

SUMMER/FALL 2014

100
AMANI

ALUMNI Society NEWSLETTER

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ALUMNI

Society

NEWSLETTER

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AMAN-AMAN-BO-BAMAN, BANANA FANNA FO FAMAN...

What's in a Name?

The AMAN Alumni Committee has come into existence every 25 years or so to produce major reunions for the AMAN alumni (AMAN 25th and AMAN50 both). The reunions are always a lot of fun, and a great walk down memory lane. At AMAN50 there was such a strong emotional connection to each other and the AMAN name with its amazing artistic history, the committee decided to stay together, keeping the connection going and rebranding our name into something with a longer shelf life.

What we came up with was the **"AMAN Alumni Society"** ("AMAN Society" for short), an all-volunteer organization. In a natural progression of the association with Mendocino Folklore Camp, we have now become part of their **CMAI** (California Multicultural Arts Institute) non-profit family. Check out our snazzy new logo on this newsletter, and our web site at www.amansociety.com

What all this means is that the committee has widened our net with this name change. In addition to the reunion parties every couple of years, we can now possibly take on other future projects as well. Some of the brainstorming ideas have been to revitalize the old "AMAN Scholarship" program for

folk research abroad, which could be funded on solicited corporate funds and alumni donations. Perhaps we could create new AMAN Scholarships for young people to attend folk dance & music workshops, festivals and camps throughout the U.S. each year. How about creating a branch of AMAN educators to continue our tradition of teaching folk dance & music to kids in the schools through in-service workshops? This one

actually still continues today with a small number of alumni through the music center and other organizations. Might we formalize it more through the society? Anyway, as you can see, we've got some ideas and could use more people to become involved. If interested, or if you would like more information, see any of the committee members at the upcoming AMAN100 reunion. Or email us at inquire@amansociety.com





AMAN100 (wink-wink)

Another Reunion Celebration is just 4 weeks away!

Saturday, November 8th, 2014

Santa Monica Bay Women's Club • 1210 Fourth Street, Santa Monica, CA

~ REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN ~

www.amansociety.com/aman100-registration.html — Visit Us Today

A little history please...

The idea to have another AMAN reunion party, and to “keep the connection going”, came in October 2013, before we’d even ended our 50th Anniversary Celebration weekend. Fellow alum (and instigator) Gwoon Tom :-)) planted that seed of an idea among the crowd, saying we should call it “AMAN 100” (I mean why wait, right?) and the enthusiasm for it grew like wildfire!

Fast-forward to November 2014, and thanks to our incredible AMAN Alumni Committee, we are once again gathering to schmooze, drink, eat, dance, sing and party at the one-day “AMAN100” reunion event in Santa Monica. Keeping our joyous connection going with fellow AMANites, friends, family and the greater LA folk community. Hope you can join us for this special day of reconnecting. Opa!

—The Aman Alumni Committee



The Venue...





AMAN100 (wink-Wink) Reunion Celebration

Saturday, November 8th, 2014

Santa Monica Bay Women's Club - 1210 Fourth Street, Santa Monica, CA

FULL EVENT PACKAGE - \$65 (all inclusive as below + Souvenir 'AMAN100 Songbook')

EVENING PARTY PKG - \$30 (includes sing-along, party w/live music & dessert bar)

Register today at: www.amansociety.com/aman100-registration.html



AFTERNOON WORKSHOP CLASSES (doors open @1pm)

Workshop 1 - AMAN Institute Dance Favorites, *Three short sessions with past institute teachers; Carol Akawie & David Schochat (MACEDONIAN), Robyn Friend & Neil Siegel (MIDDLE EASTERN) and Dick Oakes (BALKAN/INTERNATIONAL).*

Workshop 2 - 'AMAN100 SONGBOOK' Sing-Along (begins @3pm)

From our new souvenir songbook, replete with 100 songs performed by AMAN.

Workshop 3 - Special Aman REHEARSAL - It's a mystery.. what NEW SUITE will we be learning? Where is it from? Who's teaching? Gotta come to find out, but it will be fun, flirty and fast-paced! This is NOT TO BE MISSED!!



