

Workshop on Odissi Dance with Guru Smt Alok Kanungo

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." ~Alvin Toffler

For a dancer, learning is a lifelong process. Every moment of dancing is a moment of self-discovery and rectification. A dancer is always in search of how best to improve and develop further. A dancer will always want to learn something new in order to add depth to her dancing. And so, it is good idea to not only imbibe from the Guru but also attend workshops which give an opportunity to meet new dancers and work on developing their skills.

The students of Aum Arts Dance Academy and other institutes were fortunate to attend a 3-day workshop conducted by GuruAlokaKanungo on 19th December 2016. Initially trained by Guru Raghunatha Dutta and Guru Mayadhar Rout, Alokaji blossomed into a fine dancer under the tutelage and watchful eyes of Guru KelucharanMahapatra. She received "Nritya Shree", "NrityaVisharad" and "Nritya Praveen" from Kala Vikash Kendra, Cuttack. She has received many prestigious awards, including the ShiromoniPuroshkar and the Mahari Award. ShrimatiKanungo established her institution, ShinjanNrityalaya in Kolkata where she continues to impart training in Odissi dance to young dancers.

The first day of the workshop was graced by eminent personalities from the fields of classical dance and yoga who gave the students snippets of their wisdom gained through their experience and learning. Dr. Birju Acharya, the founder of Yoga Vedic Village, enlightened the students on the connection between yoga and classical dance. He explained that both help to express the inner emotions from within and to be one with self. According to Birjuji, in Gurushishyaparampara, not only does the shishya learn from the guru, the guru also learns from the shishya. The most important outcome of both dance and yoga is that they both help to overcome the ego.

Guru Smt. SmitaShastri of Nartan School of Classical Dances emphasised that students should not just learn the technique of dance but should also feel the dance and bring out their manodharma.

Dr. Uma Anantani, Director Rasadhvani, felt that in order to perform *GeetGovinda*, a dancer must be aware of the beginning, middle and end of it. Only by understanding the divine quality of *GeetGovinda* will a dancer be able to emote it in the right way.

Mrs Aishwarya Warriar, renowned Mohiniattam dancer, was of the opinion that dancers should get out of their comfort zones and imbibe from other Gurus as well.

Finally, Alokaji gave a small talk before starting the workshop. She explained that dance is a blending of physical, mental and spiritual aspects. We must always learn throughout our life and be receptive to our surroundings and must place complete trust in one's guru.

The workshop concluded with each student getting a certificate of participation. The students learnt *Bilahari Pallavi*, *Sakhi he kesimadanamudaram* from *GeetGovinda* and *Ganesh Vandana*.

The workshop was appreciated by all the students and gurus. It was an enriching experience to be introduced to a traditional guru from Odisha and to learn the deeper nuances of abhinaya and the intricate use of mudras in expressing through dance. Guruji's style of teaching was very captivating and it was refreshing to see his frank nature and humor come through.

Sucharita is learning Odissi dance from Guru Suprava Mishra since last 5 years and performed all the Major festivals like Konark Festival 2015, Geeta govinda Festival 2014 with her.