

Soorya Performing Arts  
Presents



# 13th American Natya Festival

*Indian Classical Dance Festival*

April 29, 30th and May 1st 2022  
HTCC Auditorium, 725 Weidman Road  
Manchester 63021, USA



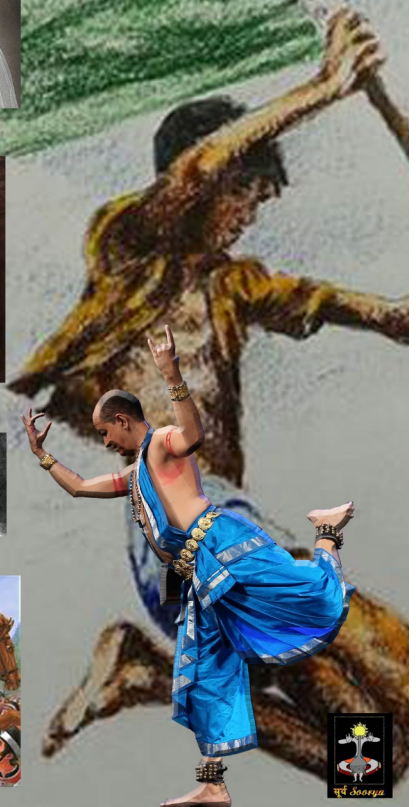
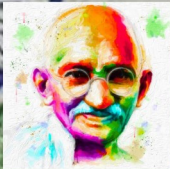


# SAMARPAN

INDIA'S FREEDOM FIGHT AGAINST  
400 YEARS OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

A MEGA DANCE-DRAMA-MUSIC - PRODUCTION  
AUGUST 13TH 2022, 6:00 PM  
TOUHILL AUDITORIUM, SAINT LOUIS, MO

A FOUR HOUR LONG PRODUCTION PERFORMED BY 150 ARTISTS



PRESENTED BY ALL INDIAN  
COMMUNITIES FROM SAINT LOUIS  
CONCEPT: GURU PRASANNA KASTHURI



## Foreword

Dear Patrons

We are delighted we reached the 13th year of celebrating the Indian classical dance festival in Saint Louis. Our dance festival makes Saint Louis a city of diverse art and artists.

This year we are presenting solo dance by Soorya's artistic director Guru Prasanna Kasthuri with live music, who is one of the great living legends of modern Bharathanatyam and Kathak dance amongst us. His Bharathanatyam performance will bring 47 years of experience and a love for art.

We will be presenting two dance dramas— "Ashtalakshmi Vaibhavam" and "Parvati Kalyan." We have visiting artists showing their experimental "Utsav" production from Philadelphia, PA, and "Pibare Ramarasam" from Dallas, TX. We welcome all the dance drama teams from across the World to St. Louis.

Many shoulders have lifted the weight of this fantastic dance festival. We want to take this opportunity to thank all the Soorya Family, who stood firmly with this festival. Not even an inch will move in this festival without their help. We thank - Missouri Arts Council for their continued support.

We thank our Soorya Family, Soorya-Friends, and donors for supporting this event.

Thank you to our volunteers who worked to make it happen. Our events for this year will continue with the presentation of "Samarpanam" - as a part of the "75th year of celebration of Indian Independence on August 13th, 2022, at Touhill Auditorium.

We will give you more details once this festival is completed. For this weekend, enjoy the dance-dramas

Board of Directors  
Soorya Performing Arts

## **Soorya Performing Arts**

A not-for-profit organization – devoted to Classical Dance,  
Music, and Theater from India - Presents

