lot of prejudice against India in Australia. She hoped Shivaram's demonstration of Indian art would be an education to Australians (emphasis added).⁶⁹

Playing down the racial element of the incident and attributing it to a mere cultural misunderstanding caused by a promotional image, Lightfoot clarified the Adelaide incident in her talk titled "A Few Stories of Shivaram by His Australian Impresario" (Figure 9):

Shivaram's first photographer, on hearing that he came from India, immediately requested "some savage expression." Shivaram showed the "Man-lion" face. The photo turned out to be really wonderful. We took it on to Adelaide, the next capital city. There we had great trouble in finding a hotel which would accept a "coloured" man; but towards the

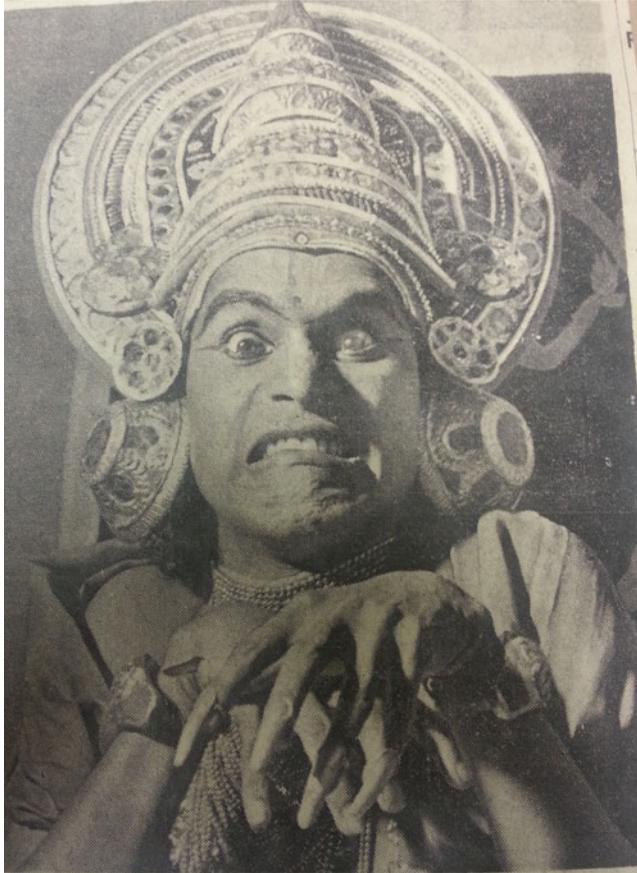


FIGURE 9 Ananda Shivaram as “Man-lion” (March 1947). © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

evening we found one. Next morning the hotel owner’s wife came to me breathless. “He’ll have to go! Look!” She showed the morning newspaper with the “Man-lion” picture. “Might frighten my children!” she said. Shivaram slept in the theatre foyer that night. The theatre manager passed the story to the Press. A “Whip-Cracker” artist from a vaudeville show in the same city offered Shivaram his room which he happened to be vacating; and the old widow there took a great fancy to Shivaram and came to see his show.⁷⁰

Frank J. Martin, manager of the Tivoli Circuit, remarked in his press briefing that, as an international artist, Shivaram was a cultural citizen of the world, and the “fact that an artist had a dark skin should not deprive him of amenities of civilisation.”⁷¹ When the people of Adelaide heard about

the incident and read appeals in the newspapers, “more than 30 people rang the Majestic Theatre” and offered accommodation to Shivaram in their homes. Lightfoot soon made arrangements for him at the home of Mrs. K. C. Teolar, an admirer of Shivaram.⁷² *The Canberra Times* followed this news and updated its readers: “Shivaram is now staying with a private family.”⁷³

On the other hand, the victim of this racial prejudice also dismissed his “predicament with a smile and a shrug.”⁷⁴ Shivaram, who felt “enchanted” to be in Australia and liked its weather, food, and people, did not want to carry on any grudges. His first impression of Australia and its people (especially women) were recorded by the *Sun Women’s Magazine* in an exclusive interview: “Australian people are very friendly” but “women carry themselves badly.”⁷⁵ Shivaram, who himself walked with “the lithe grace of a panther” noticed that Australian girls “are a little stiff, a little as if they are a machine wound to make them go.”⁷⁶

