

## DOSSIER

Richard Tremblay  
Chorégraphe et auteur

Directeur artistique à  
Danse Kalashas

## **Aperçu de parcours**

DANSE KALASHAS  
2024

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Site web :  
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*Festival International du masque*

« La narration chorégraphique a hérité des épopées ».

Richard Tremblay en conférence et démonstration



*Olivier Samson Arcand (2003)*

***Prayer for a Rope, a Pope & a Rogue***

# Diachronie

Performance de plateau  
Étalement spatial en diachronie. Musique de percussion orchestrée



Le chorégraphe convie danseurs et musiciens sur une scène habillée de blanc. Quatre percussionnistes interprètent une composition de Bruno Paquet pour la percussion d'orchestre, les tablas et les instruments de percussion de Kathakali. Figure de proue de la scène française de par sa collaboration aux travaux de Peter Brook, Jean-Guy Lecat joint à sa scénographie figurant les sommets himmalayiens une lumière balayant le corps chaud du danseur à travers le prisme du glacier. Créée à Montréal en 2002–2003, *In Himalayas*, *Prayer for a Rope*, *a Pope and a Rogue* est une chorégraphie associée au rythme et à la musique de percussion.



*La gestuelle est à la fois tellurique et attirée vers les hauteurs. Le torse, les bras, les mains, le bassin, les jambes, tout est ouvert, offert au monde, mais Tremblay fait aussi passer dans les corps des contractions intenses qui les investissent d'une densité palpable.* (La Presse, Montréal)

*Un travail unique des mains, propre à l'art indien. (Le Devoir, Montréal. Le chorégraphe cherche à procurer un sentiment de l'Himalaya, au-delà des clichés, explique [Richard Tremblay] cet homme de scène expérimenté.* [Voir, Montréal]

Quand Richard Tremblay pense « montagne », il pense Himalaya... Spectacle intéressant à plusieurs points de vue. » [Radio-Canada, Montréal.]

Chorégraphie : Richard Tremblay  
Répétitrice : Geneviève Pepin  
Lumières et scénographie : Jean-Guy Lecat  
Musique de percussion et percussion de kathakali : Bruno Paquet

## INTERPRÈTES

Peter Trosztmer, Sophie Janssens, Benoît Leduc  
Mariko Tanabe, Pascale Léonard, et  
Georges Molnar [dans le rôle de l'ermite]  
Percussionnistes : Bruno Paquet [Chenda, Maddalam  
et Edakka], Shawn Mativetsky, Catherine Meunier  
et Jagjit Singh aux Tablas.

Œuvre « tout en contrastes », « fascinante », de souligner la presse montréalaise, *In Himalaya*, *Prayer for a Rope*, *a Pope and a Rogue* est un programme complet d'une durée de 75 minutes.

Première [2003], Usine C [Centre de diffusion national et international]. Coproduit par Danse Kalashas [2003], Usine C et Ensemble Mahapooram.

# Héritage des épopées

*Le kathakali tient son mode de narration du conte épique étalé sur une nuit et reprend le récit des bardes. Le ponnāni(chantre) est le rhapsode réinventé du Kathakali alors que le danseur (« naṭan ») en est le prolongement iconique, le corps stylisé de cette puissante figure du passé qui a porté le récit des épopées. Le Kathakali a édifié son organisation dramatique sur le pouvoir évocateur émanant du narrateur en y superposant le dialogue et le temps chorégraphique. De là, l'hybridation du grand récit épique hérité des traditions et de la figuration dansée.*

Richard Tremblay



Scène de combat telle que figurée en danse kathakali. [Archives Kalashas] et illustration sur une pièce de poterie de la Grèce ancienne [British Museum].

Chantées par les rhapsodes, les épopées sont les romans du Monde ancien.

Cf HAGG, Thomas [1998 : 110-11] autour de l'assimilation de la figuration épique par le roman moderne.

## *Kurukshetra* – les terres de Kuru



*Danse Kalashas*

### ***Extrait de la première indienne (2014)***

*Sadanam Bhasi [Krishna] et Sadanam Krishankutty [Arjuna] dans la scène « Gitopadesham »*

D'après l'épopée *Mahabharata* de l'Inde

*Kurukshetra* [« le pays de la dynastie *Kuru* »] est le site d'une bataille entre deux clans familiaux rivaux, les Kurus et les Pandavas, les protagonistes d'une intrigue de guerre dans l'épopée *Mahabharata*. Le Kathakali *Kurukshetra* dépeint les préparatifs menant à la confrontation, l'affrontement à Kurukshetra et la décimation des Kurus qui en a résulté.

Avec les danseurs Vazhengada Vijayan, Sadanam Krishnankutty, Margi Vijayakumar, K. Soman, Pradeep Kumar et Anil Kumar.

Chants : Balachandran et S. P. Sajeev Kumar.

Percussion aux tambours [chenda et maddalam] : Balasundaran, Raja Narayanan et Bruno Paquet.

Costumes et maquillages : Raja Narayanan, Nambiarath Sivaraman et Appunni Tharakan.

Littérature performative [attakatha] et réinterprétation chorégraphique :

RICHARD TREMBLAY

Lumières et scénographie : JEAN-GUY LECAT

Son : BRUNO PAQUET

Production : Danse Kalashas en partenariat avec l'École des Beaux-Arts et du Théâtre, Université de Calicut, campus Thrissur, Kerala, Inde.

Merci à Narayanan Vinod, Nalanan Pillai, K. K. Gopalakrishnan et la Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute.

# ***L'Iliade* (« La colère d'Achille »)**



Captation (Swathin, 2000)

## ***Extrait de la production internationale (2000)***

*Achille [Sadanam Krishnankutty] et sa mère,  
la déesse de la mer Thétis [Margi Vijayan]*

Héritier d'une longue tradition kéralaise, le kathakali prend en charge les récits de héros et d'héroïnes qu'ont racontés les rhapsodes et les récitants des épopées homériques. Dans la création *La Colère d'Achille*, l'Iliade est portée à la scène dans les représentations visuelles du théâtre de danse Kathakali, la musique vocale et les percussions du Kerala. L'Iliade est ainsi recréée dans toute sa dimension épique et attache les récits de la Grèce ancienne au répertoire de Kathakali.

Avec les danseurs Vazhengada Vijayan, Sadanam Krishnankutty, Margi Vijayakumar,  
K. Soman, Pradeep Kumar et Anil Kumar.

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RICHARD TREMBLAY

Lumières et scénographie : JEAN-GUY LECAT

Son : BRUNO PAQUET

*La Colère d'Achille* a été créée à Thrissur [Kerala] à la première institution de Kathakali le Kerala Kalamandalam et les membres de la troupe de cette institution. L'œuvre a été présentée en première Indienne par cette compagnie sous la direction artistique du maître danseur Kalamandalam Gopi au Centre national des arts de la scène [NCPA, Tata Auditorium] à Mumbai en 1991 avec la contribution de la Sangeeth Natak Academi et de la section culturelle du Haut-commissariat du Canada à Delhi. La production internationale d'octobre 2000 à Singapour, coproduction de Danse Kalashas [Montréal] et Swadiin Productions [Singapour], a été rendue possible grâce à une bourse de l'Institut Indo-Canadien Shastri [SICI] et l'assistance aux déplacements d'artistes du Conseil des Arts du Canada [danse] et du Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec [musique]. Merci à l'Asian Museum, Singapour, pour l'archivage. L'œuvre a été répétée pour une classe dans les studios de danse du Kerala Kalamandalam en janvier 2011 avec les maîtres Balasubramanian, Ramadas, Krishna Kumar et Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan au *chenda*.

# **Le conteur qui se raconte**

*The Story Maker performs live tonight*  
**Reconstruction de danse présentée en 1916**



(Merwart, 1916)

## **Rôle historique de femme, Kottayam (1916)**

Représenté dans Merwarth(1926)

In Tremblay (2020) **The Kathakali Explorer**, *Performing History*. Presses Universitaires Kalamandalam.

L'ethnologue et linguiste A. M. Merwarth qui a assisté à une représentation de kathakali à Kottayam dans l'État du Kerala en 1916 a publié un compte rendu de la production et de ses recherches en la matière dans une monographie sur la danse théâtre Kathakali parue dans *Le Journal Asiatique* [Paris, 1926]. Cet ouvrage, accompagné de dessins, de photos prises en 1916 et de représentations graphiques a été traduit, annoté, commenté et complété par des sources connexes dans *The Kathakali Explorer* [Tremblay, 2020]. Cette traduction annotée et ses addenda constituent le matériel documentaire de base pour la recherche et la création entourant la reconstruction.