# **13th American Natya Festival**

At HTCC Auditorium, 725 Weidman Rd, Manchester, MO 63011

### **April 29th, 2022**

**6:30 PM - Bharathanatyam—Maarga**

by

Guru Prasanna Kasthuri with

Nattuvangam: Samanvita Kasthuri

Vocal : Seema Kasthuri

Mrudangam: Venupuri Srinivas

Violin: Kalpana Prasad

Master of Ceremony: Padmini Prabhu

### **April 30th, 2022**

6:30 PM – AshtaLakshmi -

Thematic Dance by Soorya Bharathanatyam School

7:30 PM – Utsav

Thematic Dance Drama by Three Aksha Dance Company

Master of Ceremony: Sumithra Girivaru

### **May 1st, 2022**

3:00 PM – Pibare Rama Rasam –

Thematic Dance by Ellora Performing Arts, Dallas

4:30 PM – Parvati Kalyan – Kathak Dance Drama

By Artists of Soorya Kathak School

Master of Ceremony: Srilakshmi Vishnubhotla

Program

**MAARGA - Solo Bharathanatyam Performance by  
Kalayogi Guruji Prasanna Kasthuri**

Prasanna Kasthuri hails from a family of literature and music and is the



eldest son of – Mr. Raghusutha and Mrs. K R Padmaje. Both his parents were well-known literary figures in the Kannada language from South India. Prasanna is a reputed performer and a teacher of two classical dance forms – Bharathanatyam and Kathak. He is respectfully referred to as "Guruji" for his service to Indian performing arts. Prasanna is known as a "24-Hour Dancer" because he danced 24 hours nonstop in 1986 to create a world record for male Bharatanatyam, which stands still today.

Prasanna Kasthuri established Shantala Arts Academy in Bengaluru, India, in 1985. He presented several noteworthy performances in India, such as 24 hours nonstop Marathon Dancing

in 1986; Kaavya Kinkini (1988), a total Kannada language-based repertoire in Bharathanatyam; Subhadra Parinaya (1991) – a Sanskrit Dance Drama; Shringara Nayakaru (1994) – a production on Nine sentiments from a male point of view. He was invited to perform and coach Sanskrit dance drama in Paris in 1991 for Soliel d'Or, a French dance company, and from Lasya Dance Company in the United Kingdom. He created some unique productions such as –

"Gokula Nirgamana" – the first Indian Opera ever performed outside India; "Rainbow-II" – a dance production based on famous English and American Poems; Anubhava Mantapa" – a production based on Sharana literature, "Beral Ge Koral" into a full-fledged dance –drama; "Dashaavatara" – story on ten incarnations of Vishnu; "Saalumurada Thimmakka" – on environmentalist's life; "Mountain Man" – on a man who broke the mountain; "Milana" – TAP\_ KATHAK showcase.

Apart from being a devoted performer, Prasanna Kasthuri has encouraged and supported thousands of artists by organizing events. Under his lead-

ership, St. Louis witnessed the first Indian Drama Festival – "Nataka 2007" and the first ANNUAL Indian Classical Dance Festival of USA – "St. Louis Indian Dance Festival" in 2008. This festival was renamed as "America Natya Festival" in 2015. A recent one was held in 2019. He has also organized the "St. Louis Indian Music Festival" since 2011 – every year. In November 2020 - he hosted "Virtual St. Louis Indian Music Festival," - an online music festival involving artists from the USA and India.

His book of dance literature, "Kaavya Samhita-1," was published in Kannada Sahitya Ranga at Dallas on April 16th, 2022. Guruji Prasanna was honored with the titles – "Natya Shankara," "Nritya Bharatha," Nritya Bhushana," "Kalayogi," and many more. In 2020, he was awarded the reputed "Ravi Datar Award." Please visit the following websites to know more about Guruji Prasanna Kasthuri's activities.

Visit <https://www.prasannakasthuri.com>

Accompaniments:

Vocal: Seema Kasthuri—Seema Kasthuri is a practitioner, performer, and teacher of Carnatic classical from St. Louis, MO. Her musical journey started at a young age under the tutelage of Vid KR Venkatesh from Mysore. She continues her advanced training under Prof Nagamani Srinath and Madurai Balasubramanyam.



Seema has performed in temples and organizations in Kansas City, Columbia, Chicago, and Los Angeles. She has performed for Sangeetha in St.Louis and St.Louis Indian music festival. She was awarded the title of "AKKA Idol" at the American Kannada Koota conference in 2012

Seema's versatility allows her to accompany her husband's creative dance productions as a lead vocalist. She has also lent her voice to many arangetrams in North America as a lead singer.

Seema has released several music albums in the classical, devotional, and contemporary genres and has many music videos to her credit on youtube. She has worked with Jazz and R&B styles of music, and her latest music album, "Wind-Chyme," is a unique collection of fusion, classical, and RAP experimentation.