Shivaram was a guest of honor at many social gatherings. He gave lectures, demonstrations, radio talks, and press interviews, and trained school children and young ballet artists interested in *Kathakali*. On his second tour of Australia in 1949, his wife, danseuse Janaki Devi, also performed.⁷⁷ Shivaram thanked the audiences and “spoke earnestly of friendship between the peoples of India and Australia.”⁷⁸ Leaving behind the racist incident that happened in Adelaide, he looked forward to a bright future: “My colour seems to have made no difference to the people here who are interested in the universal art of dancing.”⁷⁹ For the Indian press, Shivaram’s successful tour, the well wishes of his Australian friends and costars, and the great ovations of “the White Australian” public forged, in themselves, “a momentous occasion” in history and the bilateral relations between the two countries, as they “seemed to have removed the stain of race prejudice from the Australian minds, at least during the one year he spent with them.”⁸⁰

In February 1948, Shivaram was booked to perform at the Repertory Theatre in Perth. The excitement can be gauged by the news report advertising his arrival:

Shivaram is coming to Perth. In Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, the exotic dancer has captured the imagination of hundreds of theatre-goers. When negotiations to bring him to Perth fell through it seemed that once again we were cut off from a great artist by that expensive barrier, the Nullarbor Plain. Enterprise, enthusiasm and hard work on the part of a few people have now assured that Shivaram will dance at the Repertory Theatre on February 14 and 16.⁸¹

Australian connoisseurs of ballet were “profoundly interested” and “pleasantly impressed” with Shivaram’s “original demonstrations.”⁸² Comparing the dance style of Shivaram with that of the American modern dancer Ted Shawn, Seymour wrote in *The Mail*:

Perhaps the most marvellous thing in Shivaram's dancing is his virility, which makes such a deep impression despite the fact that much of the Indian dancing is restrained, subtle, and extremely sensitive. . . . [M]ale dancing is not the insipid, effeminate thing it has sometimes been thought, but . . . it unleashes before us a power and vitality completely masculine and astonishingly thrilling.⁸³

Another example of Shivaram's success can be found in the Adult Education Board's 22nd Summer School held at the University of Western Australia in Perth (January 6–17, 1950). With its theme "The Australian Way of Life," this school program offered a line of star educators and orators as visiting tutors. But, in all the glitter of top academics and professional speakers, it turned out that Shivaram and Janaki Devi, who participated mainly in evening entertainments and recreational activities, became the chief attraction for Perth audiences and participants, with the summer school recording more than 350 enrollments that year.⁸⁴ Watched by large crowds at Winthrop Hall, their lectures and performances were thought by many admirers and art lovers to foster "cultural relations between India and the Commonwealth."⁸⁵

An additional feather in Shivaram's cap was his performances in Tasmania (at Hobart, Launceston, and Devonport) organized by the Adult Education Board. *Minerva* reported in *The Mercury* (March 31, 1950) the excitement among the theatergoers:

Tasmania has been overlooked many times in the itinerary of famous dancers on tour in Australia, and it is hoped that full support will be accorded to the recitals to be given at the Playhouse, Hobart on Wednesday and Thursday next, by the world-renowned Indian dancer.⁸⁶

The Advocate (April 19, 1950) called his Tasmanian tour an "outstanding success," which "proved that the Tasmanian public is interested in more such cultural programmes" and exchanges between India and Australia.⁸⁷ At one point a teenage variety dancer, having a free view of Shivaram's *Kamadeva* (Love God) from backstage, turned to Lightfoot and exclaimed: "Oh Gawd! I could go on watchin' 'im forever!"⁸⁸ To many Australian journalists, Shivaram came across as a good-natured Indian with a great sense of humor, particularly in his habit of taking English-language idioms literally. During Shivaram's visit to South Australia, Walter Desborough, one of the pioneers of ballet in Australia, invited him to lecture and demonstrate to his students. *The Mail* (May 31, 1947) reported in "Round Town" Shivaram's exchanges with Desborough and his pupils:

"May I take your coat," said Desborough when the Indian called. "Certainly," said Shivaram bewildered, "but it may be too small."⁸⁹

And,

“How do you like your tea?”

