

This year, again based on the CCs of the festival: Collaborations, Contributions, Conversations and Connections, Samarpana's organisers aim to bring together classically trained international and local artistes to create a hub for classical dance in Singapore. Jyoti Ramesh of Jade Group, the event organiser elaborated, "Samarpana 2013 will feature dancers from all over South East Asia, India and even Spain. We're really trying to break barriers of genres and geographical borders this year."

The three-day festival will have much to offer for all dance and music lovers. The opening night features UNESCO Intangible Heritage awardees, Dhruvad singers, Urmakant and Ramakant Gundecha in their first-ever collaboration with one of India's leading dance groups - The Kadamb Troupe. The choreographer, Kumudini Lakshmi, a Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan award winner, is a pioneer in contemporary Kathak. She transformed it from a purely solo form of dance into a group performance and has added innovative storylines to the traditional tales. The soul stirring and divine music of the

Gundecha Brothers combined with the delicate, graceful hand movements and light-footed work of the Kadamb Troupe is a delight to all senses.

The organisers promise the other two days of the festival will be just as exciting and entertaining. Flamboyant Miguel Angel Espino of Spain, awarded the 'Premio Navicella', performs in the brilliantly allegorical 'The Cruel Gardens' directed by Antonio Vargas of Singapore along with Soren Niewelt of Singapore. The sizzling flamenco and spectacular contemporary dances will be used to express the psyche behind a bullfight - an extremely significant ritual concerning the triumph of the enlightened man over his animal instincts. The exquisite choreography is interlaced with excerpts of poetry from Garcia Lorca's "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías", a haunting and powerful elegy of the goring and death of a bullfighter. It would be a shame to miss this fiery performance.

The organisers of Samarpana have always emphasised cultural understanding and encouraging youngsters in Singapore to perform. Hence in the Upcoming Artists programme, Diya Gopalan, a student at the Shri Sri Laya Dance School in Singapore will perform a solo Bharatanatyam piece based on numeracy - Sanakhya.

The last day at the festival is poised to be most interesting for the playful child within all of us. The Sunday matinee show presents four styles of dance under one umbrella, summarising the essence of Samarpana. L'Académie du Danse presents ballet, the NUS Dance Ensemble headed by the inimitable Zaini Tahir showcases contemporary, and Shri Sri Laya School of Dance performs Bharatanatyam - all different styles but exploring one common theme relating to fables and philosophies revolving around the lives of birds. With many different dance forms in one production, Feathered Fables is a must-watch!

Singapore has a fervent community of classical dancers who are interested in learning how dance has evolved through time. To spur these curiosities, the

producer of the festival Gayatri Sriram said that this year Samarpana has set up a panel discussion to understand this. "We will look at dilution of classical art forms - do we need to do that to ensure continuity? Adopt or adapt? Why is it that some art forms succeed in their original and some transplant and transform?" With performers, scholars and dance promoters involved in these discussions, it promises to be a lively and constructive forum. All are welcome, say the organisers.

In the finale, Amrita Labiri, one of the foremost Kochipudi performers of today presents Chitrangada, a warrior princess whose desire for Arjan transforms her into a beautiful woman, but upon the call of war has to return to her former self. Amrita's displays light-footed grace and emotional depth in this tale written by Rabindranath Tagore.

Festival tickets are priced reasonably between S\$20-70 making it affordable for the entire family. Samarpana demystifies classical dance and makes it accessible, comprehensible and enjoyable to the novice. And as one such novice who attended last year, I can say that this is absolutely true!

(The writer is a student of UWCSEA and a dance fanatic.)