## **Le spectacle de 1916**

Titre de l'œuvre : *Narakasuravadham*

Auteur du texte performatif : Kartikatirunna [1724-98]

Année de présentation : 1916

Lieu : Kottayam [Kerala, India]

## **Recherche et création**

Sous la direction de Richard Tremblay

La reconstruction envisagée fait appel à un plan de production et de recherche menant à un montage pour la scène de l'œuvre historique. Projet de collaboration étendue, cette entreprise pionnière dans le domaine des études sur les performances passées appelle un vaste plan de travail incluant :

- un programme de recherche fondamentale portant sur la reconstruction d'œuvres passées centrée sur les études de Kathakali ;
- un apport à la création misant sur la participation de danseurs, de musiciens, d'artistes lyriques et de concepteurs engagés dans un travail d'interprétation, de chorégraphie et des arts du théâtre ; de même que
- des contributions académiques et financières provenant d'universités, d'agences publiques et privées.

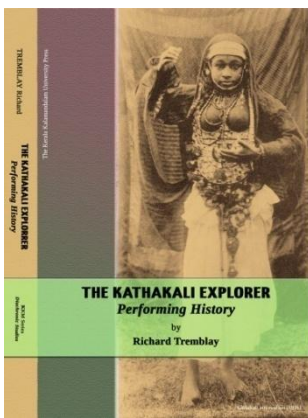
Document de première main : [\*The Kathakali Explorer \(2020\)\*](#)



## Création pour le livre

### ***The Kathakali Explorer – Performing History***

Ouvrage critique traitant de la monographie *Les Kathakalis du Malabar* publiée dans *Le Journal Asiatique* (CCIX, no 2, 1926).



TREMBLAY, Richard (2020).

*The Kathakali Explorer – Performing History*. The Kerala Kalamandalam University Press (Diachronic Studies Series), 234.

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***The Kathakali Explorer*** (« À la découverte du Kathakali ») traite de l'œuvre et de la vie de deux ethnologues, A. M. et L. Merwarth, et de leur périple de 4 ans dans l'Inde coloniale pendant la Première Guerre mondiale au cours d'une mission anthropologique couvrant les arts visuels et de la scène, les langues et la littérature de la culture dravidiennne. Les ethnologues ont aussi documenté la vie au quotidien des peuples du sous-continent indien. Ce faisant, ils ont rédigé la première monographie de la danse théâtre Kathakali (première « ethnochorégraphie », selon l'anthropologue Kurath, 1963) dans la foulée d'une représentation de nuit à laquelle ils assistèrent à Kottayam dans l'état indien du Kérala, le 14 janvier 1916. Cette monographie est traduite dans le présent ouvrage critique incluant une introduction et de nombreuses annotations, suivie du travelogue des deux chercheurs portant sur leur vie et leur travail à la grandeur du sous-continent Indien, les gens avec qui ils se sont fait amis au cours de leur quête infatigable les ayant conduit des plateaux du Deccan à la vallée du Cachemire.

[Publié en langue anglaise](#)

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# **Annexes**

Danse Kalashas

# HIMALAYAS

Prayer for a Rope, a Pope and a Rogue

Un séjour de deux ans dans les Himalayas est le point de départ de cette nouvelle oeuvre de Richard Tremblay. Le chorégraphe y évoque l'expérience intense de ces deux années dans une production de danse contemporaine pour six interprètes et trois musiciens.

Dans le cadre de l'événement LA MONTAGNE, LA FORÊT, L'ARBRE, placé sous le haut patronnage de l'UNESCO et organisé par le Service du développement culturel de la ville de Montréal.

Création

**Richard Tremblay**

Interprètes

Sophie Janssens

Benoît Leduc

Pascale Léonard

Mariko Tanabe

Peter Trotzmer

Georges Molnar

Musiciens

Bruno Paquet

Shawn Mativetsky

Jag Jit Singh

**6, 7 et 8 février**

**à 20h00**

Musique

**Bruno Paquet**

Scénographie

**Jean-Guy Lecat**



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SEMAINE DU 1<sup>er</sup> AU 7 FÉVRIER 2003  
LE GUIDE DE LA TÉLÉVISION ET DES SORTIES

# L'AGENDA

Chorégraphie  
en altitude

**DANSE** » Himalayas

**TÉLÉVISION** » PAGE 19  
La Soirée des Masques

**VIDÉO** » PAGE 18  
Laissez-passer



« On peut reconnaître dans Himalayas (*Prayer for a Rope, a Pope and a Rogue*) ce travail unique des mains propre à l'art indien ».

(Le Devoir, 9 févr. 2003)

## *Danse Kalashas is absolute contrast*

**KATHRYN GREENAWAY**  
GAZETTE DANCE CRITIC

**REVIEW**

Tuesday night, Danse Kalashas artistic director and choreographer Richard Tremblay demonstrated how much he has grown in the past two years with a program of biculturally influenced contemporary dance at the Saidye Bronfman.

Richard is a Montrealer trained in the complex technique of Kathakali Indian classical dance as well as Western contemporary idioms. Through perseverance, and some shaky debuts, he has finally come up with a seamless thread with which to weave together the superb hand gestures of the East with familiar contemporary swerves and sways of the West.

This meshing of techniques was at its best during the trio *L'Attracteur d'Exhikode*, and at its most drawn-out in the evening closer, *The Paradox of the Burning Sky*.

In *L'Attracteur*, the lovely Geneviève Pepin and Francine Gagné, with Kyrill Chour, appealed to the rain gods in a meeting of movements based on ancient rain rituals from Southern India.

### **Graceful spirals**

The trio travelled separate paths with graceful spirals, delicate wrist work, deep pliés, and gentle pendulum swings with the legs. Pepin, especially, radiated a palpable sincerity throughout.

Tremblay focuses on contemplative canons of select movements which he uses and reuses to mesmerizing effect. The scores act more as aural backdrop than musical instigators (along the lines of Cunningham and Cage) and the message radiates peace and spirituality.

■ *Danse Kalashas* is at Saidye Bronfman Centre (5170 Côte Ste. Catherine Rd.) through Saturday at 8 p.m. For ticket info: 739-7944, or Admission outlets (790-1245).

# Esquisse d'un corps divers

## Résidence chorégraphique : Danse Kalashas/Richard Tremblay au Centre chorégraphique Belfort-Sochaux, France (1998)

<https://silentculture.org/pdfs/Residences-Belfort-1998- marked2.pdf#view=fitH&page=31&zoom=125,600&toolbar=0>



### Remerciements

### PRÉSENTATION DU TRAVAIL EN COURS

**Chorégraphe :** Richard Tremblay

**Jeudi 17 Septembre à 17 heures**  
**Centre Chorégraphique National de Franche Comté à Belfort-Sochaux**

dans le cadre de la résidence de

Extrait chorégraphique créé dans le cadre du programme d'accueil d'artistes en résidence du

Centre Chorégraphique National de Franche-Comté à Belfort-Sochaux, et avec son soutien.

Le Chorégraphe tient à remercier le Conseil des Arts du Canada, le Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec

ainsi que la direction et l'équipe du Centre Chorégraphique.

## P A R C O U R S

Le parcours du chorégraphe Richard Tremblay commence par le nouveau théâtre américain et passe par le *kathakali*, danse classique de l'Inde.

*La Courbe en Flocon de Neige (1995), Amas de Percolation (1993), le Paradoxe du Ciel en Feu (1992), L'attracteur d'Ezhikode (1991) et Of Mice and Other Similar Devices (1990)*, œuvres créées et présentées à Montréal, témoignent d'un apport singulier à la nouvelle danse qui s'est développée dans cette ville canadienne, au cours des quinze dernières années.

Son travail de créateur l'implique dans différents milieux artistiques, dont celui de l'Inde. Il est directeur associé et cofondateur, avec le compositeur Bruno Paquet, du *Centre de Création pour la Musique et la Danse*.

C'est de là qu'il dirige sa compagnie, *Danse Kalashas*, fondée en 1990.

Les interprètes Guillaume Lemasson, qui a dansé avec Claude Brumachon, et Anil Kumar, danseur originaire de l'Inde et formé en danse *kathakali*, ont travaillé avec le chorégraphe pendant sa résidence au *Centre Chorégraphique de Belfort*.

*Au-delà de la différence, de l'identité du double, se trouve l'identité du Divers, génératrice de changement, de transformation, de création, de désir. A cette confluence, la diversité rencontre la diversité pour en faire apparaître de nouvelles.*

Richard Tremblay

*Esquisse d'un Corps Divers* est la deuxième phase d'un projet d'œuvre chorégraphique qui sera complété en l'an 2000.

