

The Leela Institute 2017 Annual Report





“Entertainment gives
you a predictable
pleasure....

Art leads to
transformation”

- Makoto Fujimura

Core Values

Have a **transformative** impact on the field

Elevate the standard of the art

Place artists at the center

Facilitate collective creativity

Foster artistic & administrative **excellence**

Innovate while remaining grounded in tradition



A Field Wide Approach

Leela Dance Collective

Elevating Indian classical dance and music on the world stage



The Leela Endowment

Securing the future for Indian classical dance and music



The Leela Academy

Creating a new generation of artists, arts educators and audiences



Key Goals

Leela Dance Collective

- Develop a robust body of work that represents a pioneering, expansive and authentic vision for Indian classical dance
- Establish Indian classical dance as a mainstay on the world performing arts market
- Provide established and emerging artists with viable growth and development opportunities in Indian classical dance



The Leela Endowment

- Provide artists with the critical financial patronage needed to advance Indian classical dance through performance and education
- Support the development and presentation of innovative and ground-breaking works of Indian classical dance

The Leela Academy

- Provide world-class training to a new generation of artists and arts educators around the globe
- Build strong audiences for and community engagement with Indian classical dance
- Support the field of Indian classical dance as a whole by making educational materials available through an open source database



Key Performance Indicators

Our key performance indicators for the Leela Dance Collective provide us with the critical information we need to assess the impact of our work locally, nationally and internationally.

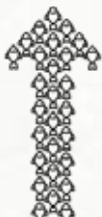
Leela Dance Collective



Reviews of artistic works



of audience members



% of performances presented by mainstream presenters



% of audience members in new markets



% of performances that are traditional kathak solos



Average annual pay per artist



Key Performance Indicators

Our key performance indicators for The Leela Academy provide us with the critical information we need to assess the impact of our work on our communities.

The Leela Academy



Student proficiency
& advancement



of student
performances



Average hours
of training per
student/per week



% student
attendance at
professional
performances



% of hours training
with visiting faculty



Student and parent
testimonials

Leela Dance Collective

The Leela Dance Collective brings together today's leading Kathak artists to engage in the practice and creation of art that is at once grounded in tradition and boldly innovative. Artists at Leela strive to achieve technique at its pinnacle, to merge the lines between dance and musicianship, to traverse the depth and breadth of human emotion. From evocative stories of ancient India, to cutting-edge dance and music, to dynamic collaborations that transcend boundaries, The Leela Dance Collective's repertoire represents an expansive vision for kathak dance.