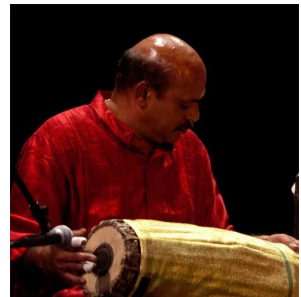
Seema has performed with St. Louis based musician Todd Mosby as part

of the World Fusion ensemble and collaborated with a rapper and musician based out of Columbia. Seema has been teaching classical music to youngsters and adults for 15 years, and many of her students perform and have taken their passion for exploring and branching out. Students of Soorya school of music perform individual concerts year long under the banner of the "Baithak series". Guru Prasanna and Seema Kasthuri work for a non-profit organization Soorya Performing arts, to promote and nurture Indian classical Dance and Music.

Nattuvangam: Samanvita is blossoming into a choreographer by experimenting with contemporary Bharatanatyam and Kathak. She has been learning contemporary for three years and has begun to combine the two. Her most notable piece of creative intelligence is 'equal'. Samanvita wrote the lyrics, composed the music (with the help of guru prasanna kasthuri), and choreographed the dance. She decided to utilize her cultural roots to speak about feminism, a social issue that she could show intersectionality. This piece went on to be performed on the Fabulous Fox Theater, aired on PBS, and performed at a pro-choice rally held in St. Louis after the sweeping bans on abortion. Samanvita's self-choreographed dance video, "Dance There Upon The Shore", has been featured on The Peahce Project's website, an organization dedicated to uplifting and providing a platform to Asian American artists.



Mrudangam: Venupuri—Sri. M.R. Venupuri Srinivas started as a child prodigy, playing Kanjira at the year and eight months in Tirupathi. He gave his first concert on All India Radio when he was just three years old. Sri Srinivas learned Mridangam under legends Ramanathapuram Sri C.S. Murugaboopathi, and Sri Tri-vandrum Mahadeva Iyer. He studied at Madras Music College under Sri Thanjavur Srinivasan, obtaining his master's degree with distinction and a gold medal. He is an "A" grade artist on All India Radio. He is the Asthana vidwan of Kanchi Kamakoti Petam. The former chief minister of Tamil Nadu honored him with the Mridanga Selvam award.



Violin: Kalpana Prasad: Smt. Kalpana Prasad is a disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi, violin maestro Sri M. Chandrasekharan. She has been learning this classical art form from an early age. She has won the Best Instrumental-



ist Award from Chinmaya Yuva Kendra and various other awards from music organizations in Chennai. She has won many accolades at the Chennai December season and Cleveland Thyagaraja festival. During her career, Smt Kalpana Prasad has accompanied accomplished Carnatic vocal artistes and Bharathanatyam arangetrams around the US. She juggles her life in Orlando as an IT professional and passionate music lover. Smt. Kalpana Prasad is a disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi, violin maestro Sri M. Chandrasekharan. She has won the Best Instrumentalist Award from Chinmaya Yuva Kendra and various other awards from music organizations in Chennai. She has won many accolades at the Chennai December season and Cleveland Thyagaraja festival. During her career, Smt Kalpana Prasad has accompanied accomplished Carnatic vocal artistes and Bharathanatyam arangetrams around the US.

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**Pushpanjali, Gam Ganapathim** – a Ganesh dance in Hamsadhwani raga and Tishra Adi Tala; followed by Alaripu in 7 count – Mishra Jati.

**Shyamala Dandaka** - A series of shlokas on Goddess Durga written by the ancient poet – Kalidasa in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

**Varnam** – in Kalyani and Aditala, describes the greatness of Shiva. Stories such as– “girl who gave milk to god”; also “Shiva, the eternal flame.”

—Few songs by Seema ji —

**Hindi Bhajan** – Navarasa Shloka with nine sentiments – followed by popular Sriramachandra, written by Tulsidas – where the story of Seeta’s marriage will be shown.

**Tanda nana** – A Telugu dance that spreads the message of equality. Anamacharya wrote this in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Nee Hinga Nodabyada nanna** – A sad song written by Jnana peetha awardee – Da Ra Bendre in Kannada portrays a deplorable scene of a mother staring at her husband when her child dies. Husband says, “ Please don’t look at me like this; I cannot face your stare”.

**Naaku Tanti and Tillana** – A tillana with poetry intertwined. Naku tanti describes the philosophical aspiration of human beings with four attributes.

