

**NRI PULSE**  
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414 Druid Oaks Dr NE  
Atlanta GA 30329  
Tel: 404-235-4998

Email: [contact@nrpulse.com](mailto:contact@nrpulse.com)  
[www.NRIPulse.com](http://www.NRIPulse.com)

**Publisher**  
NRIPulse Media Inc.

**Editor**  
Veena Rao  
[editor@nrpulse.com](mailto:editor@nrpulse.com)

**Contributors**  
Jyothsna Hegde  
Rati Kumar

**Columnists**  
Ravi R. Ponangi  
Mahadev Desai  
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar  
Kaushik Chokshi  
Rani Sharma  
P.S. Lakshmi Rao

**Art Director**  
Sonu Patel  
[sonu@nrpulse.com](mailto:sonu@nrpulse.com)

**Advertising**  
Veena Rao  
404-235-4998  
404-664-2805  
[nrpulse@gmail.com](mailto:nrpulse@gmail.com)

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# Kruti Academy Celebrates 15-Year Dance 'Yatra'

BY JYOTHSNA HEGDE

Atlanta: Acclaimed dance school of Atlanta, Kruti Dance Academy celebrated 15 years of its dance journey "Yatra" on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts center. Delightful performances transported the audience back to various parts of India depicting regional dance forms supported by apt background scores and performers adorned with vibrant costumes and jewelry.

Divided into five segments, the grand odyssey commenced from Tamil Nadu, starting with the customary Ganesh Arti, Shiva Panchaskar Stotram, Shiva Stuti, Pushpanjali, Yamunashtakam, a captivating Deepak Nritya followed by an entrancing Fusion Tillana. Segment two featured dances from Assam, Kashmir and Punjab. Kruti students performed the Assam folk dance Bihu, characterized by brisk dance steps, and rapid hand movement. Kashmir came alive with the colorfully clad dancers tapping to Kashmiri Nritya. The lush green of Punjab known for the energetic Bhangra, traditionally a harvest folk dance dazzled the crowd, followed by the Gidda. Traditionally men performed Bhangra, while the ladies were known to perform their own fierce, yet elegant dance Giddha.

Rajashthani dance forms were the core of segment three. Peacock Nritya had the performers decked with peacock feathers. The Chunar dance with young girls dancing to the Falguni Pathak's melodious "meri chunar ud ud jaaye" was mesmerizing. One of the most popular Rajashthani Ghodi dance was next with dancers in dazzling red and green costumes. The Kachi Ghodi Dance in Rajasthan, India is performed on dummy horses. Men in elaborate costumes- red turbans and dhotis and kurtas ride the well decorated dummy horses. With naked swords in their hands, these dancers move rhythmically to the beating of drums while a singer narrates the exploits of the Bavaria bandits of Shekhawati. The tribal Banjaara dance followed. India, a country of different tribes, dances and music finds some dance forms influenced by others. Specially the dances of the Punjab, the Sind region, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are close to the origins of belly dance. Performed by wandering gypsy tribes, the Banjara dance and costumes speak volumes about the influence of Mughal culture. Ruamli Dance marked the end of the Segment 3. Segment 4 focused on Gujarat, started with Raas or Dandiya Raas, a traditional folk dance form of Vrindavan, India, depicting scenes of Holi, and lila of Krishna and Radha. Along with Garba, it is the featured dance of Navratri festival in Western India. Adivasi dance with simple clothing was next. Manjira dance, a display of Raas played with jingling music of Manjira with precision and skill followed. Dance forms in Gujarat showcasing various household chores of women such as Supada dance during sifting grains, Tippani Dance with women dancing in opposite rows holding Tippani, an equipment with square wood or iron piece at the end of a long stick used for beating and pressing lime into the foundation of a floor or house under construction. Garbha and Ghado dances enchanted the audience leading to Segment 5, Maharashtra. Bollywood appeared to be the theme of this segment as energetic dancers shook

their legs to Bollywood numbers such as "Dil Bole Hadippa" in the sequence titled Seniors Finale, A medley of songs in Daddy cool Mix, "Baamulaiza", Pocket Mein Rocket", "Taali", "Kyon Hota Hai Dil Deewana", "Aayka Daajeba" in Lavani and Lezim. Staff Finale featured 2 dances by Sissy Simmons and her group's energetic performance to "Kyo Paisa Paisa Karti hain" ending on a grand note



with Shemoni Sheth and charming lovely ladies using photo frames as props dancing away to "Zara Sa, Halka Sa, Nasha sa".

Dina Sheth, founder and director of Kruti Dance Academy thanked the entire team who put the event together including the audience and sponsors. Awards were handed to all participants. Spirit of Kruti Award

was handed to Preeya Banit, Janki Patel, Ishani Patel, Chandni Nayyar and Ayshali Gauba who excelled in teamwork. Sagar Patel was the recipient of Star of Kruti Award for exceptional leadership and Student of the year Award was shared by Amola Patel and Vivienne De Freites.

Established in 1995, Kruti offers various dance courses for various dance forms. Kruti has 54 students that have completed Arangetram, the pinnacle exhibition of the mastery of Bharat Natyam. Students of Kruti auditioned for Season 5 of America's Got Talent in Orlando on June 16<sup>th</sup> making it to the final 100 and will participate in the next round. While the Founder Dina Sheth herself has many awards and recognitions to her credit, her daughter Shemoni Sheth, an honors graduate in Industrial and Systems Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology, has been a dance instructor since her graduation, specializing in Bollywood and Fusion dances. Most recently, Shemoni was invited to work with Longinus Fernandez (choreographer for multi-Oscar winning movie Slumdog Millionaire) as the assistant choreographer for Canada's popular reality show So You Think You Can Dance Canada.

An enchanting evening filled with truly inspired, well-choreographed, vibrantly clad and immensely well-coordinated performances offered a visual treat to a packed hall of about 2500 attendees. Here's wishing Kruti and its team more success in the years to come.



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(404)-483-9512 (Cell) (770)-573-4311 (Home)  
Email: [msswayampakula@yahoo.com](mailto:msswayampakula@yahoo.com)