### *Esquisse d'un Corps Divers*

**Chorégraphie**  
Richard Tremblay

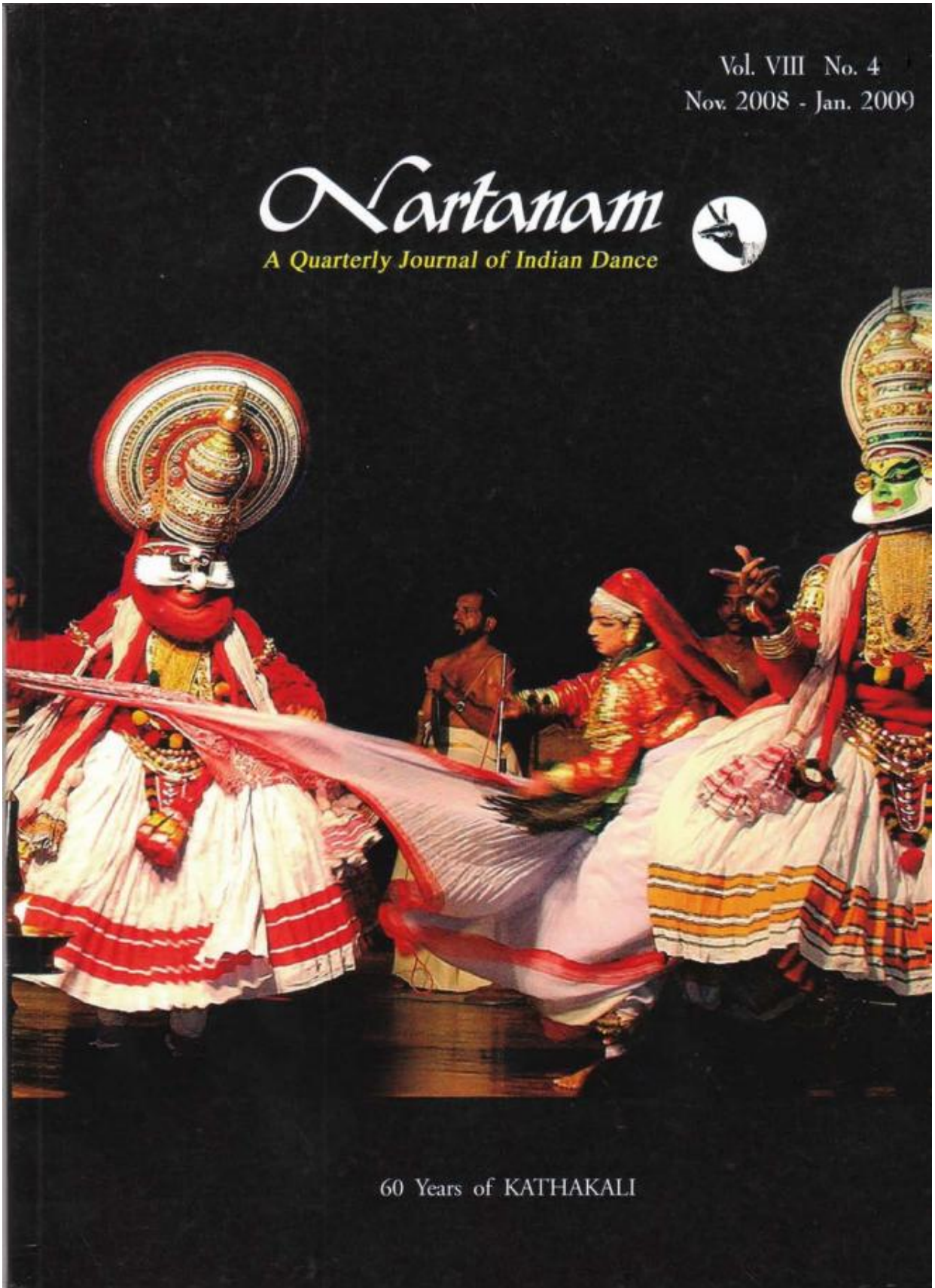
**Musique enregistrée**  
*Les Arbres Célestes*, de Bruno Paquet  
*Shiraz*, de Claude Vivier

**Danseurs**  
Anil Kumar  
Guillaume Lemasson

## *Sixty years of KATHAKALI*

Vol. VIII No. 4  
Nov. 2008 - Jan. 2009

*Nartanam*  
A Quarterly Journal of Indian Dance



60 Years of KATHAKALI

Survol des contributions au kathakali pendant les 60 dernières années, incluant le répertoire et les créations. Pages reproduites de la revue *Nartanam*, Vo. VIII, No. 4.

RNI No. APENG/2001/4294

*Nartanam*, published as a quarterly by the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai, provides a forum for scholarly dialogue on a broad range of topics concerning Indian dance. Its concerns are theoretical as well as performative. Textual studies, dance criticism, intellectual and interpretative history of Indian dance traditions will be its focus. It publishes performance reviews and covers all major events in the field of dance in India and notes and comments on dance studies and performances abroad.

The opinions expressed in the articles and the reviews are the writers' own and do not reflect the opinions of the editorial committee.

Cover Page : Kerala Kalamandalam's performance  
(Courtesy : K.K. Gopalakrishnan)

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## NARTANAM

Volume - VIII, No. 4

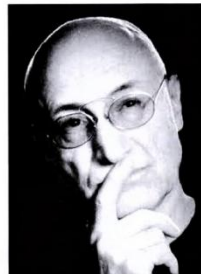
November 2008 - January 2009

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Totally shaking the world of Kathakali and its 'predominant obstinacy' in accepting any stories of new origin *Karnasapadam* was whole heartedly accepted in both Southern and Northern Kerala. Since the 1970s, *Karnasapadam* is treated on par with other popular stories like the Nalacharitham; it turned as the only well-accepted Kathakali repertoire composed in modern times and performed.

#### The Iliad in Kathakali format with English verses



Richard Tremblay

In 1987, Canadian dance choreographer Richard Tremblay, who got trained in Kathakali acting from the Kalamandalam, made an attempt to present *The Iliad* in Kathakali with English verses. But this maiden effort didn't work out the way one desired since the traditional vocalists were unable to cope with the correct pronunciation of English words, though from the artists' viewpoint "the ragas and talas remained unaffected and all vocalists and actors were able to maintain the narrative elements of the art form." Later, Richard successfully choreographed the same story with Sanskritised Malayalam librettos with the support of senior masters and successfully presented *The Iliad* in various centres

in Kerala and other parts of India and in Singapore. Followed by this came France based Annette Ledey's attempt with Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which was presented in countries like the UK.

#### Women in Kathakali

Though Kathakali is masculine and men handle even the female roles, a few women indeed made endeavours since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but not in hero roles. In 1975, a women's Kathakali troupe was formed in Thrippoonithura (Kochi), with female artists for acting and



An all-women troupe

vocal music. They were able to find a space of their own in the male dominated art form. However for costumes and the percussion, Chenda and Maddalam, they bank on male artists. Though by and large it is a performance troupe of a few amateurs the long and short of it is that their efforts are laudable. Artists like noted actress Chavara Parukutty was too associated with this troupe.

#### A significant attempt:

A significant attempt in Kathakali early this century is an effort initiated by actor Sadanam Krishnankutty to bring back the traditional attire of Sage Parasurama in the play *Seeta Swayamvaram*. Since this story was not very often performed and generally not used for class-room (*kalar*) training in any of the schools, there were doubts about the choreography and the attire for Parasurama. During early 1950s Kalamandalam Ramankutty Nair, with the support of Vallathol, designed new costumes for Parasurama, with no typical attires of the art like *chutti*, *uduthukettu* and *kireetam*, following the depiction in Ravi Varma pictures and considering the fact that the character is both a sage and a warrior of equal significance. Though it attracted several controversies, the final end was that it resulted in bringing back the character on to the stage in the new outfit. After several years of successful staging during 1950-80, the play *Sita Swayamvaram* again went to almost oblivion after Ramankutty Nair stopped handling this role; a few artists who continued performing the role not being able to achieve the mark that Nair had brought in.



Sadanam Krishnan Kutty



Chavara Parukutty

Late Keezhpadam Kumaran Nair had given a clear depiction about the traditional costume of Parasurama in his autobiography (1999) and reminisced about his innumerable portrayals of Rama with the great Guru Chandu Panikkar (1875-1969) as Parasurama. He recorded that it was *pazhuppu* (ripe) and black beard with the usual outfits of Kathakali. According to late Maddalam maestro Venkichen Swamy (1873-1951), who saw the play, the role had "a sort of facial



# theflyinginkpottheatreviews

## THE ILIAD: GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN KATHAKALI by Swadhin Productions

reviewed by marcus tan

date: 8 Oct 2000

time: 7:30 pm

venue: the wtc auditorium

rating: \*\*\*\*1/2

### A CROSS-CULTURAL TROJAN HORSE

According to T.S. Eliot, all works of art, in order to be great, must seek their meaning from and be enconced in the 'tradition.' No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists' ('Tradition and the Individual Talent'). If we agree with Eliot that all works of art are haunted by the spirits of dead forefathers, Swadhin Productions' dramatisation of Greek poet and lyricist Homer's epic poem 'The Iliad' should not only invoke their supernatural presence but inevitably seek its approval from these spectres of authority. This production, however, overturns this dictum. Presented as Kathakali, a traditional Indian dance form that is almost three hundred years old, the production brings about not only a unique meeting of two great cultures and traditions but creates an imaginative space, corporealised in performance, of an unknown dimension that fuses both Hindu mysticism and Classical mythology. Kathakali, literally meaning 'story-play', is a dance-drama that originated in the 17th century, a time parallel to Shakespeare, in a small South Indian state called Kerala. Kathakali can then rightly be said to be an Eastern equivalent of Shakespeare's plays, which fuse a kaleidoscope of art forms, for this Indian dance-form combines harmoniously the five art forms of literature (narrative), music, painting, acting and dance in an integrated and seamless matrix to tell the story.