The show ends with **Mangalam**.



## Ashta Lakshmi Vaibhavam – Thematic Bharathanatyam - Presented by Soorya Bharathanatyam School



Lakshmi is commonly known as the Goddess of wealth. Wealth is not only money. Tradition and values of life are also wealth. And so is our family and success in life. Our belongings such as land, properties, animals, grains, and virtues like patience, persistence, and purity in the form of a character, are nothing but our wealth, and so is glory or victory.

This eightfold shloka or verses on Sri Lakshmi known as Sri Ashta Lakshmi is presented today.

Aadi-Lakshmi is often depicted as the consort of Narayana, living with him at his home in Vaikunth or sometimes seen sitting in his lap. Her serving of Lord Narayana is symbolic of her service to the entire universe. Aadi-Lakshmi is portrayed as four-armed, holding a lotus and a white flag in her two hands, while the other two are in Abhaya mudra, in which the right hand is held upright, and the varada mudra, in which the right palm is held out with the fingers pointing down.

Dhana means wealth in the form of money or gold. At an intangible level, it may even mean inner strength, willpower, talent, virtues, and character. Thus, the Name Dhana-Lakshmi represents this aspect of the human World, and by her divine grace, we can get an abundance of wealth and prosperity.

Dhanya-Lakshmi - The third of the eight forms of Ashta-Lakshmi is named after Dhanya, or food grains, full of natural nutrients and minerals required for a healthy body and mind.

Gaja-Lakshmi - born out of the churning of the ocean, the fabled

Samudra Manthan of Hindu mythology, is the ocean's daughter. Myths have it that Gaja-Lakshmi helped Lord Indra regain his lost wealth from the ocean's depth.

Santana-Lakshmi - As the Name suggests (Santāna means offspring), this form of Lakshmi Goddess of Progeny is the treasure of the family life. Worshipers of Santana-Lakshmi are bestowed with the wealth of good children possessing good health and long life.

Dhairya-Lakshmi - As the Name suggests (Dhairya means bravery or courage), this form of Goddess Lakshmi is the bestower of courage, strength, and power. Dhairya-Lakshmi is worshiped to gain valor and strength to overpower formidable adversaries in war or to overcome life's difficulties and ensure a life of stability.

Vidya-Lakshmi Vidya means knowledge as well as and, not just degrees or diplomas from the university, but real all-around education. Thus, this form of Goddess Lakshmi is the giver of the knowledge of the arts and sciences.

Vijaya-Lakshmi - Vijaya means victory, and this form of Goddess Lakshmi symbolizes victory in all aspects of life, not just in war but also in life's significant struggles and minor battles. Vijaya-Lakshmi is worshiped to ensure overall victory in every part of life.

*Performed by Saanvi Ramgounda, Neha Patlu, Akshaya Radhakrishna, Hritika Malugu, Sona Prabhakaran, Sapthaka Upadhyaya, Manasvini Vishnubhotla, Meenakshi Kadungath, Diya Arun, Shreenidhi Senthil, Mrudini Nandakumar, Adithi Sriram, Keerthi Natarajan, Bhavya Mudduluri, Sahasra Muddu, Ishita Sanghvi*

*Music & Choreography by Guru Prasanna Kasthuri. Sung by Seema Kasthuri, Mrudangam by Janardhan Rao, Veena by Gopal Padmanabhan, Flute by Jayaram. Recorded at Aravind Studios, Bengaluru, India, and Soorya Pro Studios at Ballwin, MO, USA.*

## **Utsav – Thematic Bharathanatyam - Presented by Three Aksha**

Three Aksha was founded in Philadelphia in 2003 by Artistic Director Viji Rao and is based at Girard College, where she has been an artist in residence since 2008. Three Aksha seeks to preserve and promote Indian culture and heritage through classical Indian Bharatanatyam dance choreography in the Philadelphia area and other ethnically diverse regions. Three Aksha has performed in major cities across the US, the UK, Europe, and

India. Three Aksha has been recognized for its development of new choreography within classical Indian tradition and for its work in the Kalakshetra style of Bharatanatyam, which is renowned for its focus on the body.

