

the subject, and the film could do without them. Few scholars of qawwali are interviewed, however, although their commentary is excellent and informative.

After exploring the role of music among Sufis, the film addresses the often neglected but interesting role of women in qawwali, and includes some of the most poignant singing in the film, performed by several of Nusrat's female students. An exploration of Nusrat's family background presents his initial impetus for performing qawwali, and his significant public performances after the death of his father, who was also a qawwal. Nusrat is known outside of India and Pakistan primarily due to his association with popular music artists such as Peter Gabriel. A discussion of Nusrat's "internationalization" also includes the controversy regarding use of his music in Hollywood film soundtracks. Nusrat is the most recognized and beloved qawwali singer, and his untimely death has left a void in the qawwali musical community. The film ends by introducing a possible successor, his nephew Rahat.

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Rahat Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Nusrat's nephew, and Farruck Fateh Ali Khan, Nusrat's brother, provide music for the film. Although qawwali is played throughout the film, the variety of songs is limited and footage is drawn from only a few concerts. Using a select number of songs, however, does provide continuity for the film, and the cumulative effect makes an impact on the listener by the end of the documentary.

While the film is certainly appropriate for college, high school, and even middle school, both the content and the structure of the video require some preparation by the instructor, regardless of level. In terms of content, one unfortunate drawback is the film's lack of emphasis on lyrics and poetry. Since the Sufi poetry is of primary importance, it would be highly beneficial to familiarize students with translations to illustrate the use of metaphor and depth of devotional expression. The technique used in formatting the documentary alternates short segments of concert footage and interviews, with overlying voice narration. The truncated concert clips, however, do not provide those unfamiliar with the genre to grasp an overall sense of the musical form, and students should listen to a qawwali song in its entirety.

This documentary is accessible to students with little or no familiarity with Islam, Sufism, or qawwali, but is equally interesting to those who are more knowledgeable. The narration is succinct and clear, and explains complex ideas in a straightforward manner that will provide abundant material for further classroom discussion.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Read examples of Sufi poetry and discuss the use of metaphor and symbolism.
- Listen to a song in its entirety for its overall form and specific musical characteristics.
- Compare the composition, performance practice, and function of the qawwali ensemble to other singing ensembles and devotional genres more familiar to students such as gospel.
- Introduce the idea that each qawwali song is never a final product but rather an unfinished version—one improvisation or

interpretation among many.

- Discuss the role of women in Islam and in qawwali.

#### SUGGESTED LISTENING

*Songs of the Mystics*, Abida Parveen (a well-respected female Sufi devotional singer), Navras NRCD 5505/6.

*The Sabri Brothers—Greatest Hits*, Shanachie SHA 64090

*Qawwali: Vocal Art of the Sufis*, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, JVC World Sounds, VICG 5030

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

Barks, Coleman. 1997. *The Essential Rumi*. San Francisco: Harper.

Barks, Coleman. 2002. *The Soul of Rumi: A New Collection of Ecstatic Poems*. San Francisco: Harper.

Schimmel, Annemarie. 2001. *Rumi's World: The Life and Work of the Great Sufi Poet*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.

Wilson, Peter L. 1999. *Drunken Universe: An Anthology of Persian Sufi Poetry*, 2nd edition, Pacific Grove, CA: Cole Publishing Company. ■

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## Kutiyattam (A CD-ROM)

### Sanskrit Theater of India

By Farley Richmond

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

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This multimedia, interactive CD-ROM is a visually rich and appealing survey of the ancient South Indian theater of kutiyattam, associated with temples and religious ritual since the tenth century CE. Special temple servant castes produce the dance-story performances that are considered to be visual sacrifices to the temple deity.

The main musical instruments are a special kind of drum with an elaborate repertoire, hand cymbals, and a small hand drum. After years of comparative research on performing arts in India, Richmond learned that kutiyattam is probably the only kind of performing art in India that still carefully follows the ancient Sanskrit treatise, the *Natyashastra*.