**'THE ILIAD is certainly a visual spectacle that awes and captivates. It is nonetheless alienating for those who are unable to comprehend its unique gestural language'**

THE ILIAD dramatises one of Western canon's greatest epics, 'The Iliad'; the dance-drama enacts the middle books of this epic poem which narrates the renowned feud between Hector and Achilles. The dance-drama begins with the meeting of Hector and Andromache after the former's return from the battlefield. This is followed by the conquests of Patroclus against the Trojans, which inevitably leads to his confrontation with and death at the hands of Hector. The two-and-a-half hour production ends with Achilles' cruel vengeance on Hector after the former's acquisition of Hephaestus' magical shield. Imagine Shakespeare's dramatic action and soliloquies without words and you will come to understand the difficulty that is yet the beauty of Kathakali. Kathakali presents its story purely via a culturally specific kinetic code that is delicately interwoven with musical codes. From the quiet 'soliloquies' of Hector and the magical visions of Achilles to the tense combats between the two, the dancers employ an extensive repertoire of facial expressions and gestures to narrate a tale that would have been told verbally in conventional drama. The entire story is presented via gesture, movement and expression; the music of the percussion, often accompanied subtly by chanting, then guides the viewer along by establishing the climaxes through an incessant drumming that parallels the tempo of the rising and declining moments of tension.

The telling of a Western Classic through Indian dance becomes a unique and exhilarating experience of cultural intersection [inter-borrowing/interaction]. Creator and Director Richard Tremblay manages to weave the gestures of Indian dance with Western sways and swerves. The expression 'East meets West' is a phrase that calls to mind the novelties of fusion food and blond hair on Asian heads, and is perhaps a cliché that is insufficient to classify the cultural density of THE ILIAD. Rather, Tremblay's ILIAD exemplifies the phrase 'East confronts West'. The colonised now re-scribes and reinterprets the text of the coloniser in what can be seen as a post-colonial gesture of the overturning and redefinition of a 'great' tradition. Homer's epic poem becomes unrecognisable when staged as Kathakali for Kathakali extracts the epic and heroic elements and transforms them into universals that can be identified across cultures. THE ILIAD reminds us that as much as Homer has his heroes and heroines, the Indian culture possesses its great traditions such as the Mahabharata. When staged, the Western epic is no greater than the Eastern. Appreciated as performance, THE ILIAD is certainly a visual spectacle that awes and captivates. It is nonetheless alienating for those who are unable to comprehend its unique gestural language. But perhaps in that process of alienation, the text of the colonised severs its umbilical cord with the coloniser's. The haunting spectre of Homer is ignored as THE ILIAD manages to make strange to the western viewer what is scripted as an archetype of the great Western tradition.

<https://inkpotreviews.com/oldInkpot/00reviews/00reviliagreemythkath.html>

N.B. The review published on the website of the Singapore *Flying Inkpot* in 2000. A PDF version was archived at [silentculture.org](http://silentculture.org) before the site shot down in 2014.

The original site of the *Flying Inkpot* and its review of *The Kathakali Iliad* has been archived on a public hub:

<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/webarchives/2022-07->

[12%2020:41:40.000/wp/details/http:%2F%2Fwww.inkpotreviews.com%2FoldInkpot%2F00reviews%2F00reviliagreemythkath.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/webarchives/2022-07-12%2020:41:40.000/wp/details/http:%2F%2Fwww.inkpotreviews.com%2FoldInkpot%2F00reviews%2F00reviliagreemythkath.html)

On the contribution of the *Flying Inkpot* reviewers and their web site to the theatre life in Singapore and the touring companies who performed there:

<https://sg.style.yahoo.com/entertainment/blogs/singapore-showbiz/singapore-theatre-review-website-the-flying-inkpot-closes-after-19-years-061927858.html>

<https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/archives-of-dormant-singapore-arts-review-website-the-flying-inkpot-to-be-kept-online>

# La Colère d'Achille

## *The Kathakali Iliad*

Reprise à Singapour, coproduction de Danse Kalashas (Centre de création pour musique et danse, Montréal)



**इवद्धिन**  
PRODUCTIONS

&

CENTRE DE CRÉATION  
POUR  
LA MUSIQUE ET LA  
DANSE

Proudly Present

### THE ILIAD

*Greek Mythology  
In Kathakali*

*Choreography  
Richard Tremblay*

*Performed By  
The Best of  
Kerala Kalamandalam,  
Margi & Sadanam  
Dancers & Musicians*

*Space and Light Design  
Jean-Guy Lecat*

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> Oct 2000**  
**World Trade Centre**  
**Auditorium**

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## Le bouclier d'Achille

La description du bouclier d'Achille forgé par le dieu du feu Hephaïstos est une des scènes réputées de l'Iliade. Le dieu y a incrusté des scènes de la vie quotidienne et de combat destinées à inspirer Achille à affronter les Troyens. Il a fallu commander un bouclier à l'accessoiriste pour intégrer cette scène à l'Iliade Kathakali : *La Colère d'Achille*. Le chorégraphe s'est inspiré pour la créer d'un modèle chorégraphique connu en Kathakali sous le nom de *varṇanam*, une séquence de nature descriptive élaborée sur des musiques de percussion. Les descriptions sont exécutées en solo à l'aide de mouvements et de positions de mains, et peuvent durer jusqu'à plus de trente minutes. *La Colère d'Achille* introduit un nouveau *varṇanam* dans le répertoire de Kathakali : le *paricha varṇanam*, ou « description du bouclier ».

(D'après une note du chorégraphe)



Captation screenshot (Swadhin)

Création de Richard Tremblay présentée dans une scénographie et des lumières de Jean-Guy Lecat.



Captation screenshot (Swadhin)

## Conférences/Démonstrations

Rencontres publiques avec présentations d'extraits de travaux suivies d'un échange avec le public et portant sur les enjeux de création.

Programme conjoint avec la danseuse et romancière indienne Radhika Jha à l'occasion de la semaine de la Francophonie à nouvelle Delhi (2008).

Organisé conjointement par l'ambassade du Luxembourg, les Services culturels de l'ambassade de France et les Services culturels de Haut Commissariat du Canada à Nouvelle-Delhi.

# From Canadian contemporary dance to Indian classical dance...

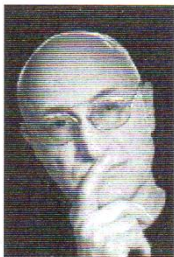
*On the occasion of La Francophonie week 2006, come to a unique discussion/demonstration on the roles of dancers & choreographers in the*  
Captation screenshot (Swadhin)

Presented by:  
**Richard Tremblay**,  
contemporary choreographer, Montreal, Canada  
**Radhika Jha**,  
Odissi dancer, New Delhi, India  
Friday March 24, 2006, 11 am  
Alliance Française Auditorium  
72 Lodi Estate, Delhi  
Entry Free



### Radhika Jha

Based in New Delhi, novelist and dancer Radhika Jha performs a rare form of Odissi, the temple Orissa. A disciple of critically acclaimed Guru Surendranath Jena, whose sensuous and lyric Odissi has greatly widened the repertoire and deepened the emotional content of this popular dar Radhika has been studying Odissi for ten years and has performed in India and Europe. While all the schools of Odissi draw inspiration from Orissa temple sculptures, Guru Jena's choreography departs better known schools of Odissi in turning well-known sculptural poses into movements instead of making the end points of movements. Radhika has honed her choreography to bring out the innovations that are distinctive: abrupt rhythm changes, the use of spoken language, the integration of nritya (movement drama).




### Richard Tremblay

From Montréal, Canada, Richard Tremblay began choreographic theater in the 1970s. One of his works, *Madam's Being Carried Away* (1975-78), was invited to participate in the Baltimore New Festival and earlier presented at the National School of Drama, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the Theater in Srinagar. He also trained at the Kerala Kalamandalam State Academy of Arts, creating *The Achilles*, or *The Iliad* (1988), presented in Mumbai in 1991 and in Singapore in 2000 with his dance company Danse Kalashas.

