



## A Note from the President

The past year has been one of tremendous and wonderful change for Chhandika. Now, at the beginning of our second full year of operation, we look back at 2003 with happiness at what we have accomplished. While last year saw the departure (for dance companies and graduate schools) of several of our more advanced students, we have greatly increased our student body, adding classes in Brookline and, most recently, Andover to the existing classes in Cambridge. We are excited to welcome these new students, many of them young children.

Our ability to expand has been in large part due to our growing up as an organization. We have received the long-awaited status of a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, meaning that we are exempt from Federal taxes and may receive tax-deductible donations. We have been lucky to receive a number of generous donations, which have helped support not only our classes but our outreach efforts and performances. Last year, we conducted outreach programs in several area schools, participated in a Cambridge Arts Council Summer program for children, and performed at three benefit events. These are programs for which we prefer to charge nothing or only nominal fees, and the donations we received enabled us to do just that.

The highlight of the Fall was the Naya Deep

concert, at which Chhandika students and spectators alike were treated to a long-awaited and mesmerizing performance by Artistic Director Gretchen Hayden. Chhandika students themselves had an occasion to demonstrate their own accomplishments at the Annual Show.

We are now gearing up for a busy Spring with this year's Annual Show, as well as a collaborative performance by Gretchen Hayden and other percussive dance artists, and a residency by Pandit Chitresh Das. The Spring will also be full of events for students, including an Intensive Weekend, a Kids Kathak Camp Day, and a Summer Retreat. That is, if Summer ever does show its face...

*Anjali Mitter Duva*

Thank You!!!

A heartfelt thank you to the anonymous donor who so kindly surprised us in October with a gift of \$3,000. We are grateful for your generosity and will strive to offer more performances, classes and outreach programs of the highest quality, and to keep the tradition of Kathak alive.

## "Naya Deep" Concert Presents Kathak in a New Light

*By Gretchen Hayden*

On October 18th, Chhandika presented a traditional Kathak dance concert at MIT featuring a Kathak solo by Gretchen Hayden. This event celebrated both the first year anniversary of Chhandika and Diwali, a time of renewal, light and new beginnings.

The concert was a sold-out success! George Ruckert's accompanying music, along with his original score for the new "Dymphna" story, added greatly to the beauty, rhythmic complexities and emotional depth of the evening. Nitin Mitta delighted the audience

with his dynamic tabla solo, as well as his supportive accompaniment. Also performing were Chhandika dancers Anjali Nath and Meenakshi Verma, with narration/singing by Sarah Morelli.

We look forward to presenting similar concerts as an annual autumn event and, in the words of Anjali Mitter Duva, Chhandika President, "A new light on the horizon, Chhandika thanks all the guests, dancers, supporters and members who have helped this organization flicker to life."

*“Gretchen Hayden deserves congratulations for not only learning and mastering this art form, but also for internalizing it and bringing her own spirituality into it.”*

*Ranjani Saigal,  
Lokvani Newsletter*

*Spring Highlight Event!  
(Date TBA)*

**Pandit Chitresh Das**, Artistic Director of the Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company in California, will be in Boston for a **weeklong residency** sponsored by Chhandika. He will be conducting Master Classes, workshops and giving lecture-demonstrations in the area.



*Chhandika dancers perform a Summer in the City event in Cambridge.*

## Dancing through Pregnancy

*By Justine Watt*

I had always been impressed by classmates and teachers who kept dancing well into their pregnancies. Growing up Chinese, I was used to pregnant women being treated as fortunate invalids. Seeing women dance with relish, therefore, seemed like a refreshingly different and more admirable attitude.

Pregnant women are advised to exercise, but not to take up any strenuous activity to which they are not already accustomed. Since I had been taking dance classes for years, when I found out I was pregnant, I asked my doctor if I could continue with them and she said, “No jumping, but otherwise, that is excellent exercise!”

Our teacher Gretchen-ji’s attitude went from initial satisfaction that I would not give up dance to alarm as I kept trying to do the moves with as much vigor as before. She kept reminding me to be gentle for the little one.

As the months progressed, I found that some moves became very hard, such as bending sideways at the waist. (What waist?!) Other moves my body had to relearn constantly,

## Kathak in the Park

*By Bandita Joarder*

On a bright summer morning last August, the first sunny day after a long period of rain, children were laughing, running, swinging, and sliding in the playground at Corporal Burns Park in Cambridge. In the meantime, technicians hired by the Cambridge Arts Council (CAC) were setting up a stage and sound system for an outdoor performance and workshop, and three Chhandika dancers prepared to go on stage. The event, very well organized by CAC, was one of the City of Cambridge’s annual Summer in the City series of free concerts open to the public and held in the city’s parks.