HAPPY HOUR and Schmooze-Fest (begins @6pm) (no-host bar)

'Rueda de Casino' - Havana Nights Salsa & Sizzle!

Think Salsa Club (fruit headdress optional.. this is an Aman party after all). Men with 'Guayabera' button-down shirts, jeans or slacks, Fedora or straw hat. Ladies in brightly colored strappy dresses w/full skirts, cami and skinny jeans, sleeveless tops and dresses. Comfortable, tropical!



BUFFET DINNER

Continuing with our theme, CUBAN food! Experience a taste of Cuban cuisine: juicy, delicious, and exceptionally flavorful without being spicy! Vegetarian options are available.



TAMBURICA SING-ALONG (doors open @8:15pm)

..with the band, ending with LADARKE! Special guest musicians John and Gregory Yeseta.



FOLK DANCE PARTY with LIVE MUSIC (9pm - 1am)

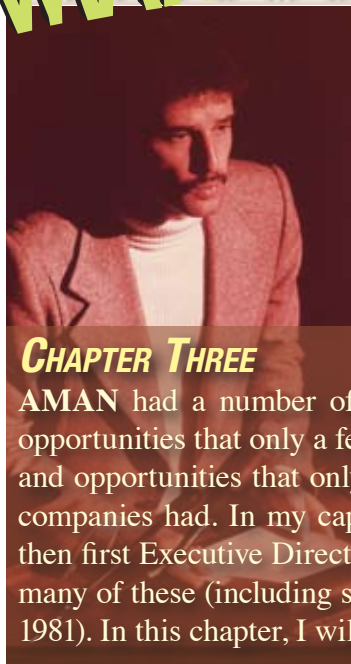
Multiple Bands! with AMAN alumni musicians & friends plus special guest band **The MEHANATONES!** Join us for an incredible night of Balkan/International dancing... with a twist of AMAN fun!



Late night..

DESSERT and COFFEE BAR

Brought to you by the AMAN Alumni Committee :)



Michael Alexander's History with AMAN

Written in October, 2013 for the Dance History Project chronicling the activities of concert dance in Southern California

CHAPTER THREE

AMAN had a number of unique opportunities in its forty-year life—opportunities that only a few Los Angeles music or dance companies had and opportunities that only a few US-based traditional music and dance companies had. In my capacity as AMAN's first General Manager and then first Executive Director, I was privileged to play a significant role in many of these (including some that took place after I left the company in 1981). In this chapter, I will cover a few of them.

KCET

After AMAN's 1977 Music Center performance, Ronda Berkeley informed me that a family friend, Loring D'Usseau, a senior producer at KCET, was interested in producing a one-hour special about AMAN. Even now, some 36 years later, there are very few opportunities for local, mid-size performing arts companies to get the exposure that comes with a television special on public or commercial stations. We could certainly consider this a big break for the Company and it came at a most auspicious time—just as we were embarking on a major campaign to build deeper and broader community support.

I contacted a friend of mine, Scott Garen (who along with me became the associate producers of the special) to talk about what this opportunity could mean from a TV production perspective. Scott was

a CalArts film program graduate and had recently returned from the East Coast where he had worked in public television as a director and producer.

He told me we had to make a critical decision about the nature of the program. He pointed out that we would be creating a product that would be viewed on a small two dimensional screen (remember this is well before giant flat televisions became ubiquitous in households throughout the economic spectrum). We could invite KCET to tape a live performance with an audience in one of the suitable auditoriums in the area or we could go into the KCET studios and produce a product just for television. The latter seemed much more appealing to me. Why create a documentary of a live performance when we could take advantage of the medium and create a unique product for television? Scott and I shared

this information with the Artistic Directors Anthony (Tony) Shay and Leona Wood, and, as best as I can recall, there was no disagreement that we would have more control and a better product by going into the studio to make the special.

By working this way, we could have cameras in the midst of the dancers and offer the television viewers more vantage points than would be possible by positioning a number of cameras in the audience areas of a theater. It also meant we could start and stop the taping and take advantage of re-takes and repositioning the cameras. One thing that would be very different from our norm was that the musicians would have to go into a recording studio to pre-record all the music for the selected works and then “mime” playing during the videotaping.