This intense rapport to India has considerably influenced his contemporary dance work. Following a residency at Odile Duboc's Centre Chorégraphique, in Belfort, France, and in a co-production with Danse K Ensemble Mahapooram (Kathakali percussion), and the Usine C Theater, Montréal, he choreographed *Himalayas; Prayer for a Rope, a Pope, and a Rogue* (2003), a dazzling work, with six dancers and four meters of light and scenography by one of Peter Brook's close associates, Jean-Guy Lecat.

**Présentations sous l'égide de l'Alliance française de Trivandrum (Kérala)**  
dans le cadre des Journées internationales de la Francophonie (2008, 2006).

Alliance Française de Trivandrum  
അലിയോൺസ് ഫ്രാൻസെയിസ് ദ് ട്രിവൻദ്രം

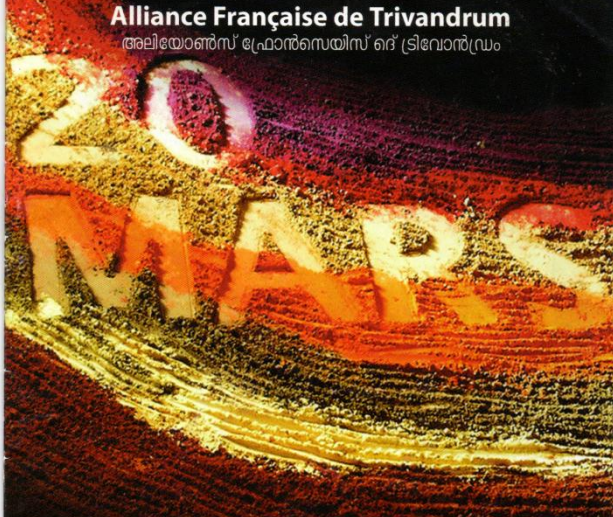


JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

MARCH - APRIL 2008

**af** **Regards**  
Bulletin d'informations-Newsletter

Alliance Française de Trivandrum  
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JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE  
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**af** **Regards**  
Bulletin d'information-Newsletter

MARCH-APRIL '06

ORGANISATION  
INTERNATIONALE DE  
LA FRANCOPHONIE

FRANCOPHONIE

**DANCE WORKSHOP**  
From Storytelling to Story-making  
by Richard Tremblay  
3.30 pm, Saturday 22 March  
@ Alliance Française de Trivandrum




Artiste confirmé de Kathakali et chorégraphe contemporain, Richard Tremblay se propose d'illustrer deux approches différentes du personnage à travers le langage corporel et des extraits vidéo. Compositeur et percussionniste, Bruno Paquet, qui a reçu une formation aux percussions de Kathakali, jouera de la chenda pendant la démonstration.

*Being a Kathakali artist and a choreographer of contemporary dance, Richard Tremblay proposes to illustrate two different approaches of characterization through body language and video excerpts. Composer and percussionist, Bruno Paquet, who was trained in the Kathakali percussion, will play chenda during the demonstration.*

**CINÉMA FRANCOPHONIE**  
Sunday 30 March  
@ Museum auditorium

3 pm  
**La petite Jeusalem / Little Jerusalem** /2005/ 96'/  
Dir: Karin Albu  
Eighteen year old Laura is torn between her religious upbringing and her studies in philosophy and the passion to offer an other view of the world.

5 pm  
**Voisins Voisines/ Résidence Mozart** /2005/ 1h 30'/  
Dir : Malik Chibane/Comedy/Colour  
The residents of the Mozart estate, a privatised former public housing estate, get a new caretaker, Paco, and a new neighbour, a rap musician.

6.45 pm  
**Wesh Wesh Qu'est-ce qui se passe** /2002/ 1 hr 26'  
Dir : Rabah Ameur-Zaimèche  
The life of a group of young adults confronted with the social decomposition of their neighbourhood, seen through Kamel's eyes.

**BETWEEN SKY AND EARTH**  
Dance Workshop  
By Richard Tremblay

1 April  
3.30 pm  
@ Vylloppilly Samskriti Bhavan

A look at contemporary dance: classical or abstract dance, dance-theatre, new dance of pop culture or street dance by Richard Tremblay



**Richard Tremblay**, a well-known Canadian choreographer, is now in India to give a series of conferences on the contemporary dance. His conferences are intended at students, amateurs of dance, music & theatre. In Trivandrum he will present an hour long conference with a view on some of the outstanding performances in France, India, Germany, England and Canada.

**DOCUFICIONS**  
By Jean-Marie Carrel

22 April  
3.30 pm  
@ Alliance Française de Trivandrum



Meet Jean-Marie Carrel, a young filmmaker from France! Jean-Marie Carrel delivers through his recent films a glance at two Asian cities, Tokyo and Bombay. Jean Marie Carrel is the co-director of the production company *a part ça?* which he found in 2002 with Eléna Koutoulidis, a theatre personality from France. He has been in the field of video production (direction, shooting & editing) for the last four years.

**CROSS OVER BOMBAY**  
(BOLLYWOOD BY NUMBERS) / 2006 / 26'  
A documentary fiction, *Cross over Bombay* is the story of a French traveler who passes by Bombay. Obsessed by the image of a world famous Bollywood actress, he moves around the city to meet her.

**FOR TOKYO**  
2005 / 26'  
Reaching Tokyo by train to discover the urban universe; then setting out again. The original music, the absence of dialogue and the montage reveal the border between experimental film, documentary and musical clip.

Click on: [www.apartca.com](http://www.apartca.com)

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE  
FRENCH EMBASSY IN INDIA

WORKSHOP  
VIDEO

## WORKSHOP

# Performing arts

Last Saturday afternoon was unusually brisk at Alliance Francaise de Trivandrum. The terrace came alive with a Canadian choreographer's agile footwork, a curious audience and the enchanting beats of the chenda.

Organised by Alliance Francaise de Trivandrum (AFT) for the second time in two years, a dance workshop, 'From storytelling to story-making' was in progress. Conducted by Richard Tremblay, a Kathakali artist and a choreographer of contemporary dance, the workshop was divided into a demonstration and a series of video excerpts. Composer and seasoned percussionist Bruno Pacquet accompanied Tremblay on the chenda.

## Eloquent mudras

The demonstration itself had Tremblay performing two pieces of dance he had choreographed. With a slight smile playing on his lips, his eyes and fingers portrayed meditation and peace in the world. In this first piece, the gentle, yet evocative Kathakali mudras shone

Choreographer Richard Tremblay and percussionist Bruno Pacquet narrated stories through mudras and beats of the chenda



STORY TIME Richard Tremblay and Bruno Pacquet put up a riveting show for the spectators PHOTO: S. GOPAKUMAR

brilliantly through Tremblay sitting almost motionless. The second piece was contemporary and involved more footwork. Interestingly, while the first piece had no music at all, the second incorporated traditional bells.

The entire demonstration attempted to analyse the role of narration in dance. Interestingly, music adds to the narration, though not always directly. As Tremblay pointed out, dance itself is a language — no word or music is

always necessary.

The second section showcased some excerpts from dance productions choreographed by Tremblay. For the stubborn wife, a duet, had very fluid movements that dramatically trans-

formed into energetic and intense movements. 'Sarpa', a solo performance, was remarkable for the dancer's hand movements that reflected those of a snake. As Tremblay later explained, this piece adapted a "totally

different approach to narration."

In most of the pieces, 60 per cent of the sounds were Indian, said Bruno Pacquet. Besides the chenda, one could also hear the maddalam, the edakka and the tabla.

What followed the workshop — the interaction with the audience — turned out to be the most interesting part of the evening.

"I don't mix Kathakali and contemporary dance... I want to develop my own language," clarified Tremblay.

The discussion got more interesting as another eager member of the audience, a Bharatanatyam dancer herself, wanted to know why contemporary dance was so monotonous and lacked the "variety" of say, an Indian classical dance. In response, Tremblay drew attention to the difference between Western and Indian styles.

As more and more questions poured in, the dance workshop proved the crucial role of the audience. That no performing art truly succeeds without the audience understanding it.

ANUPAMAR

City Express With The New Indian Express

Thiruvananthapuram, Tuesday, April 1, 2008

## 4 CITY LIGHTS

"When I started to play Chenda, I could feel this tremendous energy within me"

# TWO TO TANGO

By Reema Narendran

Kathakali, with its unique combination of fine art such as facial expressions, rhythm and movement of body and hand gestures, has always fascinated many an art-lover across the planet. But it was none of these that left choreographer Richard Tremblay in a trance after viewing a Kathakali performance in Montreal.

"It was the *adya*, the percussion. So many things were happening. I was hearing so many sounds and voices together — that of maddalam, elathalam, edakka, chenda, and chengila. It was a terrific experience and I was like a zombie for two days after that," recalls Richard Tremblay.

He was left in so much of awe that he was compelled to come to Kerala to watch the masters. If coming to Kerala was one major decision, watching Kalamandalam Gopi portraying *Raadrabhimam* paved the way for the other — he decided to learn Kathakali.