The company's dancers have trained in Kalakshetra Bharatanatyam under Viji for six years and have also studied under teachers in India. In



addition to its active performance and touring schedule, Three Aksha shares its expertise in Indian dance in workshops and lecture demonstrations throughout the Delaware Valley. As a complement to the socially conscious themes that frequently play into the company's performance work, Three Aksha engages with social issues by working with youth and fundraising programs. Many of Three Aksha's students have pursued Bharatanatyam to its fullest, completing arangetrams (debut performances) and receiving support for apprenticeships from the Philadelphia and New Jersey Councils on the Arts. Three Aksha presents "Utsav," sharing the art form of Bharathanatyam, its wisdom, and emotions. The show opens with a composition of Dwaraki Krishnaswamy in Raga Hamsanandi and set to Adi thalam, followed by Ganesha Shodasha Namavali and concludes with a Natesha Kautvam. We then invoke Lord Shiva with the shlokam Angikam Bhuvanam Yesya, followed by Namana, a music composition of Praveen D Rao.

Sumukha, a composition of Muttuswamy Dikshitar in praise of Lord Ganesha and music composition by Praveen D Rao set in Raga Malika, and to Aadit thalam that number gets weaved through the design of Mysore Veenae Sheshanna in Karnataka Kapi and set to Aatta thalam, a choreography of Guru. Anuradha Shridhar.

We are bringing the concept of Navarasa, the life's nine moods or sentiments refer to nine expressions that human often shows with the theme of Navadurga in the piece Jai Durge Nava Durga., representing nine forms of Goddess Parvati which are Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyanini, Kaalaratri, Mahagauri,

and Siddhidhatri.

The centerpiece Utsav is Navadurga, awakening the energy in the personification of the universal mother Goddess Durga, precisely betokened as the remover of grief in life. The music for this piece is by Praveen D Rao and the choreography by Viji Rao.

The concept is to bring the devotional poetry into the conversation and transcend the vocabulary of Bharatanatyam to express the emotional content to connoisseurs through dance numbers on Goddess Saraswathi.

Shivapanchakshara sthuthi is a choreography of Guru. Shridhar's in Raga Malika and Set to Khandachapu thalam.

Concluding piece Utsav in Raga Malika and set to Adi thala. Music compositions by Chandrasekhar Jois and Praveen D Rao. An innovative dance work with creative choreography by artistic Director Viji Rao aims to bring the Power and Grace of art form under one umbrella through the work Utsav.

*Dancers: Afra Menon, Anika Maganti, Anjali Padmavar, Ankita Shenoy, Ava Gounder, Ishi Rao Yellayi, Kamy Benakanakere, Mahima George, Rochitha Nathan, Santhi Chandrasekaran, Vandan Nair, Shreya Nair, Diya Nair, Divya Kami Reddy and Viji Rao.*

### **Pibare Rama Rasam – Thematic Bharathanatyam - by Ellora Center for Performing Arts**

Vani Iswara established the Ellora Center for Performing Arts (ECPA) in the USA in honor of the institute started by her Guru Smt. Rema Shrikant



in India, where Vani taught until she moved to the United States. She has been teaching Bharatanatyam in the country since 1994 and in the DFW area since 2003. ECPA conducts classes in Flower Mound and Coppell areas. The goal of the Ellora Center for Performing Arts is to promote Indian Classical Dance through the budding dancers, who undergo rigorous training for perfection and professionalism with a strong emphasis on quality

of execution.

Vani Iswara is a Bharatanatyam dancer, teacher and choreographer based in the Dallas Fort Worth area where she established Ellora Center for Performing Arts. She began her dance journey at a very young age by learning Kuchipudi under the guidance of Guru Sri Vedantam Mallikarju-

na Sarma. Later, she continued with Kuchipudi and started learning Bharatanatyam under Guru Smt. Rema Shrikant. Vani had the honor of pursuing her Bachelors and Masters at M S University, Vadodara specializing in Bharatanatyam under the guidance of legendary Guru, Padma Bhushan awardee Professor C V Chandrasekhar. Vani, a winner of the gold medal and a scholarship for dance as the highest ranker in the university. Vani has also earned her two Masters - in Clinical Psychology from M S University and in Dance/Movement Therapy from Columbia College Chicago.



In this festival ECPA presents Pibare Rama rasam.