KCET selected one of its top directors to work with Tony and Leona on arranging their works for the special. He also found out what the critical choreographic elements were in each of the works selected for the special and discussed camera angles, close-ups versus long-shots, a few overhead shots, decor (interesting set pieces were created that were installed against the sound stage's cyclorama, and each piece

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>>> had its own lighting design) and other issues to ensure a great and effective production. A few of the numbers had to be shortened in order to fit all the selected works into the limited time (with time for the narration, some footage of both artistic directors rehearsing works and the credits, we had about 50 minutes to fill with repertoire).

Over a week's time, various company members came to KCET's

rooms. (San Francisco Ballet was the most notable exception to that.) Unfortunately, this special never went national.

One of the by-products of the developing Women's Council and the recent Music Center performance was the introduction of the company to Marge Champion (for those too young to remember, she was half the team of Marge and Gower Champion who gained

AFTRA, the union representing KCET's on-air talent. If I recall correctly, the performers got minimum union scale, but did not have to join AFTRA because of the Taft-Hartley law that allows people to work in unionized "shops" for the first 30 days of employment without joining the union. Any subsequent television work in any unionized "shop" represented by AFTRA would have obligated the performers to join that union.

The production was covered by union regulations though. KCET had the right to broadcast it a specific number of times the week it was first shown and after a certain number of showings in three years, it would never be able to be shown again without major residual payments to all the labor which included the cameramen, the lead and assistant directors and the performers. No one was coming up with the kind of money needed to give this special a second life.

We got a few archive copies for our own purposes, but AMAN was restricted to never show it publicly. It was a grand and prestigious experience and introduced AMAN to a wider Los Angeles audience than had ever known it before. I am sure that all involved were very pleased with the final product, as we quite successfully translated what worked on the concert stage to the small box without sacrificing the artistry or integrity of what AMAN was all about. It won a local Emmy and considerable renown in the local arts community. >>>



Sunset Boulevard Studios to record the program. This was a big venture for the station and it certainly was a golden opportunity for AMAN. The station had a very limited history of covering the local arts community—it still does. Though produced for local television, there was talk of offering it to Great Performances—the PBS series that brought mostly New York City companies into America's living

major national fame as a dance team during the heyday of film and television musicals), and she agreed to be the host of the special. She introduced each of the works and, while footage of Leona and Tony rehearsing their dancers was being shown, gave background information about the Company.

At the time, there were few, if any, union artists in the company—certainly none affiliated with

>>> ALASKA TOUR #1

As a regular attendee at the annual Alliance of West Coast Colleges for Cultural Presentations (AWCCP: See Chapter 1 for some background on our involvement there), I befriended a number of presenters and public arts officials who would have an impact on the touring that AMAN would undertake. One of these was Ira Perman, the head of the Alaska State Arts Council. Alaska's Arts Council was one of the richest in the nation during the early years of the Prudhoe Bay oil boom. Because of the low population density, the Council took a leadership role in bringing performing artists to the state. Only by arranging performances in a number of the cities could a cost effective tour take place that would include more than the State's two major cities—Anchorage and Fairbanks.

Ira decided that he wanted to bring AMAN to Alaska and

coordinate with presenters in the two biggest cities to present the full company. But budgets being tight, he asked about having a reduced ensemble go to some of Alaska's smaller cities. We decided to bring the full company up for the beginning of the tour—about seven days—and keep a smaller contingent of 18 for the final leg—seven more days.

This was the first opportunity for the company to go to a locale where there was still a sizeable population practicing traditional music and dance of their own. I talked to Ira about arranging opportunities for the company to meet with artists from the indigenous Aleut and Inupiat populations so we could learn about their dances and music. I thought it would be important to document these encounters as well and talked with our Development Director Evelyn Hoffman (see Chapter 2) about securing special funding so we could take a videographer with us.