“Very much, indeed,” said Shivaram.⁹⁰

Much later, Shivaram acknowledged to a journalist of the *Sunday Times* (January 8, 1950) in Perth: “I speak your English very bad.”⁹¹ But the language barrier did not diminish Shivaram’s popularity in Australia. In his column “Out among the People” in *The Advertiser* (June 11, 1947), Vox called Shivaram a “planet” surrounded by fans and well-wishers, after the cashier of a well-known city restaurant where Shivaram was dining predicted to her friends that the race horse named “Star of India” would win the next day at the races—and it did.⁹² Shivaram, the “star of India” and a winner in another realm, enjoyed constant attention from an excited public. Some Australian dance teachers and keen students of Indian philosophy and dance, like Mrs. Minnie Salar, Mrs. Wilfred Thomas, and Mrs. K. C. Teolar, even followed Shivaram throughout his recitals in every state in Australia. Thousands of people came to see his performances and critics noted key reasons for the success of Shivaram’s tour: “the simplicity, emotional intensity, grace and strength of this superb artist.”⁹³

To the Australian public, Shivaram appeared to be a young, successful, and ever-smiling Indian folkloric hero, followed by “the usual bevy of women who sighed rapturously every time the dancer lifted his little finger and exclaimed loudly at his merest wriggle in the hope that they would be mistaken for experts. ‘What grace.’ ‘What fluidity of movement.’ And so on.”⁹⁴ But hiding behind Shivaram’s laughter and beautiful smile was a painful truth that he told to the *Australian Women’s Weekly* (April 15, 1950).⁹⁵ Although he belonged to a family of temple dancers, born and bred in the tradition, and knew of “no other life” than dancing, even he had to painfully convince his mother and her relatives that he wanted dancing as his occupation.⁹⁶ Shivaram’s father, Gopala Panikker, a noted *Kathakali* dancer himself, had been a failure as breadwinner for the family and ultimately had to turn to working on the farm or paddy fields of the local landlord to support his family. Now a huge international success and a major economic contributor toward his household, Shivaram felt grateful to Lightfoot for saving him from a future in which “he would be suffering scolding from his mother, and uncles, and aunts for idling his time away as a five-rupees-a-week temple dancer, after he had completed his twelve years’ grueling course as a *Kathakali* dancer.”⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

During her time as a student of Kalamandalam, Lightfoot organized tours within India and Ceylon for Shivaram (1939, South India; 1943 and 1944, Ceylon); Ascka (1940, Bombay); Ramgopal (1940, Bangalore); Sreenivas

Kulkarni's troupe (1943, Ceylon); and Neena Maya (1946, Calcutta). As Lightfoot's friendship and respect for Shivaram's work grew, she focused particularly on arranging performances for Shivaram and Janaki Devi (1947, Australia; 1948, London and Fiji; 1949, Australia and New Zealand; 1952, Japan; 1953, Canada; 1954, 1955, and 1960–1963, U.S.; 1957, Australia and Indonesia; 1959 and 1963–1967, Canada; 1974, Australia). During the 1950s, when Shivaram was teaching at dance centers in the U.S. and Canada, Lightfoot went on a holiday-cum-research trip to Manipur, a northeastern state of India. Here, she researched various forms of Manipuri dance and organized international tours for Priyagopal Singh and Lakshman Singh (1951, Australia; 1952, Japan; 1953, Canada) and Ibetombi Devi (1957, Australia and Indonesia).⁹⁸ Apart from bringing the first Indian dancer to Australia, Lightfoot worked with filmmaker K. Subramanyam at Madras (Chennai) and published her perspective pieces on Indian dance, arts, culture, women, and nature in the Indian and Australian press.⁹⁹ In recognition of her work in the field of *Kathakali*, Shivaram's mentor and the founder of Kerala Kalamandalam, Vallathol bestowed upon Lightfoot the fond title of "Australian mother of *Kathakali*." Before her death in 1979 (in Melbourne), Lightfoot donated boxes filled with her writings, books, notes on music and dance compositions, audio material, and press clippings of her tours with Indian artists to the Music Archives at Monash University. In 1997, using some of the material from the Music Archives, renowned Indian Australian dancer and choreographer Tara Rajkumar created a dance plus "dialogic performance" called *Temple Dreaming* to revive the memory of Louise Lightfoot and her passion for *Kathakali*.¹⁰⁰