Impact

3

New Artistic Works

28

Artists

16

Performances

38%

Of performances presented by mainstream presenters

50%

Of performances were traditional kathak solos

4,750

of audience members

71%

Audience members in new markets

\$1,773

Average annual pay per artist

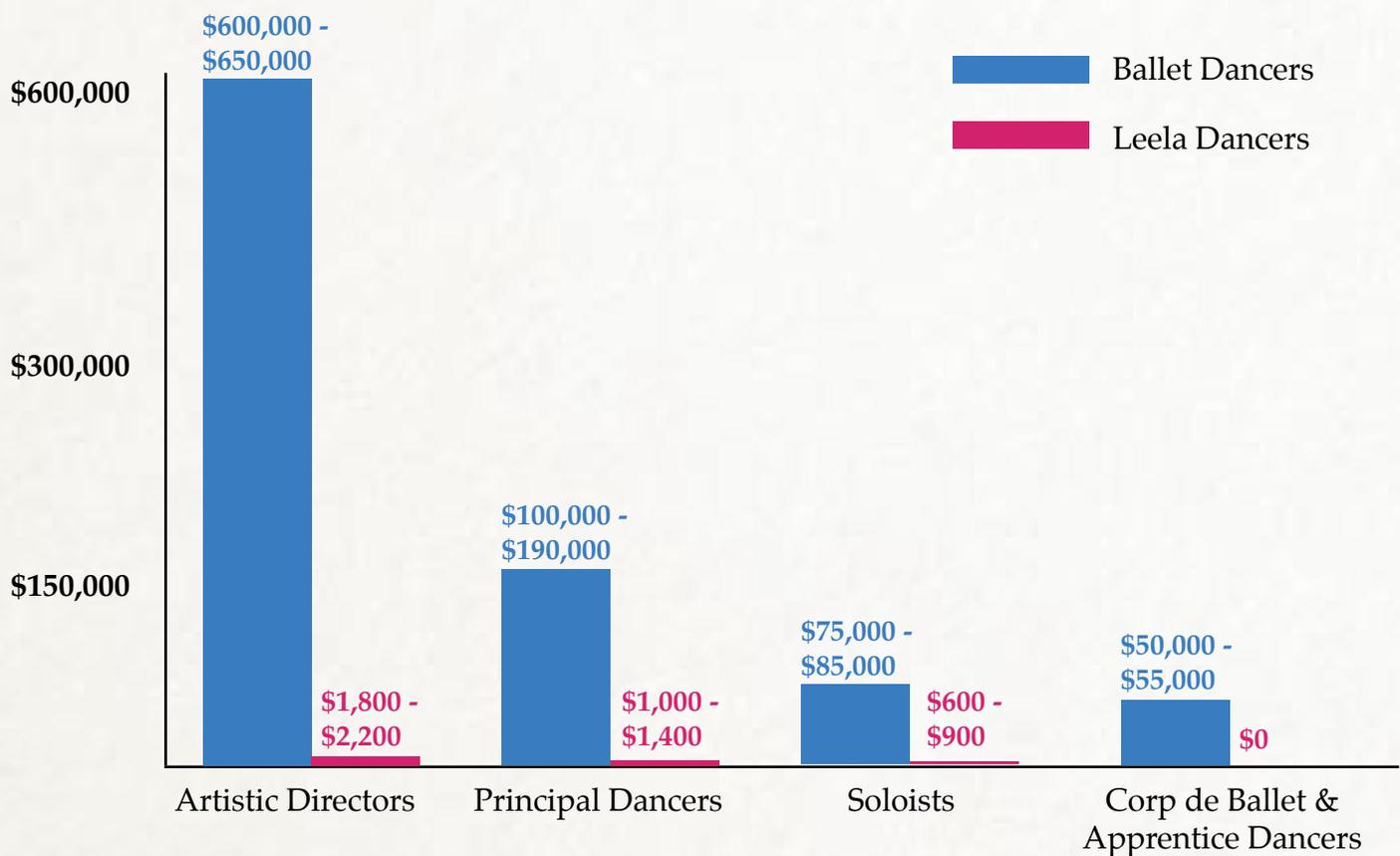
1.5m

Reached through media and digital platforms



Salary Comparison

The financial infrastructure for Indian classical art trails far behind that for classical art in the West. No place is this more evident than in the salaries available to ballet dancers and Western classical musicians as compared to the salaries available to Leela Dance Collective artists.





2017 Audience Reach in the US & India

In 2017, the Leela Dance Collective's performance, digital and media reach surpassed 1.4 million. Live performances reached new audiences in cities around the globe while media coverage and digital content amplified the Leela Dance Collective's voice and impact nationally and internationally.

Live Performances | 4750



Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sonoma, Boston, New York, Denver and Mumbai

Digital Reach | 155,549



Web, Email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube

Media Reach | 1,304,514



The New Yorker, SF Gate, SF Examiner, KQED Arts, India Journal and India West



SPEAK

Artistic Direction: Rina Mehta, Rachna Nivas, Michelle Dorrance, and Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards

“

“These women welcome the collision of their individual genres, using their art as a container for the larger conversation about connection. The reach across the perceived divide engages, entertains and educates.”

- Amy Seiwart, Amy Seiwart Imagery

“

“The East spoke to the West without using words. It made you feel nothing else matters as long as we can experience beauty like this. Humanity will triumph in spite of all the adverse events happening around us.”

- SPEAK Audience Member



Son of the Wind

Artistic Direction: Seibi Lee, Rachna Nivas, and Rina Mehta

“

“As a Ramayana scholar who also enjoys dance, I was struck both by the production’s sophisticated conception...and by the professionalism of its execution by an all-female cast... Given that traditional lila performances of epic stories in India generally feature exclusively male casting, even in female roles, the gender reversal here was striking, especially given the predominant martial mood (vīra rasa) of most of the episodes”

“

“With its technical brilliance, emotional power, and reverent yet creative reinterpretation of sacred epic, ‘Son of the Wind,’ staged by American women of a variety of ethnic backgrounds, was world-class transnational dance theater that celebrated Indian performance traditions even as it innovated within them and challenged cultural stereotypes.”