Evelyn Hoffman and I talked about approaching ARCO—at the time, the arts' most important Los Angeles-based corporate funder—for that support. We set a meeting with the ARCO Foundation President, Walter Eichner, who listened to our proposal and then said he needed some time to see what ARCO could do. We went in hoping to secure about \$3,000. We ultimately got over \$100,000 worth of support for the tour including a special flight for a contingent of 14 of us to ARCO's Prudhoe Bay facility where we presented two performances. ARCO also provided their Twin Otter aircraft to bring the company to two Inupiat villages, Nuiqsut and Kaktovik where we performed in their high schools.

It should be noted that these were not typical high schools by "lower 48" standards. These Inupiat villages sat on top of the oil that ARCO was pulling out of the ground. The high school

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>>> in Kaktovik had a brand new \$10 million gym where we performed—and \$10 million went a lot farther in the late 70s than it does today. A class of high school students had just returned home from a field trip—to San Francisco! In Nuiqsut, in spite of the oil wealth-supported performance venue, the town's one telephone for calling outside the village was in a shed near the school, and people lined up to place calls to the rest of the world.

But let's go back a bit. It appears that ARCO was having some difficulties with the Eskimos over how much to pay for the oil. There were active lawsuits pending at the time of our trip. ARCO wanted to demonstrate that it was a good corporate citizen by supporting this cultural offering to the villagers.

There were other tensions as well. For example, the pilot of the Twin Otter aircraft that transported us to the villages from Prudhoe Bay complained that though ARCO had employed some of the Eskimo men to work at their Prudhoe Bay facility, when the caribou were "running" the men would avoid work to go hunting. "I'd like to go hunting whenever I like it, too" grumbled the pilot. I don't think he realized that hunting caribou for the Eskimos was not recreation but survival. They had no idea how long this "oil" fad and the jobs that came with it would last so they had to maintain their skills as caribou hunters to be ready for a time when they could no longer rely on a cash economy for community survival.



Shortly after we talked to Mr. Eichner, he contacted us about extending our projected two week tour in Alaska to a longer visit with major ARCO support. ARCO would contribute funds to support our fee, some local transportation, accommodations and meals, and some production costs. They wanted us to perform for the crews still working at Prudhoe Bay (ARCO's crews by this time were no longer digging the wells or working on the pipeline but instead were managing the oil recovery processes) and for the two Inupiat villages previously mentioned. We rounded out the tour by including four mid-size (by Alaska standards) cities—Homer, Nome, Barrow and the capital, Juneau.

They also wanted to brand the tour "the ARCO-AMAN tour of

Alaska". I was flown up to Alaska about 10 weeks prior to the tour to discuss marketing and overall promotion. Our tour was just a few years after the devastating Anchorage earthquake and one could still see evidence of the quake in many parts of the city. I saw a "new" cliff where the land had risen over six feet adjacent to a parking lot.

In April 1981 the company flew off to Alaska via Seattle. We were flying a short time (geologically speaking) after the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Washington State and the Alaska Air pilot graciously flew over the volcano so we could all view the still smoking caldera. Quite a sight!!

Our first stop was Fairbanks where the full company was to perform. I remember having to

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>>> return to the airport our first evening in town to pick up some of the instruments that we could not fit onto the bus that picked us up at the airport. That trip gave me my first opportunity to see the Northern Lights. While I expected the “sheet” lights as shown in most photographs about them, what we got was a giant green cloud-like blob undulating in the sky above us. It was quite impressive but only visible outside the areas where urban lights obscured them.

Our first week included highly successful performances in both Fairbanks and Anchorage, along with a few school-based activities. This was also the Company’s first opportunity to meet local Aleuts who demonstrated some of their dances for us. The dancers were young and old, men and women with the youngest looking like they were still in high school. Much of the drum-accompanied dance that we saw was based on

the movements of animals native to Alaska and the hunts to capture those animals (sometimes from the animal’s point of view). One interesting thing that I remembered was the ritual of putting on thick gloves before each dance. It seemed that the tradition was not to dance without gloves on.

At the end of that week, we split the company in two, with half going to the ARCO facility above the Arctic Circle and the other half to Homer. I went with the Prudhoe Bay contingent. Barry Glass (by now, the Co-Artistic Director of the Company with Leona Wood) led the Homer contingent, partly, I think, because he wanted to return to a site where he had spent time years before.