Along with co-dancer Janaki Devi and manager Louise Lightfoot, and supported by an ensemble of Australian dancers (including Ruth Bergner, Moya Beaver, Leona Welch, Pat Martin, and Betty Russell), Shivaram successfully toured and promoted a range of Indian classical dance forms (such as *Kathakali*, *Manipuri*, *Bharata Natyam*, *Kathak*, *Kuchipudi*, *Odissi*, *Chhau*, and *Mohiniyattam*) throughout India, Ceylon, Australia, England, New Zealand, Fiji, Japan, the United States, and Canada. His Australian tours were made possible by the generous official assistance of state funding bodies, such as the Arts Council of Australia, the Adult Education Board (in Western Australia and in Tasmania), and the Council of Adult Education (in Victoria). In his 1947–1949 tour, Shivaram performed at prestigious theaters, such as the National Theatre in Melbourne, the Majestic Theatre in Adelaide, and the Repertory Theatre in Perth. He mesmerized and enchanted his Australian audiences with awe-inspiring performances of *Runga Pooja*, *Kamadeva*, *The Hermit*, *Forest Scene*, *Ras Leela*, *Peacock Dance*, *Indra Vijayam*, and *King Rugmangadan* (see Figure 10).*

* *Runga Pooja*, a sacred dance in praise of the presiding deity of the stage, offered salutations to the audiences. *Kamadeva* was a cupid dance about Lord Shiva and Parvathi's



FIGURE 10 Ananda Shivaram in *Ras Leela*. Photograph by Neil Murray. © Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Reproduced by the permission of Mary Lightfoot and the Music Archive of Monash University, Melbourne. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholders.

In the 1960s, Shivaram settled down in the U.S. and started a dance school in partnership with Lightfoot to promote *Kathakali* through lecture-demonstrations in American and Canadian universities and galleries. Further, to keep his global dance connections active in Kerala, Shivaram also started an institution dedicated to classical dances called the See India Foundation in Cochin (Kerala); it also housed the first daily tourist theater for *Kathakali*. According to P. K. Devan, Shivaram's youngest brother and director of the Foundation: "the institute leads the visitors through *Kathakali*

love. *The Hermit* told the story of the great Indian sage and writer Kalidasa. *Ras Leela* expressed the legendary love story of Lord Krishna and his beloved Radha. *Peacock Dance* portrayed the peacock's joy in seeing the approaching monsoon. *Indra Vijayam* was a dance about Lord Indra, god of heavens, and his fight over mighty mountains. *King Rugmangadan* told the story of a king's triumph over temptations sent to test his devotion by the Lord Vishnu.

to the ever-updated ethos of Indian concepts of spirituality and philosophy” that Shivaram strived to propagate.¹⁰¹ Decades of hard work and dedication to *Kathakali* earned Shivaram the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Fellowship and a visiting professorship at University of San Francisco. In June 1957, Shivaram performed with *Manipuri* dancer Ibetombi Devi at the newly opened Anzac House in Australia and returned in 1974 to give his final performance at Monash University with Malaysian-born Australian dancer Chandrabhanu and Australian modern dancer Ruth Bergner. At the age of eighty-six, on November 7, 2001, this daring experimenter, whose subtle expression of emotions spellbound millions, left for his eternal abode in his village, Ezhikkara, near Cochin.