Chhandika, featured as one of the primary performances in the Cambridge Chronicle and selected as the “Kids’ Pick of the Week” in the Boston Globe, began by demonstrating some techniques of Kathak dance. Accompanied by Stephen Celluci on tabla, the dancers then taught the audience about keeping count of the beats, doing footwork and telling stories. They encouraged the

such as chakkars, or turns. Although it was difficult to get momentum going, it was somehow easier to balance than when I was not pregnant.

I asked my doctor again at six months if I should stop going to dance class and she asked “Why?” So I kept going to class until I was well into my third trimester.

Right after our son, Jeremy, was born, I weighed only a little more than I did before I was pregnant. Most women take months to lose their pregnancy weight. I’m sure that Kathak was one of the factors which helped keep my weight gain in check.

In case you’re wondering, Jeremy was born at over 8 lbs. and he started life kicking, with really good muscle tone in his legs. I was comparing notes with a neighbor, who taught kick-boxing while pregnant and she said that her son came out kicking as well, and punching. It might just be a coincidence, but I like to think that the mother’s activity while pregnant has something to do with how the newborn turns out.

audience members to participate and learn some dance steps.

About seventy-five people were in the audience, representing Cambridge’s cultural diversity. Parents were not shy to stand up and try Kathak with their children, encouraging them to try the hand movements representing butterflies and bees, rivers and deer. Many were interested in the stories of the little boy Krishna, were in awe of the beautiful costumes Kathak dancers wear, and were eager to learn about classes being offered in Cambridge.

The Cambridge Arts Council Staff were very supportive of our participation in the program, taking lots of photographs and managing the sound perfectly. Our dancers had a wonderful time working with the children and dancing outdoors, and hope to make it a regular event for Chhandika.

## From Moscow to Boston

By Jennifer Vanora

A chance encounter with the sounds of tabla led to my interest in Indian music and Hindu mythology. I had never, however, heard of Kathak dance. When I was living in Moscow, Russia, as my boyfriend taught English there, I went with a couple of friends to the Indian Cultural Center by the Indian Embassy. We had heard there were free tabla lessons. We started attending the lessons and learned that there were also lessons in Hindi language, in Yoga, and, in the room adjacent to us, dance classes. All of the teachers were living in Moscow temporarily from India, and classes were taught in a strange mix of Russian, Hindi and English.

That was my first experience with Kathak. The room was usually very full; many Russian women were interested in learning. Ashwani, the teacher, was the second Kathak teacher who had taught at the center in Moscow. He was a pretty strict teacher. He taught exercises and Tukras sequentially and everyone was always very excited to learn more, but he would wait to teach anything until we had repeated the first ones countless times. In about ten months of classes we learned two basic Tukras. The classes were very big so it was hard for me to know if I was dancing correctly. Indian clothing was hard to come by so I sewed a set for myself. I didn't know that the pants tied, so I made them more fitted and with snaps. Later, at a market I found a blue outfit and some ghunghru (bells). There was no ghunghru ceremony but after a while we were expected to have them, and Ashwani told us not to come without them. As a teenager I had been too shy and awkward to learn dance, so this year was very important

to me as I realized it was something I might learn. I was fascinated by the rhythmic patterns and I felt like they were communicating some mathematical evidence of perfection in the universe.

Next I lived in Washington, D.C. and it took a long time for me find a teacher. I finally found a wonderful teacher named Runa Guha. I had to start learning almost completely from the beginning as Runa did things differently. She had only a few students and she was deeply concerned with each of them. She taught me not only some exercises and Tukras, but much more about being comfortable moving. She organized recitals at a Durga Temple in Virginia, and she taught me folk dances as well, I think to help me be less awkward. Sometimes we would practice together, and sometimes we would do footwork with the lights off. Even though I only had a chance to learn with her for about a year, Runa became a very good friend. My grandmother lived in Queens near a busy Indian neighborhood, so Runa came with me to stay with my grandmother. She gave me a new set of ghunghru from the stores there since the ones I had from Moscow had all fallen apart. From Runa I learned much more about the feeling of dancing Kathak.

When we moved to Boston for school and had a baby it took me a long time again to find a Kathak teacher. I was so happy to find Gretchenji and Chhandika. The classes are very intense, like a meditation for me. Each teacher or school I have experienced has brought me something new, reflecting the many dimensions of Kathak dance.

### News!

We have received **Federal tax exemption!** Chhandika is now a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible.

Mark your calendars for **Chhandika's Annual Student Show on May 9<sup>th</sup>** at the Peabody School in Cambridge!