We landed at Prudhoe Bay where the wind-chill factor read negative forty degrees. We were advised not to breathe too vigorously through our teeth for fear of cracking them from the cold

(was that an “old-wives’ tale??”—I wasn’t sure). ARCO provided us with fur-lined parkas that we held onto until our departure from this site on the Arctic Ocean.

We settled into rooms at the ARCO facility and got introduced to the cafeteria. ARCO basically had food available 24/7 so their employees, who worked 12 hour on and 12 hour off shifts, could eat whenever they wanted and needed to. ARCO was still planning menus based on the requirement to consume close to 5,000 calories a day to cope with the harsh conditions outdoors and strenuous physical labor. One of AMAN’s instrumental musicians, Jerry Robin, took full advantage of this largess and loaded his plate very generously every time we visited the cafeteria. Fortunately for him, his metabolism was high and he never showed the signs of overeating as some of the more-desk-bound ARCO employees were now evidencing.

Fred Allen, our Production Manager, and I shared a room in the ARCO dorms. I remember Fred jumping out of bed at 3:00 AM to close the shutters on our windows. Being on the summer side of the equinox and so far north, we were treated to the sun rising *very* early in the morning (it also went down >>>



>>> very late in the evening).

On Day One of our Prudhoe Bay visit we performed two 60-minute shows for the ARCO employees—one for each shift. On Days Two and Three we went to Nuksit and Kaktovik. It took two flights to move us because the plane only had 12 seats and there were 14 of us plus instruments and costumes. Fred and I were on the first flights both times so that we could start preparing the venue for our performance.

As mentioned earlier, these high schools had incredible gyms—gyms complete with indoor swimming pools that would be the envy of the finest private schools in the lower 48. We also had opportunities to talk with the locals while waiting for the balance of the performers to join us. In Kaktovik we heard about the polar bear that had been rummaging through garbage near the homes the night before our arrival. He was shot and butchered with the meat left in numerous boxes in people's yards to fast-freeze for ultimate transport to family members living farther to the south and otherwise unable to procure bear meat. On our drive between the airport and the village we saw a whale skeleton on the beach as evidence of a successful hunt the year before.

We talked to a high-school girl about what types of meat she enjoyed. She liked polar bear and caribou but ukmuk—the whale blubber delicacy—was her favorite. I did not get to try any (lucky me!!),

but some of the company that stayed for the full three weeks had a chance in Barrow—the northern-most community in the United States.

Following our separate journeys to Homer and Prudhoe Bay (we'll have to rely on colleagues who visited Homer and who stayed the full three weeks for more specifics) we reunited in Anchorage where I led the unit only there for 10 days back to Los Angeles. Our intrepid colleagues who stayed for the full three weeks had some incredible experiences particularly in Nome and Barrow—two cities that, at the time, were not used to hosting large ensembles of performers.

The tour was clearly a success in the eyes of our ARCO sponsors, the State Arts Council, the communities we visited and the company. I left AMAN in 1981 but not before starting talks about bringing the company back for a

second tour of the state. It was an experience all involved appreciated, AMAN's longest tour to date and a harbinger of other exciting touring yet to come for the company.

THE BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Hopes of getting to New York City with the sponsorship of one of that City's limited number of non-profit or college-based presenters were limited. By the late 70s it was clear that if we were going to "play" NYC, we might just have to self-produce our first performances there. By this time, Fred Allen was handling booking for the company and he started investigating a self-presentation concept at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, already known as the most prominent NYC performing venue outside of Manhattan.

We put together a budget for

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>>> bringing the company there for two performances that we would tie to a single date Fred had booked at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. We figured that this was an investment in AMAN's future and were preparing to earn about \$50,000 less than the costs of renting the venue, paying the union stage crew, covering the promotion and advertising and bringing the company east for just under a week.

Diane Miller's sizeable support



that year gave us the cushion to seriously consider taking this on.