"I could not imagine how I could learn this artform but I knew that I had to learn it. My teachers, Kalamandalam

Vijayan and K.Gopalakrishnan, and the students at Kalamandalam were extremely patient with me," he remembers. The years from 1975 to 1981 marked the years of learning for Richard Tremblay.

But he kept coming back, like he had last week, with new compositions of contemporary dance, its essence drawn from Kathakali. Richard Tremblay was here in the city with percussionist and composer Bruno Pacquet for a dance workshop, organised by the Alliance Francaise de Trivandrum. "It is a full dance piece where we attempt to relate contemporary dance with Kathakali music," says the duo, who had earlier performed the same at Delhi. Bruno on the Chenda and Richard with some fluid body movements that were in perfect rhythm to the percussion.

But it was not chenda that had captured Bruno's imagination initially, but tabla. Bruno began his tabla studies with Panalal Chaurasia, in 1974. He went for further studies with the masters Swapan Chaudhuri at Ali Akbar Khan College, San Rafael, and Mukerjee Opadhyaya in Delhi.

It was in mid-eighties that he saw Richard Tremblay perform in Montreal. And it was something that made him think about the percussion possibilities of Kathakali. Ask him which Indian percussion instrument he liked the best and he would say: "I like them all. It is difficult to choose. Like, when I hear a good edakka player, I would think edakka is the best."

Bruno studied the Kathakali percussion instruments, especially chenda, with Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Asan. "They tell me it is an *asuric* instrument, but when I started to play I could feel this tremendous energy within me," says Bruno. "I was already a musician, a percussionist at that, so the learning process was not too difficult. It was only a matter of relating to the instrument," he adds.

Bruno not only studied Kathakali music, but also developed a notation of his own. "I just used the symbols of a stick, a closed round and an open round for the notations. It made learning a lot easier for other musicians in Canada," he says.

Bruno also had to learn to tune the instrument. "It was almost as difficult as learning the instrument. But I have developed a tuner of my own. In this version, the traditional ropes, used in tuning the instrument, have been replaced by levers which provide the drummer with greater control over the tension," says Bruno, who for the last 20 years has been participating in concerts for sitar and tabla, creating and performing for contemporary dance and Kathakali.

The duo have been working together on various projects for many years now. "We are not attempting any kind of fusion. But, for my choreography, Bruno's compositions and the Kathakali percussions are very important. The movements have to be accompanied by the chenda. Bruno has created some fantastic structures that have many layers and we are trying to relate to pure music through dance, through movements," says Richard.

While Richard with his choreography wants to continue exploring the source of movement, Bruno has a dream — to be able to dance.

City Express caught up with choreographer Richard Tremblay and percussionist Bruno Paquet when they came to the city for a dance workshop organised by the Alliance Francaise de Trivandrum

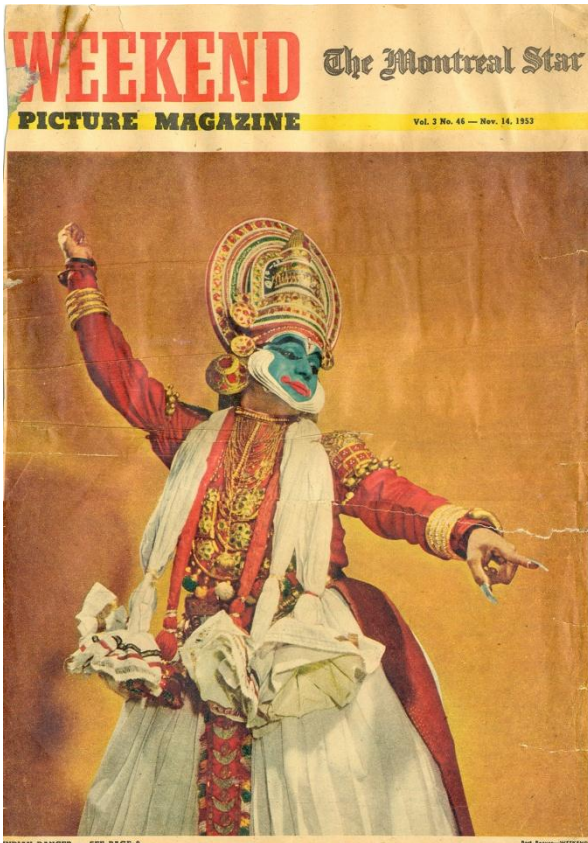


Richard Tremblay and Bruno Paquet. Express/Athul Lal A.G.

## Danse et percussion de Kathakali au Canada

La danse Kathakali et les instruments de percussion associés furent introduits en permanence au Canada et en Amérique du Nord dès 1976 par le chorégraphe Richard Tremblay et le compositeur Bruno Paquet. Un descendant d'une famille de maîtres (*gurukkula*) du Kérala, Ananda Shivaraman, a établi un précédent dans les années 50 en faisant connaître le Kathakali à la grandeur du Canada à partir de Montréal où il a demeuré pendant deux ans.

<https://silentculture.org/wp/danse-theatre-et-percussion-de-kathakali-au-canada/>



J.-F. Boucher (1981)

À gauche : Ananda Shivarama en page couverture du *Weekend Magazine* du *Montreal Star* du 14 nov. 1953. Source : Tremblay R. (2016) et archives Devan, Ernakulam.

Ci-dessus : Danseur émérite et artiste invité K. Gopalakrishnan et danseur et chorégraphe Richard Tremblay en tournée canadienne en 1981, suite à un programme de formation sous assistance par le Conseil des arts du Canada.

Ci-dessous : Percussionniste et compositeur Bruno Paquet et danseur et chorégraphe Richard Tremblay, programme au répertoire. Festival international du masque, St-Camille (Québec), 2011 et au Québec depuis 1994.





2. **Framed by the Gaze: Tribal Tourism in the Indian Context - Ms. Neetha Prasad**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, SD College, Alappuzha.
3. **Treasuring Indigenous Knowledge: Climate Change and Inuit Traditional Ecological Knowledge - Ms. Reshma P. K.**, PhD Research Scholar, Institute of English.

**10 February 2023**

10.00 a.m.

**Plenary Session II**

**Dr. Richard Tremblay**,  
Visiting Researcher, Kerala Kalamandalam  
Deemed to be University.

**Chair**

**Dr. Meena T. Pillai**, Professor, Institute of  
English and Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Kerala.

11.15 a.m.

**Chair**

**Paper Presentations: Session III -  
Forms of Hegemony and Interventions**

**Dr. Suja Kurup P. L.**  
Professor, Institute of English and Director, School of English  
and Foreign Languages, University of Kerala..

1. **Integration of Indigenous Communities into Hinduism: Role of Mass Media - Dr. Muhammad Sihas K. M.**, Assistant Professor, Department of Rural and Tribal Sociology, Kannur University and **Dr. Lekshmi V. Nair**, Professor, Department of Humanities, Indian Institute of Space and Technology.
2. **Indigenous Life Ways: The Visual Images of the Kani Tribe of the Western Ghats - Ms. Soumya S.**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University College, Trivandrum.
3. **Imaginations of the Umwelt in Indigenous Expressions - Ms. Amruthashree R.**, PhD Research Scholar, Institute of English.
4. **Histories and Memories of Alienation and Marginalization: A Case Study of Indigenous Communities in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary - Ms. Athira P. T.**, PhD Research Scholar, Department of Political Sciences, SN College, Kollam.

2.30 p.m.

**Feedback**

3.30 p.m.

**Valedictory Session**

**Welcome**

**Dr. Lakshmi Priya** Assistant Professor, Institute of English.

**Presidential Address**

**Dr. B. Hariharan** Professor and Head, Institute of  
English and Director, UGC Area Study Centre for  
Canadian Studies.

**Valedictory Address**

**Dr. C. A. Lal** Professor, Institute of English & Director,  
School of Distance Education, University of Kerala.

**Vote of Thanks**

**Dr. Lakshmi Sukumar**  
Assistant Professor, Institute of English

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

## **ECOLOGICAL COMPOSITIONS: INDIGENOUS RESPONSES FROM INDIA AND CANADA**



Organized by  
**Institute of English &  
UGC Area Study Centre for  
Canadian Studies**  
University of Kerala

**2023  
February  
09, 10**

Funded by  
**University of Kerala &  
Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute  
New Delhi**

*Micro Communities and the Aporia of Cultural Property in Performing 'Otherness'.*  
Mise en situation de la création de Robert Lepage «Kanata» dans une optique para nationale.  
Présentation de Richard Tremblay à la session plénière II de *Ecological compositions: Indigenous responses from India and Canada*. Conférence portant sur les cultures autochtones (Inde et Canada), sous l'égide de l'Institut Indo-Canadien Shastri

Indigenous communities, world over, are a heterogeneous group with distinct histories, memories, beliefs and patterns of life. They share intimate affinity with nature and identify themselves in relation to their immediate ecological environment. Their creative expressions are closely knit to their everyday lived experiences and memories and their responses to it. In the contemporary milieu the presence/absence or loss of such ecospheres are a matter of grave concern which needs to be addressed from within the larger discourse of developmental paradigms. The very idea of evolutionary history of development and claims of modernity are in many ways problematized, challenged and resisted within indigenous everyday spaces as well as narrative compositions. Creative compositions of the community embark on a passionate journey that documents hitherto overlooked aspects of life as experienced and lived in close communion with nature. In the contemporary socio-cultural narratives indigenous writings are strong political statements that assert histories and memories once lost to colonial/feudal hegemonies. Creative expressions become a critical method of knowledge formation that distinctively affirm self/collective identity. The Conference 'Ecological Compositions: Indigenous Responses from India and Canada' seeks to address the narrative spaces of self-assertion indigenous creative compositions from India and Canada put forward.

