Enhancing the Performance Experience: 
Application of Design Concepts of Form, Space and 
Choreography in Indian Dance Theatre 

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I declare that the thesis is my account of my research and contains as its main context work, which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Saseedaran K. Anandan
ABSTRACT

The thesis revisits the key concepts of Indian dance based on the contemporary performance space by introducing design as an integral part of Indian dance, addressing these designs as symbolic or suggestive form (natyadharmi) and not as a realistic form (lokadharmi). In doing so, the thesis aims to explore the possibilities of further integrating design in dance so as to enhance performance experiences. The thesis argues that enhancements are a necessary development in order to express Indian dance in such an integrated way as to allow the “essence” of traditional Indian dance, its spirituality, to be maintained and enhanced.

Expounding on theories of reception, to the extent where the performer is also configured as a receiver, the thesis demonstrates how the form and the formless are conceived by the performer and the receiver. The thesis also investigates how space transformation and choreography affect both the dance and the presentation. The thesis therefore emphasises on design as an important component to investigate how performance experience can be enhanced. It is conceived as a metaphor that develops ideas in dance and how it then creates other possibilities of interactions and communications.

During research, the exploration of design and dance was conducted not only for intellectual inquiry but also to deal with the experience of performances, performers and audiences. To develop a mode of executing Indian dance, the thesis creates a perspective of seeing design and dance as metaphors. The thesis further analyses the concept of symbolic representation in space, time, form and movement, of which the thesis argues, Lord Nataraja as the ideal example of conceptual inspiration.
As a theory of theatricality the thesis argues for the extent to which the value of a performance is enhanced through a shared experience. The experience is enhanced by the multiple design elements integrated within a performance, and directed to induce *rasa* in both the performer and the audience. Therefore by heightening the performance experience, Indian dance is reflected upon as a spiritual journey enhanced.
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DEDICATION

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