We found one of the best free-lance publicists in NYC to coordinate our entire campaign including ad buys and pitches to the local print and electronic media. Among her accomplishments was securing coverage from John Rockwell, by that time a major performing arts critic for the New York Times. He had reviewed AMAN during his days at the Los Angeles Times and was favorably familiar with the company. She also hosted a press reception just days before the first concert. None of the major media showed up

but we did have writers from the Ladies Garment Worker's Union newspaper and a few others with equally limited circulation. Every bit helped.

Our advance ticket sales were abysmal. I was certain that we were going to take a beating at the box office. But, much to our pleasure and BAM's surprise, the folk dancers of New York who had been hearing about AMAN for the better part of a decade, came out in significant enough numbers to give us respectable audiences for each of the two shows.

I sat in the balcony looking down on the audience and the stage during the first show. In the middle of the Scottish number performed by Co-Artistic Director Barry Glass and Linda DeNike, I saw Barry do something strange. He stopped dancing and hobbled off stage. I ran back-stage to find out that he had popped his Achilles tendon—he would not be able to return to the stage for months.

While other dancers could cover for him in the many suites he was in, there was one where I was probably the only possible replacement. We added Igor Moiseyev's Moscow City Quadrilles to our repertoire while I was still actively dancing in the late 60s and I was in the original cast for that number. Barry was dancing the same position that I had. It was quickly agreed that I would have to dance again but fitting my 5'10" body into Barry's costume was out of the question. I could fit

into his shirt (maybe) but the pants and boots were another matter. Somehow we found an acceptable pair of each and I was on stage in a dance that I had not performed in half a decade. Thank goodness for intermission. I had the opportunity to run through the choreography once with everyone just to make them and me confident that I was up to the task. I was.

Our New York debut was a great success. Some of the board members had traveled to BAM to be with us. We had a great after party at one of the leading folk dance venues meeting with many folks we, too, had heard about but never met. We got a great review from John Rockwell. (I was very nervous about another leading NYC reviewer who I had been watching from the balcony. He was sleeping through most of the show, had a reputation of disliking ethnic dance and was someone whose reviews were respected throughout the country. I was grateful when his review never ran.)

Following this major New York City debut, we returned home triumphant with some fine East Coast reviews and great memories. One more activity that made the late 70s through the 80s some of AMAN's most exciting years. I was proud to be the Executive Director during part of this time when AMAN was on a fast track to significant recognition and activity throughout the United States with one great international trip under the auspices of the USIA yet to come.

bippidy boppidy boo

AMAN's Kathak Groove

by Ronda Berkeley

IN THE 70s the only thing I wanted to do was be wherever Michele Gerard was. (I still feel the same way.) She was, and is, the coolest one of all. And she let me hang out—which was friggin' unbelievable as far as I was concerned. So there I was tagging along with the big girls, Michele and Susan Marshall in Venice for my first ever Festival of the Chariots; with giant jaganata wagons, Hari Krishnas, hippies, surfers, skateboarders and deep orange marigolds everywhere. What I didn't know at the time is our jaunt to the boardwalk was really about one man—Pandit Chitresh Das, who had been invited to perform.

We squished our way up to the front of a spare wooden stage draped in bright fabrics with champa incense wafting to mix with the smell of skunky weed. A sarod and tabla player noodled away. It was mellow, stoned and so very Venice. Then Chitresh hit the stage. My heart stopped—nirvana. I had never seen anything remotely like this guy—power, drama, humor, grace, musicality, ropes of brass bells—it was sublime. He electrified, and made still and attentive, a giant crowd who had absolutely no experience, education or background in Indian Classical Music other than thinking that George Harrison and Ravi

Shankar were groovy. He spun. He told stories. He competed with the tabla player throwing crazy rhythmic compositions at one another. And then he did “The Train.”

The Train, a polished old chestnut handed down by the gurus, an idyllic journey by steam railcar through

the countryside, over trellises, under bridges, unaccompanied, just feet and bells—charming. How can you make so many different sounds and rhythms? And then he did something I had not seen in any ethnic dance performance before—he shattered the traditional by introducing a bullet train speeding by on a different track. With a wink, he returned to his traditional steam train and brought it and the audience back into the station and to reality. Later, I would hear him describe this device, this hook, as “shaking off the cobwebs” and keeping Kathak fresh, modern and accessible. I knew at once—this guy, Chitresh Das—here's how to make traditional arts relevant. I am looking at it.