**Prof. B. Hariharan**  
Head of the Department  
Institute of English &  
Director  
UGC Area Study Centre for Canadian Studies  
University of Kerala

**Dr. Lakshmi Priya N.**  
**Dr. Lakshmi Sukumar**  
Co-ordinators

**09 February 2023**

10.00 a.m.

**Inaugural Session**

**Welcome**

**Dr. Lakshmi Priya N.**  
Assistant Professor, Institute of English.

**Presidential Address**

**Dr. B. Hariharan**  
Professor and Head, Institute of  
English and Director, UGC Area Study Centre  
for Canadian Studies.

**Inauguration &  
Keynote Address**

**Dr. A. Jameela Begum**  
Professor and Head (Rtd.)  
Institute of English & Founder Director, UGC Area  
Study Centre for Canadian Studies.

**Vote of Thanks**

**Dr. Lakshmi Sukumar**  
Assistant Professor, Institute of English

11.30 a.m.

**Plenary Session I**

**Dr. Dheeman Bhattacharyya**  
Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature,  
BhashaBhavana, Visva - Bharati, Santiniketan.

**Chair**

**Dr. A. Jameela Begum**  
Professor and Head (Rtd.), Institute of English &  
Founder Director, UGC Area Study Centre for Canadian Studies.

12.15 p.m.

**Paper Presentations: Session I  
Theatre and Performance**

**Chair**

**Dr. Appu Jacob John** Assistant Professor, Institute of English.

1. **Eco-crisis Echoed in Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* - Mr. Suphita Pal** PhD Research Scholar in English, School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management, NIT Karnataka.
2. **Elements of Performativity: Practice of Rematriation in Rebecca Belmore's Select Performances *Shilpa U. M.***, PhD Research Scholar, Institute of English.

1.45 p.m.

**Tribal Poetry**

**Reading and Performance**

**Mr. Sukumaran Chaligatha** (Bethimaran),  
**Ms. Bindu Irulam**, **Ms. Dhanya Vengachery**,  
**Mr. Ajayan Madoor**, **Mr. Shivalingan P.**,  
**Ms. Sindhu Manganiyan**, **Ms. Sreeja**.

**Chair**

**Dr. Anilkumar David**, Poet

3.45 p.m.

**Paper Presentation: Session II -  
Land and Sustainable Tradition**

**Chair**

**Mr. Vishnu Narayanan** Assistant Professor, Institute of English.

1. **The Anti-Dam Movement in Dzongu and its Limitations - Dr. Vaidyanath Nishant**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English and Cultural Studies, Christ (Deemed to be) University, Bangalore) & **Dr. E. K. Santha** (Independent Researcher, Gangtok).

## Can a Kathakali ('story-play') hold a performance reading?

**RICHARD TREMBLAY**

independent Researcher and Artistic Director Danse Kalashas

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La présentation récente d'une création de danse Kathakali soulève des questions de performance que l'auteur se propose de dégager du discours chorégraphique en les extrayant des sous-systèmes qui le constituent. Ainsi apparaissent les rôles que l'interprète joue à son insu, lesquels se superposent à ceux qui lui sont attribués explicitement de par l'organisation de l'œuvre. *Can a Kathakali* (« danse de caractère ») *Hold a Performance Reading*, trace le parcours de cette exégèse à travers la représentation que lui en donne *Nāṭyōtpatti* (« Des origines de la danse et du théâtre ») présentée récemment en première à la maison théâtre Kuttampalam, le théâtre sanskrit de l'institution de danse Kalamandalam dans l'État du Kérala au sud de l'Inde. Depuis sa naissance au Kérala au 17<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère, la danse sud indienne kathakali, dite de caractère, est transmise à des générations d'interprètes par la réitération d'un enseignement pris en charge par des lignées de maîtres. L'article propose une perspective de la performance allant au-delà de l'esthétique et de la forme tout en s'y appuyant pour en interroger les prémices.

*The recent presentation of a Kathakali dance creation raises questions of performance that the author intends to draw from the choreographic discourse by extracting them from the subsystems that constitute it. Thus appear the roles that the performer plays without his/her being aware of them, and which overlap with those explicitly assigned to the performer by the organized work. Can a Kathakali ('dance of character') Hold a Performance Reading, traces the journey of this exegesis through the representation of Nāṭyōtpatti ('On the origins of dance and the theatre's) recently premiered at the Kuttampalam theatre, the Sanskrit Theatre of the Kalamandalam reputed dance institution in the South Indian state of Kerala. Since its inception in the 17th century CE, the Kathakali so-called character dance has been passed onto generations of performers through reiteration of the teaching by lineages of masters. The article offers a glimpse into the dance performance of Nāṭyōtpatti, that goes beyond aesthetics and form while relying on this basis in order to question its premises.*



Photo: Shaji Mullukkaran (2022)

Legendary Bharata Muni (Aromal) author of the *Natyashastra*, and his pupils.

## ABSTRACT

*The reformulation of the world heritage, on the one hand, and the discontinuity of contemporary art on the other congregate at the agency of the performing subject. Yet, the partitioning of synchronicity and diachronicity concur at new cultural sites and conjunctions of ethos to allow discursive stylization, giving ample scope for studying acts of performance in contact. In this perspective, the Kathakali Nāṭyōtpatti ('birth of theatre'), a new production recently presented at the Kalamandalam Kūttampalam traditional theatre of Kerala, makes performance strategies visible enough to gain insight into the super roles densely packed into the work of art. The article seeks the story maker in the position of the story teller, especially in this presentation on the origins of dance where a young generation of theatre artists are underway to find more or less new paths in understanding what they perform. Judging from the small attendance, a mix of teachers, dance students and members of the local audience who gathered at the opening night of a puttiyakatha ('new Kathakali story'), some scratching their heads, others peeping into their notes on the play in search of points of reference in the story, a sense of unfamiliarity pervaded the atmosphere at the presentation of Nāṭyōtpatti ('The Birth of a Theatre/Dance/Music') in Kerala. To the native audience, a Kathakali performance bearing upon the Nāṭyaśāstra, the Indian holy book on theatre, dance, music and the theatre arts, could be as exotic as a Kathakali Shakespeare. Kathakali has long been associated with the epics and the Pūraṇas. Dealing with the birth of dance through the medium of dance might appear auto-referential. But that gave the theatrical event an overlay to its aesthetic expression. And yet turning to the śāstra to go back to the origins of theatre and dance, the Kathakali dance theatre exposes itself as a mode of representation, and warrants a reflection on its formative years and the ongoing process of transformation involved in its narrative and dramatic devices.*

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## **Tournée pan-canadienne (1981)**

K. Gopalakrishnan et Richard Tremblay



*Montage : SILENTCULTURE sur des photographies par J.-F. Boucher (1981)*

Achilles agrees that Zeus has granted his wish to see the Achaeans punished, but says he, 'this is no consolation to me.' Why has Zeus taken his friend as a victim? He then takes the path that he will take revenge on Hector for the death of his friend. But Thetis warns him that he should engage in the battle only on the next day after she returns from the Heavens with a shield and a new armour made for him by the Godsmith Hephaestus. Achilles promises to obey. Thetis departs to the Heavens. Restless, Achilles lingers on the beach impatiently awaiting Thetis' return.

**SCENE FIVE**  
**Achilles' Shield**

On the next day, Thetis brings the marvellous shield and armour from the god Hephaestus. When he sees it, Achilles is overcome with admiration and awe. He scares the Trojans with his loud war-cry, and orders the Achaeans to pull Patroclus out of the battlefield.

As he prepares for war, Achilles' eyes rest for some time on the wonderful shield. On it, he sees the Cosmos, Earth, Sky and Sea, Sun, Moon and the different constellations. There are beautiful cities, too, and in one of them there are weddings and banquets taking place. Youths, accompanied by flute and lyre are whirling in the dance. The other city, however, is beleaguered by two armies, notices Achilles with passion growing high in his heart. He praises the Gods for the war scene they have so beautifully inlaid on the shield to inspire him. Restless and frenetic at last, he sets all his weapons right for the battle, jumps into his chariot, and quickly drives away to the battlefield.