An unusual feature of kutiyattam is that actors playing male roles chant in Sanskrit, and while playing female roles they chant in Prakrit (also an ancient, classical language). The theatrically

important clown figure speaks colloquial Malayalam, the main language of Kerala. Some female roles are enacted by men, some by a particular caste of women. The audience, which nowadays consists of anyone who wants to see the performance, listens to a short Malayalam narration of the story before the play begins. A kutiyattam performance is so complex that only segments of a story will be presented throughout an entire night, lengthened by elaborate conventional explanations and digressions from the narrative. Richmond states that kutiyattam was historically a precursor to the more familiar (to south Indian aficionados, anyway) Kerala kathakali dance theatre.

The self-loading CD is dual platform. It opens with a rotating globe upon which are superimposed photos from the CD. This figure resolves into a faint background for the title, author and designer names, publisher, and date. There is no main menu page, but all pages present the menu as a series of named colorful buttons, medallion figures suggesting a dancer's belt, placed along the length of the left side of the frame. There are eight sections: Introduction, Contexts, Texts, Community, Training, Character, Music, and Reference. Below these are small signs for Navigation Help or Quit. When one clicks a bright medallion button, it enlarges slightly and one goes to the first page of its section. Subsections are accessed by clicking on buttons on the additional ribbon that appears at the bottom of the frame to announce them. Small pop-up windows also direct the reader/viewer to other parts of the CD.

The introduction presents basic information about kutiyattam, its history, locations in Kerala, etc. Its page nine presents the first video clip, a performer impersonating a queen's handmaid telling about a bird eating a flower, about two seconds, with clear voice-over by Richmond. The contexts section on India includes three maps, showing significant places and the distribution across the country of the main religions and other performing arts. This section also has a button on Kerala with varied photos, including typical Keralan temple architecture. There is very much more in this CD, which includes 147 video clips, 76 sound clips, and 620 photographs. The most detailed, culturally-intricate presentations are found in the texts, training, and music sections. The reference section contains an appendix that lists major essays and also primary sources, all hyperlinked in red to their respective texts, a full scholarly array. These texts can be saved or printed out. The last item in the appendix is a Sanskrit text on gesture, including audio clips of a Brahmin chanting the verses. A nice feature of this segment—running the cursor over the Sanskrit verses gives the reader the English translation. Reference also includes a bibliography, the credits, and a help section. The function of a glossary is supplied by small pop-up windows that open in the texts when a red, hyperlinked, technical term is clicked, providing a short definition. There is no discography or video list, perhaps because recordings and videos are actually limited, and/or available only in India or Kerala.

This CD's organization is broadly successful as an introduction to the subject and could stimulate, through its multimedia offerings, the desire in some viewers to learn more about this ancient ritual theater. I'd expect musicians to find themselves absorbed in learning the *talas* (drum rhythms), and theater students inspired to work on the facial gestures. But students inspired by this work would need to find living instructors and courses in Indian theater and music, as the CD itself does not provide training. (Richmond notes in one of his essays in the appendix that he created a training video when he was at the University of Michigan. This video is not listed in the appendix; one wonders if it is still available.) Kutiyattam could provide a valuable enrichment resource, either as operated with a multimedia projector in the classroom, or reserved in the library for courses on Indian arts and culture. If he has the video, perhaps Farley Richmond would soon consider putting a series of kutiyattam performances on DVD-ROM, a medium that, unlike a CD-ROM, provides more than four gigabytes of recording space. This CD certainly whets one's appetite for more. ■

**JOANNA KIRKPATRICK** taught cultural and social anthropology at Bennington College, 1967–1994 and is now retired. She authored and produced a multimedia interactive CD-ROM titled *Transports of Delight: The Ricksha Arts of Bangladesh*, just out from Indiana University Press, 2003.

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Assisted by scholars, K-12 teachers designed these curriculum plans during an NEH Institute entitled "Cultures and Religions of the Himalayan Region" held at The College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, in the summer of 2002.