Later, we attended a master class with him at Aisha Ali's dance studio—the most exhausting and exhilarating experience—singing in one rhythm, dancing in another, devouring complex mathematical combinations and spitting them out with your feet (what Chitresh later >>>



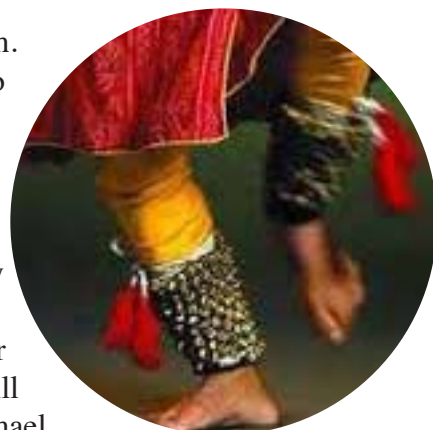
>>> developed into his now famous Kathak Yoga—check out his TEDX talk)...and to top it off, it was beautiful and exotic to look at. Susan and Michele quickly became dedicated students traveling to the Bay Area as often as they could to study with Chitresh who was then affiliated with the Ali Akbar College of Music and bringing him down to LA when we could raise the funds. Thanks to the vision of Leona Wood and Michael Alexander, and their advocacy, AMAN directed some scholarship dollars to help support their efforts. And thanks to Susan and Michele's generosity of spirit, I got to study as well when Chitresh came to stay at Susan's house in Monterey Park. Within a few months, Leona repurposed some old Gudjarati Skirts and Central Asian vests into colorful Kathak costumes; Dan Ratkovich picked up a sitar and Jeff Feldman joined Dan, Susan and Michele on tabla for a show stopping duet.

When I turned 18, I finally got to go north for concentrated study thanks also to an AMAN scholarship. Though I didn't travel the miles that some AMAN scholarship recipients traveled, it was a life changing journey for me. Having Chitresh "tie my bells" and getting to join Susan and Michele in performance was absolutely thrilling. Our Kathak cabal grew when AMAN sponsored Ritesh Das, Chitresh's younger brother to come from India to the US and tour with us on tabla. Peggy Caton joined the musicians on santur and Rita Oliver-Sandlin and Roné Prinz began serious

study as well with Chitresh. AMAN invited Chitresh to perform as a guest artist—he memorably hijacked an AMAN show 12 minutes into his featured solo by asking the audience if they wanted to see more. Of course they did for another 20 minutes or so. (I can still see the expression on Michael Alexander's face. We were running an already long program in a union house!)

The wonderful thing about the Kathak discipline is that the necessary command you must have using rhythm, turns, musicality and expression hones you to be a soloist—but also the beauty and fluidity of Kathak makes it more adaptable to striking group choreographies than any other classical dances from India. Chitresh's AMAN girls were able to mix and match at will—be a soloist on a chamber tour or in the small group and then reform as a duet, trio or

an ensemble for big group shows. Barry Glass took us on as a pet project at a time when the company was still segregated into Balkan and Oriental divisions. And doing that spectacular thing he does—getting every turn, every eyebrow in sync—elevated our performances. A demanding teacher, Chitresh made me cry often. Barry made me cry more often. And I was a better dancer for it. Barry's work on us inspired and informed Chitresh in a way that allowed him to move his company of dancers into a more polished ensemble as well. It became an infectious collaboration between two dance companies. >>>



>>> When we were able to train together with the CDDC dancers in NoCal the dancers in both groups benefited. Back in SoCal, standing in the corner of the gym at Emerson Jr. High counting out long complicated rhythmic compositions our circle would grow to include many AMAN performers fascinated by the recitation and footwork puzzles—I can still see Robert Gately humorously but accurately mimicking our obsessive efforts with his own “Bippidy-bippidy boppidy-bippidy boppidy boo-bippidy boppidy, bippidy boppidy, bippidy boppidy boo!”