And we have begun **new classes in Andover, MA.** Classes are held on Wednesdays at 5pm at the Chinmaya Maruti Center. ([www.chinmayamaruti.org](http://www.chinmayamaruti.org))



*Gretchen Hayden performs at Naya Deep concert*

## Upcoming Events Calendar

- January 4: **Classes** resume for the Winter/Spring session
- February 20-22: **Kathak Intensive Weekend** for Chhandika Students
- March 21: **Ghunghru Ceremony** for recent students
- April 3: **Rhythm Underfoot: An Evening of Percussive Dance.** Artistic Director Gretchen Hayden performs with Kieran Jordan (Irish Step) and Jill Braverman (Tap) in this multicultural dance concert at the Springstep Center at 8 pm in Medford ([www.springstep.org](http://www.springstep.org), 781-395-0402)
- April 17: **Kids Kathak Camp Day** for Chhandika's youngest students.
- May 9: Chhandika **Annual Student Show and Fundraiser** at the Peabody School (formerly the Fitzgerald School) in Cambridge, at 4 pm
- April/May: **Pandit Chitresh Das in residency** (events and dates to be announced)
- June 4-6: **Summer Retreat** in Western Mass. for Chhandika students

## Chhandika Dancer Joins Company in California

At the end of last November Anjali Nath, Chhandika dancer and assistant instructor, left the Boston area for California. There, she joined the Chitresh Das Dance Company (CDDC) as an apprentice and immediately

left with the Company to perform in India. She is still, however, very much a part of Chhandika, and we look forward to her return visits to the Boston area. CDDC and audiences in California are lucky to have her.

## Coming in 2005...Kathak at the Crossroads

Chhandika is working with the Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company and MITHAS (the MIT Heritage of the Arts of South Asia) to produce a three-day Kathak conference. "Kathak at the Crossroads" will be held on the MIT campus in Cambridge, MA.

This conference will enable dancers, teachers, choreographers, musicians, dance scholars, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, historians, women's organizations, arts presenters and managers, critics, and students to take part in a broad conversation exploring the experiences, techniques, and issues central to this dance form.

Through panel discussions, papers, presentations, lecture demonstrations,

showcases, workshops, and public performances, the conference will seek to both unify the international Kathak dance community and to bring greater awareness of this classical dance-theater art form to the public at large.

Evening and afternoon performances will offer audiences from the Boston area and beyond a unique opportunity to see both kathak masters and upcoming young artists from around the world demonstrate the rich traditions and contemporary interpretations of Kathak dance.

Planning the conference is a major undertaking, and we welcome any and all suggestions regarding funding opportunities and local logistics!

## Thank You!

Many thanks to the following "Friends of Chhandika" donors: Dr. & Mrs. Muhammed Huq, Nora Janeway, Deepti & Vinit

Nijhawan, Sahdev & Carolyn Passey, Cathryn Shahab and the many others who have helped support us this year.

## About Chhandika

The Chhandam Institute of Kathak Dance (Chhandika) is an organization of artists, musicians and scholars dedicated to maintaining and contributing to the rich tradition of Kathak dance. From its origins in ancient India to its dramatic emergence on today's international stage, the storytelling art of Kathak blends classical theater with dynamic rhythms and exquisite dance

movement. Chhandika offers classes for men, women and children of all ages; enriches the community through performances and demonstrations; and fosters personal growth and cultural exploration through its workshop and outreach activities. Chhandika is affiliated with the Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company (based in the San Francisco Bay Area) and the Nritya Bharati Institute.



### Class Schedule (Winter/Spring session, January-May 2004)

Dance Complex Studio 4	Sunday 10:30 am	Children I
Dance Complex Studio 4	Sunday 11:30 am	Children II
Dance Complex Studio 5	Sunday 10:30 am	Adult Beginners
Dance Complex Studio 5	Sunday 11:30 am	Adult Mixed Levels
Dance Complex Studio 5	Sunday 12:30 pm	Adult Int./Advanced
BCCA	Thursday 6:30 pm	Adult Beginners
BCCA	Thursday 7:30 pm	Adult Mixed Levels
Chinmaya Maruti Center	Wednesday 5:00 pm	Children
Chinmaya Maruti Center	Wednesday 6:00 pm	Adult Beginners

### Board of Directors

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Anjali Nath with some of Chhandika's youngest students

**Dance Complex:** 560 Massachusetts Avenue (Central Square), Cambridge, MA  
www.dancecomplex.org

**Brookline Community Center for the Arts:** 14 Green Street (Coolidge Corner), Brookline, MA  
www.bccaonline.com

**Chinmaya Maruti Center:** 1 Union Street (Route 28), Andover, MA  
www.chinmayamaruti.org