*"Drink the essence of the name of Rama, for it will keep you far from sins and fulfill you with many rewards!!!".*

We heard this from every one of the great devotee composers of India urging us. The significance of the Name, **Rama**, is beyond the reasonable limits of a human mind. Likewise, these saints also point to us that the sweetness of Name is also equally inconceivable.

*Here is the choreographer's message - "Let us all be freed of all the obstacles just by reciting His Divine Name, having your thoughts always filled by Him and offering flowers at His lotus feet. By doing these simple deeds, all our past and future sins will be burnt to ashes in the fire of the Divine Name – **Rama**. This is not a reminder for the mind but the tongue. This is an acknowledgment of the power of the sound energy in the Name of Rama. Thus, the beauty and bliss of Rama's Name transcend the boundaries of rules, apprehensions, and doubts. Let us all, therefore, relish the nectar of Rama Nama ...."*

Concept and Choreography: Vani Iswara

Dancers: Rohitha Kaimal, Shashank Iswara, Soundarya Daliparthy, Sharanya Vunnava, Sai Hiranya Akarapu, Mithra Arun, Advika Rajeev, Aditya Subramaniam

Musicians:

Nattuvangam: Vani Iswara, Rohitha Kaimal; Vocals: Deepu Nair, Sharanya Vunnava & Anjali Prabhala; Mridangam: K Sivaprasad, Aditya Iswara; Rhythm Pads: Shashank Iswara; Flute: Chethan Anant, Raghunadhan Krishnan; Veena: Uma Prabhala; Violin: Neeraj Chandrasekhar

## Parvati Kalyan – Kathak Dance Drama – Presented by Soorya Kathak School

Parvati is the daughter of the King of the Himalayas. She grows up listening to stories of Shiva



Bhagwan. She is fascinated and falls in deep love with him. She is always thinking of this vagabond god, despite being a princess. Parents knew the power of Shiva. They let her worship and serve him at his ashram. Shiva was always in deep meditation. But there was the need for a marriage of Shiva and Parvati to protect

the World from a terrorizing demon called Tarakasura. Indra, King of Gods, requests – Cupid – Manmatha, and his wife Rathi to wake Shiva up from his meditation. They intended to make Shiva fall in love with Parvati and get them married. Manmatha creates spring around Shiva's place. Rati floods love in the surroundings. Manmatha shoots five arrows of love. The strongest fifth flower arrow of love wakes Shiva up. Shiva opens his eyes and sees a beautiful girl and falls in love immediately. But a few moments later, he realizes Manmatha has disturbed his meditation. An angry Shiva opens his third eye of fire. Manmatha, the god of love, will be burnt down. Parvati, who hoped for more love from Shiva, watches him deserting her. Parvati gets more focused on him and starts a severe penance to please him. Shiva will come later and test her in the disguise of an older man. He tries to attract through wealth to ignore Shiva. But Parvati is steadfast and rejects all matrimonial offers from anyone other than Shiva. Siva is pleased by her devotion and deep love and gets her as his wife.

*Performed by Anushka Rausaria, Aanya Kaushik, Namita(Tara) Rai, Divya Sinha, Suparba Panda, Souravi Upadhyay, Saanvi Upadhyay, Riti Shehapeti, Deepshikha Banerjee, Bhumi Upadhya, Samanvita Kasthuri, Prasanna Kasthuri*

*Parvati Kalyan's music was recorded at Aravind Studios, Bengaluru, India. The music of Parvathi Kalyan was recorded with the help of singers Raghunandan Bhat, Sampada Bhat; Tabla by Uday Karpurkar; Sitar by Subrahmanya Hegde.*

Lyrics, Music, Choreography – Guru Prasanna

## **Volunteers**

Stage Volunteers: Neha Patlu, Amyra, Prabhakar Betnag

Ticketing: Aparna Kaul, Sheetal Ramgounda, Sumathi, Sunitha Mudduluri, Nagendra Sanjeeva

Lighting Volunteers: Jayashree, Prasanna Kasthuri

Volunteer Videographers: Sandeep, Vikram Kini, Nagendra Bogarapoo

Volunteer Photography: Ramesh Natarajan, Anand Muthukrishna

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Special Thanks to  
Missouri Arts Council  
for supporting  
this festival.





# samarpan



120 artists present  
400 years of freedom fight  
against British colonialism



August 13th 2022  
Touhill Auditorium  
Saint Louis