AMAN’s Kathak groove was a wonderful exchange with a master performer and his company that benefited us personally as dancers and musicians; not to mention that AMAN got some really flashy and versatile repertoire in the bargain. In 2010 Chitresh Das Dance Company honored Leona Wood (posthumously), Michael Alexander and AMAN for their support of the CDDC in its formative years. The CDDC still thrive today with a whole new generation of amazing dancers trained by Pandit Chitresh Das that continue to spearhead the innovative and dynamic evolution of

Susan Marshall



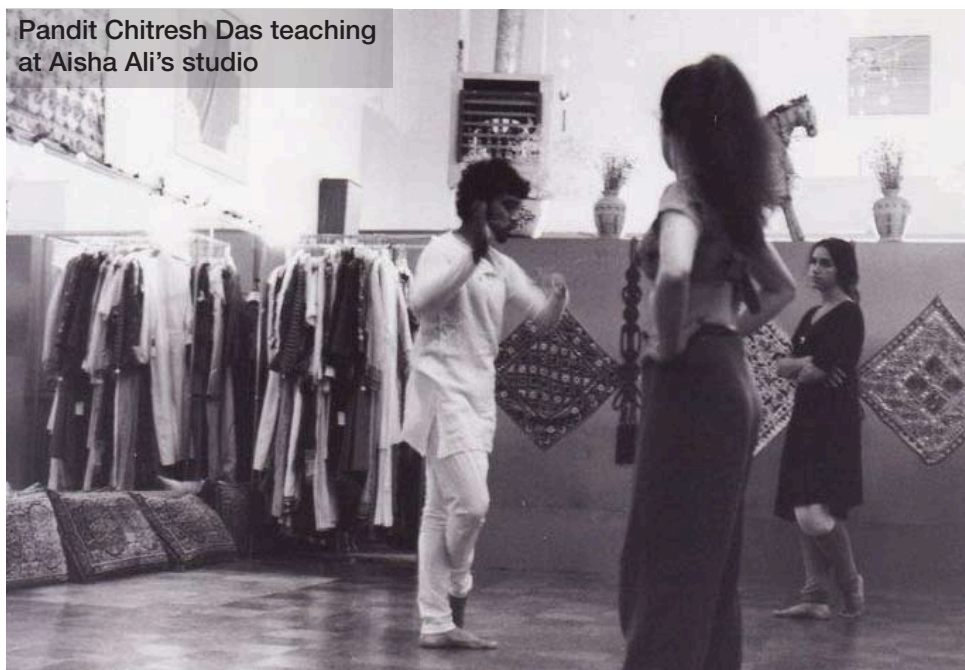
Michele Gerard



Kathak dance worldwide in performances and with affiliated schools in the Bay Area, New York, Boston, Toronto, Mumbai, Kolkata and our own school in Los Angeles run by CDDC dancer Rina Mehta. “Upaj,” the documentary executive produced by Rina and directed by Hoku Uchiyama about Chitresh and his collaboration with lauded tap dancer Jason Samuels Smith is currently airing on PBS stations across the country and also was featured at a screening with the artists in attendance in June by Dance Camera West

at RedCat in Los Angeles. A few weeks later, Chitresh (at 69 years old) and Jason (34) brought down the house with “India Jazz Suites” at Michael Alexander’s Grand Performances in downtown Los Angeles on a warm September evening. I attended the concert with one of Rina’s 15 year old students; a powerful young dancer with lightning fast feet, and I realized she is same age I was when on that day trip to Venice. As she watched Chitresh and Jason tearing up the floor with a 5½ beat rhythmic cycle, she had that look in her eye and whispered, “This is the best thing ever!”

Pandit Chitresh Das teaching at Aisha Ali’s studio



VOLUNTEER SHOUT OUT

CALLING ALL AMANITES...

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The AMAN Alumni Committee (*volunteers one and all*) would like to reach out to our community of alumni, friends & family and ask if people would please consider volunteering a bit of their time to help out during the AMAN100 reunion party.

There is no monetary compensation, but many helping hands make light work for everyone at this all volunteer event. :-)

For more information,
or to sign up—

👉 **CLICK HERE** 👈

Just fill out the volunteer
form and submit.
Easy-breezy!

—**THANK YOU**—

