

Mythili Prakash and the Dance of India Ensemble

Bharata Natyam

Los Angeles, CA

At 26, Los Angeles-born Mythili Prakash is a rising international star carrying on the 3,000-year-old South Indian dance tradition. Often regarded as the most popular of the seven or eight classic Indian dance styles, *Bharata Natyam* is noted for its beauty, elegance and spirituality. A vibrant, brilliant performer, Mythili exhibits a command of this challenging dance form that is far beyond her years.

Acclaimed as a prodigy at the age of eight, Mythili was trained in Bharata Natyam by her famous dancer/choreographer/teacher mother, Guru Viji Prakash. As a first generation American-born Indian, Mythili is a young woman straddling two worlds. Already the recipient of critical acclaim from Bharata Natyam cognoscenti and adored by Indian audiences worldwide, Mythili's stated mission is to transcend cultural barriers and bring her beloved Bharata Natyam into the mainstream of American arts.

The way in which Bharata Natyam is performed today evolved about 200 years ago in the southern province of Tanjore. Falling under the patronage of kings and nobles, it became less religious in nature, which led to a gradual degeneration of the art until a renaissance that began about forty years ago revived the tradition.

There are two basic forms of Bharata Natyam: *Nritta*, purely rhythmic movement, and *Nritya*, which incorporates interpretative miming to tell the story of the song being sung. *Nritta* involves intricate footwork to complicated rhythmic patterns, while *Nritya* uses the hands, eyes, face, and indeed, every part of the body in narrating the tale.

In both the US and India, her fulltime career in dance includes performing, touring, choreographing and training. Though Mythili's performances embody the classical and ancient traditions, she also pushes the boundaries of the art form by exploring concepts that are communicable and accessible to all audiences. Most recently, she brought Bharata Natyam to the national spotlight with her appearance on NBC's Superstars of Dance.