In 1949, after his successful first Australian tour, the *Indian Express* had hailed him as the true “cultural ambassador” of India in Australia.¹⁰² Shivaram interacted with both Australian artists and the common people to promote knowledge of his art and to bring Indian and Australian cultures and worlds closer together. His performances also resulted in a period of vitality in the Australian dance scene stemming from exposure to Indian dance forms. Shivaram became a popular personality and made a profound impression on many, achieving intercultural success that even Louise Lightfoot did not imagine or expect to accomplish through her presentations of *Kathakali*.¹⁰³ He taught *Kathakali* and the art of experimental fusion (of Eastern and Western dance forms) to young Australian students and ballet dancers. His tours, lectures, and demonstrations of Indian dance held “great cultural significance,” as they “enhanced the respect of Whites of Australia for the intellectual heritage of India.”¹⁰⁴ While Shivaram’s experimental presentations of *Kathakali* received applause and rave reviews in the West, Unnikrishnan observes that Indian and South Asian audiences often objected that, in his modern interpretations, he had sacrificed the classical Indian tradition.¹⁰⁵ As an artist, Shivaram remained true to his art and vision in making *Kathakali* accessible to wider audiences both in the East and in the West; in this, he was ahead of his times. Moreover, his unique experimentation left a stylistic mark on many ballet artists and choreographers in Australia, such as Walter Desborough (*Indian Harvest Dance*, 1949) and Anita Ardell (*Indo-Jazz Suite*, 1967), who followed his work closely for inspiration.

In conclusion, building on the project that Vallathol started in the 1920s, Shivaram succeeded in promoting *Kathakali* at both a national and an international level by gaining recognition for himself as a global cultural citizen and for *Kathakali* as a classical art among “the world’s great classical arts.”¹⁰⁶ According to Guru Rao Bapat, an eminent scholar of Indian classical dance, “These efforts that began in pre-independent India can be seen as part of the effort of projecting a national tradition in opposition to the colonial discourse.”¹⁰⁷ As an early image-maker in both pre- and post-independent India, Shivaram further paved the way for other dancers and dance troupes, including Janaki Devi, Rajkumar Priyagopal Singh,

Lakshman Singh, Ibetombi Devi, Tilakavati, Indrani, Bhaskar, Chitrasena Ballet, Song and Dance Theatre, Kerala Kalamandalam, Balagopalan, Masked Dancers of Bengal, V. Gayatri, Krishnaveni Lakshmanan, Yamini Krishnamurti, Vyajayanthimala, Daksha Sheth, Jyotikana Ray, Mallika Sarabhai, Sonal Mansingh, Birju Maharaj, and Sanjukta Panigrahi.¹⁰⁸ These and many more have come to participate in various dance and cultural festivals organized throughout Australia over the years.

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NOTES

1. For a discussion of the development of Indian dance forms, see Mandakranta Bose, "The Evolution of Classical Indian Dance Literature: A History of Sanskritic Tradition" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1989).
2. For a detailed history of *Katbakali*, see Guru Rao Bapat, *Re-scribing Tradition: Modernisation of South Indian Dance Drama* (Shimla: IAS, 2012), 55–82.
3. See Phillip Zarrilli, *Katbakali Dance Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play* (London: Routledge, 2000), 39.
4. Chitra Panikkar, "Patrons, Troupes, and Performers," in *Katbakali: The Art of the Non-worldly*, eds. D. Appukkuttan Nair and K. Ayyappa Paniker, special issue of *Marg: A Magazine of the Arts*, vol. 44, no. 4 (1993): 38.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.* See also Zarrilli, *Katbakali Dance Drama*, 29; Bapat, *Re-scribing Tradition*, 64.
7. See Purnima Shah, "State Patronage in India: Appropriation of the 'Regional' and 'National'," *Dance Chronicle*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2002): 126, 130.
8. See Bapat, *Re-scribing Tradition*, 55.
9. Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Davesh Soneji, eds., *Performing Pasts: Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1–3.
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