

AUD LECTURE SERIES

“SOCIAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF WRITING HISTORY IN RECENT TIMES”

A LECTURE BY

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“Historicising masculinity: Looking at the male dancer in India”

23rd September 2015, 03.00 P.M

CR-4, AUD Campus

This presentation tries to engage with the different ways in which dance in India has framed the male dancers within the discourse of gender and sexuality. It begins with the nationalistic vision that assigned a particular role to its dancers – formatting the gendered definitions of male and female dancers in Independent India. This process entailed, along with a massive cultural cleansing process in the name of social reforms, setting strong imageries of masculinity and femininity within the context of dance. Most of the newly restructured classical forms became domains dominated by feminine aesthetics. More and more of a vanishing breed, the traditional male masters were replaced by female teachers, thus bringing in an era of increased visibility for female dancers in the post-independence days. Simultaneously, the presentation problematizes the historical stage of abortive modernity in dance, when efforts such as works by Tagore, Shankar and IPTA tried sharing the contested space in the cultural public sphere, as a parallel development to classicization. The final section of the discussion brings into focus the aggressive hyper-masculinity that has grown out of dance in Bollywood – giving rise to a multi-layered understanding of the male dancer in contemporary India.

Dr. Urmimala Sarkar Munsi is a Social Anthropologist / Dance Studies scholar in India, who has been associated with building an academic foundational base for dance studies in India. She is the Vice President and the Network Co-chair (Research and Documentation) of the World Dance Alliance – Asia Pacific. Urmimala is a dancer and a choreographer, trained at the Uday Shankar India Culture Centre, India, and has performed extensively within and outside India. Her important publications in this area are “Engendering Performance, Indian Woman Performers in Search of an Identity”, co-authored with Bishnupriya Dutt (Sage, Delhi 2010) “Traversing Tradition: Celebrating Dance in India”, co-edited with Stephanie Burridge (Routledge, India 2010), “Dance: Transcending Border” edited by Urmimala Sarkar (Tulika Books: New Delhi 2009). Her current research focuses on dance and gender, Politics of performance and Dance History.