

PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY  
PUDUCHERRY

&

“ANIKAI” DANCE, BOSTON, USA  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH “STAGE INDIA”

PRESENTS

H E W H O B U R N S

&

F O R E S T

At Pondicherry University, Culture-Cum-Convention Centre,  
Pondicherry

ON 19<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2011, 6.30PM.



ALL ARE INVITED

## *The Group:*

**“ANIKAI” Dance Theatre Company** is the most recent incarnation of Choreographer Wendy Jehlen’s company that has been evolving since 1998 in India, Italy, Japan and the US. Moving across, amongst, between and in the space between cultural, linguistic and geographic boundaries are the *modus operandi* of the company and the choreographer.

ANIKAI Dance's goal is to break down perceived boundaries between people, cultures and art forms. ANIKAI's performances weave together music, dance and storytelling, folk and classical, modern and traditional, secular and sacred, aural and visual. With each synthesis, a language

is created. ANIKAI communicates in a unique and constantly evolving language.

## F o r e s t

### ***Brief Summary of the Play:***

Forest is a dance-theater work of pure physical theater. The scenes are as follows, there is no text:

Blue Butterfly... Growing... Grove... Path... Water...  
Pixies... Frogs... Gemini... Bird... Dragonflies...  
Ants... Flying... Butterfly

### ***Cast:***

Wendy Jehlen : Director/Performer

Pradhuman Nayak : Performer, lighting designer

Kim Eun Jung : Performer

DeAnna Pellecchia : Performer

Terra Weaver : Performer

Mila Thigpen : Performer

Neva Cockrell: Performer

Maki Somekawa: Performer

### ***Synopsis of the Play:***

In many storytelling traditions, we are told of a world that exists around and within us. The forest mirrors the human psyche, where many stories, many emotions exist simultaneously. The storyteller opens a door to this world. We enter it but for a moment and glimpse only part of these eternal tales.

Forest, a work for seven dancers, takes us into the archetypal world of the forest, the jungle. Throughout the world, the forest is seen as a place of transformational magic. Heroes of the world's epics must pass through the forest in order to fully realize themselves. The forest is a world of elicit trysts, of confrontations between opposing forces. ANIKAI Dance takes you into this world at its roots, draws you into its branches, and sends you flying up through the canopy.

The butterfly is the gatekeeper, our god of the threshold, transformation, discovery, wonder, the space between.

### ***Director's Note:***

***Forest*** is an exploration of a potent place in human mythology - the forest, the jungle, the magical space

outside of our civilized settled lives, the place where anything is possible. In my work, I strive to draw the audience into this space, if only for a moment. I invite them to leave behind their everyday lives and to enter into this unfamiliar, alluring, sensual, world, where everything is constant, and everything is constantly evolving.

Brother Blue, to whom Forest is dedicated, was a storyteller and performer of international acclaim, and one of my personal mentors. His voice and breath begin and end the piece.

## H e W h o B u r n s

### ***Cast:***

Wendy Jehlen: Director/Performer

Pradhuman Nayak : Performer

Kim Eun Jung : Performer

### **Synopsis of the Play:**

***He Who Burns*** is an exploration through movement, text, video, and music of the figure of Iblis (Satan) as understood in some Sufi traditions. Through this

lens, the dance-theater piece explores the nature of humanity's relationship with the divine, the eternal quest for unity and the illusion of duality in the human experience.

Staged as a trio, He Who Burns takes us on a journey from the time before time, through the suffering of Iblis in his separation from his Beloved, and his quest for the same, through to his ecstatic annihilation. The performance at once parallels the Sufi quest, as outlined in the great Sufi text, “Conference of the Birds,” and the structure of the Bharata Natyam performance. The text, from the Persian, Arabic, and Urdu of Al-Hallaj, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Mohammed Iqbal, Al Ghazzali, Hafiz, and Maulana Jelaluddin Rumi, is performed in Urdu, English, and Korean.

### ***Director's Note:***

He Who Burns takes our notion of good and evil, the divine and the satanic, and turns it on its head. There are three characters – Iblis, Allah, and Adam. Iblis is the greatest lover of God, the truest monotheist. The world, and everything in it, is merely a test of Iblis' love, a divine illusion. Or perhaps it is all Adam's dream, a metaphor for the duality he sees in his world, but which is itself an illusion. In the

performance, this ambiguity is emphasized by the changing roles that the performers take. As the play progresses, the players come in and out of character, at times narrating, at times observing, at times embodying a theme in abstraction.

**Wendy Jehlen** (*director/ choreographer / performer*) is a choreographer of Contemporary Dance whose unique approach to movement incorporates elements of a wide range of dance styles including Bharata Natyam, Odissi and Kuchipudi, which she has studied for over twenty years, since the age of seven, in India and the US; Capoeira (Brazilian Martial Art), West African dance; and American and European Modern and Contemporary dance styles.

Jehlen's emotionally powerful choreography has been performed throughout the United States, Europe, India and in Japan. Her work is informed by her study of storytelling and literature from around the world. She holds a Bachelor's degree with Honors in Storytelling, Ritual and Performance from Brown University and a Masters of Theological Studies in Religion and Performance from Harvard University. Her works include Birth (2005) a juxtaposition of the story of the creation of dance and rhythm from South

India and the image from the well-known lecture on Chaos Theory, the Butterfly Effect; Dragon (2005), based on a Japanese folk tale about a girl who becomes a water dragon; Breathing Space (2003), a collaboration with Japanese choreographer Hikari Baba; Crane (2002), based on images from Japanese Buddhist poetry; Haaaa (2002), inspired by the experience of childbirth; Midnight (2000), based on a poem by Sufi saint Jelaluddin Rumi; Job 10 (1999), based on the tenth chapter of the Book of Job of the Hebrew Bible; and Becoming Fire (1998), an evening length work exploring texts from the Sufi traditions of Iran and South Asia.

Another important element of Jehlen's work is collaboration with Deaf performers and poets. She is fluent in American Sign Language and uses both the language and aesthetic of American Sign Language poetry in her choreography.

Jehlen has received funding and recognition for her choreography from the Artist Grants Program of the Massachusetts Cultural Council (2001, 2003), the Senior Performing Artist Fellowship program of the American Institute of Indian Studies (2001), the Ford Foundation/Arts International (1996), the Puffin



Foundation (2001), the Tokyo American Center (2002), the National Endowment for the Arts(2005), the Fulbright program/United States Educational Foundation in India (2005-2006, the National School of Drama (2006) and the Alliance Francaise de Madras (2006), among others.



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