**SCENE SIX**  
**Hector is slain**

Hector is brought down and begs Achilles not to allow his body to be torn by dogs. Achilles rebukes him mercilessly. Dying Hector predicts Achilles' death at the hands of Paris (Hector's brother), and with the help of Apollo. In anger, Achilles takes back his armour from Hector. In the final scene, Achilles drives his chariot three times round the city of Troy dragging Hector's body in the dust.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Kalamandalam Gopi** Artistic Director of the Kerala Kalamandalam Company (KKM). Now at the peak of his career and artistry, Kalamandalam Gopi is acknowledged as the Kathakali master of his time. Toured extensively all over the world.

**Richard Tremblay** The choreographer, from Canada, has authored several works. *Of Mice and other Similar Devices*, in contemporary movement, and *The Iliad*, in the Kathakali dance form, are two of his latest creations. Former student of Kerala Kalamandalam where he trained from 1975 to 1981.

**P. Vijayan** studied under his father, the celebrated Kunchu Nair. In 1971, he was appointed at KKM where he is now a professor. Has taught R. Tremblay and others from USA and Europe. Toured with the company.

**M. P. S. Namboodiri** studied at KKM, and joined the institution in 1977. He also studied the Kandy Dances of Sri Lanka, and has been invited to perform and lecture in several universities, in USA and elsewhere. Author of articles on the Kathakali dance. Has attended international conferences in the Performing Arts.

**Vasu Pisharodi** studied Kathakali with Kunju Nair. In 1978, he was appointed a teacher at KKM. Toured abroad with the KKM and the FACT troupes. Gave several lecture-demonstrations in colleges and universities.

**K. Gopalakrishnan** studied at Kottakkal and at KKM. was appointed a teacher at KKM, in 1988. Participated in tours with KKM and privately. Was invited to participate in a tour of Canada with R. Tremblay, in 1981.

**Rajashekaran** received his training in the South School. He now teaches his technique at KKM. He has specialized in women characters. Toured with company.

**Ramadas** studied at KKM, and joined the institution as a teacher, in 1983. Specialized in Red-Bearded characters (Tadi). Performed in tours with KKM, and privately.

**Krishna Kumar** trained at KKM, and was appointed a teacher in 1990. One of the most promising dancers of his generation.

**S. Gangadharan** is a professor of singing at KKM. Toured extensively with the company.

**M. Unnikrishnan** is a professor of singing at KKM. Toured extensively with KKM and privately.

**M. Unnikrishnan** (Chenda) joined KKM in 1982. Teaches Chenda. Toured with company and privately.

**Narayanan Nambisan**. Professor of Maddalam at KKM. Toured extensively with the company.

**KERALA KALAMANDALAM**  
Presents

# The Iliad

a Kathakali dance work  
featuring episodes from the  
epic of Homer

Co-presented by the National Centre  
for the Performing Arts and the  
Kerala Kalamandalam

The National Centre for the Performing Arts  
Tata Theatre, Nariman Point, Bombay  
April 9, 1991  
6:30 pm

*Notes de programme (1991)*

Artistic direction and rehearsal mastership  
**Kalamandalam Gopi**

Choreographer  
**Richard Tremblay**

**The Cast**

Hector ( <i>Katti</i> )	: <b>Vijayan</b>
	: <b>Vasu Pisharodi</b>
Andromache ( <i>Stri</i> )	: <b>Rajashakaran</b>
Patroclus ( <i>Paccha</i> )	: <b>M. P. S. Namboodiri</b>
	: <b>Krishna Kumar</b>
Euphorbus ( <i>Tadi</i> )	: <b>Ramadas</b>
Achilles ( <i>Paccha</i> )	: <b>Gopi</b>
A Messenger	: <b>Krishna Kumar</b>
	: <b>Gopalakrishnan</b>
Thetis ( <i>Stri</i> )	: <b>Rajashakaran</b>

Song  
**Gangadharan**  
**Unnikrishnan**

Chenda  
**Unnikrishnan**

Maddalam  
**Narayanan Nambisan**

Chutti (make-up)

**Sivaraman, Balan**

Assistants  
**Murall, Kunchan, Chandran**

Costumes, props  
**Kerala Kalamandalam**

The songs draw heavily on an English rendering of Homer's epic by Smith and Miller (1944), which was further adapted and edited by Richard Tremblay (1985). The translation into Malayalam was provided by Sri. Marumakan Raja (1988). Directions by Richard Tremblay were made available in Malayalam through and ad hoc translation by V. Kaladharan.

The choreographer acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute, the Department of External Affairs of Canada and Le Ministère des Affaires Culturelles du Québec. He expresses his thanks to the chairman of Kerala Kalamandalam, Sri K. V. Kochaniyan, and its secretary, Sri Iyyamkode Sreedharan, for their co-operation and help without which this production would not have been possible. Thanks are also due to Sri. N. Rajgopal for the promotion of the Iliad-Kathakali, to Victor Rakmil from the High Commission of Canada, and to the Consulate of Canada, in Bombay.

The Iliad was first performed to English songs at the Kathakali Club, Trichur, in 1988.

**SUMMARY OF LIBRETTO**

After ten years spent in a war against the Trojans, a group of kingdoms (Mycenae, Sparta, Pelea, Beotia, Thebes, etc.), here assembled under the banner of Achaea, or Ancient Greece, had failed to conquer the huge fortress of Troy. The Achaeans had gathered by the sea under the kingship of Agamemnon, with galleys packed with soldiers, horses, and weapons of all kinds. Hector, the Trojan captain, had waged a dreadful war with them.

**SCENE ONE**

**Hector and Andromache meet at the Scaean Gates**

The scene starts as Hector comes from the battlefield back to the city of Troy. At the gateway, he meets his wife Andromache who is nestling their 'Infant Son', Astyanax, in her arms. She expresses her worries to Hector and, fearing for his life, asks him not to meet the Achaeans on the battlefield. Trying to persuade him to hold to the fortress, she draws his attention to the spot where, she observes, the Achaeans could easily climb the wall.

Pleading a warrior's honor, Hector turns down the suggestion that he should remain on the city tower, and shelter there from the dangers of battle. Should Andromache become a widow and their son an orphan? Hector predicts the destruction of Troy, and is upset at the idea Andromache being dragged away and his son being killed by the Achaeans if he is not there to protect them. He addresses Zeus, and prays the God to grant that Astyanax be as great a warrior as his father, and that he should become the king of Troy. Husband and wife part here in a famous scene where love blends with sorrow.

Hector departs for the battlefield. He orders his soldiers to set the Achaeans' ships aflame. While observing the scene, he sees Patroclus coming out of the Achaeans' ranks and sets out to stop him.

**SCENE TWO**

**Apollo intervenes**

The Trojans have succeeded in setting the Achaean ships aflame. Achilles, foremost among the Greek captains, has earlier had an argument with Agamemnon and has so far refused to participate in the war by the side of the king. Achilles has

compromised, however, and sent his friend Patroclus to the head of his army, the Myrmidons, to help the Achaeans out. Having donned Achilles' terrible armour, and borrowed his great shield, Patroclus now sets out at the command of the Myrmidons to push the Trojans back from the ships. But of sheer temerity, he forgets Achilles' warning preventing him from going too far into the plain. He even pushes beyond the plain up to the walls of the celebrated city of Troy.

Apollo, the protecting deity of the city intervenes, severely warning Patroclus of the danger of this impetuous deed. Recovering from the God's terrible blow, Patroclus pursues Cebriones, Hector's charioteer, kills him, and proceeds to strip the charioteer's body of its armour.

**SCENE THREE**

**Patroclus is slain**

When Hector and his assistant Euphorbus intervene over Cebriones' body, Patroclus lays claim to it and fights with Hector who is defeated and runs away. Taking pride in his victory, Patroclus sets about killing more Trojans and routs their army. But Apollo intervenes once more and deals Patroclus a fatal blow. Euphorbus has been looking on from a distance. He now approaches the wounded Patroclus, and hits him in the back in cowardly gesture. Hector, who had been defeated in the previous encounter with Patroclus, now approaches the bleeding warrior and mercilessly pierces him with his spear. Fainting, Patroclus then reproaches Hector for his uncomely deed and predicts his death at the hands of Achilles. Angry Hector insults the dead Patroclus, strips him of Achilles' celebrated armour, and dons it himself. In a trance, Hector then shows off to the Trojans.

**SCENE FOUR**

**Thetis pities her son Achilles**

A messenger now enters to announce the death of Patroclus. Achilles cannot bear the news and gives in to mad despair. Goddess Thetis then approaches her beloved son and comforts him. She reminds him, however, that he had once requested her to have the Achaeans punished for an insult Agamemnon had done to him. Are the Achaeans not now dearly paying for the insult? So, 'Why is this sorrow laddering your soul', asks Thetis.

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