- Philip Lutgendorf, Ramayana Scholar, University of Iowa



California Gharana

Performed by the Leela Dance Collective

“

“California Gharana is simply outstanding. Das’ aesthetic, dynamic style and musicality shines through as the Leela Dance Collective reinvents the kathak tradition placing it squarely in our modern time”

- California Gharana Audience Member

“

“An incredible display of dance and music. California Gharana elegantly shepherds the past into the future as it pays homage to legendary kathak artist, Chitresh Das and his legacy, while giving voice to a new generation of women artists”

- California Gharana Audience Member



The Traditional Kathak Solo

The traditional kathak solo is a tour-de-force performance of dance, music, poetry and storytelling that takes audiences on a profound journey that is transformative. Unproduced, highly interactive and in large part improvised, the traditional solo is kathak dance in its most raw and unadulterated form. The solo, as the name implies, features one kathak artist in performance along with an ensemble of hindustani classical musicians for anywhere between 90 to 120 minutes. As kathak evolves into the 21st century, the traditional performance format is being replaced by group choreography accompanied by recorded music and high-production value lighting and staging.

As the kathak solo becomes obsolete, so does an entire strand of knowledge and artistic practice. Improvisation becomes replaced by choreography. Live music becomes replaced with recorded music. A wall is erected between artists and audiences where there once was an open and engaged conversation and connection between the two. The focus shifts from dance and music to lighting and staging. What once used to be art degrades into entertainment and spectacle.

Art forms such as kathak represent a body of knowledge that serves to enlighten and uplift the human consciousness and our society as a whole. The task before us thus becomes preserving the core of the kathak tradition while evolving it to make it relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences. This is indeed the task we have undertaken at Leela. Each year Leela works to create and tour its large scale works from SPEAK to Son of the Wind to California Gharana. At the same time, Leela invests in the presentation of traditional kathak solos by established and emerging artists in strategic venues and markets around the globe.

Leela Dance Collective - The Pipeline

The Leela Dance Collective's repertoire is grounded in the belief that art can be a powerful catalyst for personal transformation, community building and social change. Through its traditional works, Leela brings the depth and breadth of India's artistic gifts onto the world stage and provides a way for communities and cultures to be made visible. Leela's collaborative works provide vital avenues for connection, bringing together artists and audiences separated by race, religion, and class. Leela's pipeline of artistic works aims to preserve the core of the kathak tradition while at the same time evolving the tradition to make it relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences.



2016-2020

Son of the Wind

Son of the Wind is a spectacular retelling of the Ramayana episodes centered around Hanuman, featuring a cast of renowned kathak and Hindustani musical artists from around the world.

2015-2019

SPEAK

A collaborative work that brings two art forms and communities together while bringing to the forefront a new generation of female voices and perspectives in kathak and tap dance.

2018-2022

Pilgrimage

A collaborative work that brings kathak dance together with the folk music of India's desert state, Rajasthan and the Romani music tradition of Europe.

2020-2024

Pancha Jati

The Leela Dance Collective restages one of legendary artist, Pandit Chitresh Das' most innovative works - Pancha Jati, an exploration and synthesis of North and South Indian rhythm.

2024-2028

Imagine India

A spectacular work that brings nine of India's classical dance and music traditions together onto the world stage to celebrate the richness and diversity of India's artistic and cultural heritage.

2022-2026

Elan

India and Spain come alive on the stage through powerful footwork, lyrical movement, haunting music and intensive emotion as the artists of Elan come together in what can only be described as a long awaited communion.



The Mechanics of Performance Art

The life cycle of works such as SPEAK and Son of the Wind begins with a spark of creative inspiration. The journey from this spark to a fully-formed work of performance art is long, intense, and filled with unexpected detours and discoveries. From research and development to the premiere performance and touring, every phase of the process requires a significant investment of time and resources to ensure a standard of excellence and far-reaching impact.



Research (1-2 years)

\$10,000 - \$20,000

Extraordinary works of performance art are almost always grounded in strong research. The research phase can involve academic study of history, mythology and performance art as well as ethnographic study of artists and art forms.



Development (1-2 years)

\$20,000 - \$40,000

Artists come together from around the world to test ideas and experiment. An iterative process that is mostly trial and error begins as artists work on the development of a musical score, choreography and stage design.





Premiere Performance (1-3 days)

\$40,000 - \$60,000

After years in development, a work is presented on the main stage. Venues are chosen based on factors ranging from cost, audience strength, and technical capacity. New works are often self-presented and as such dance companies bear the full cost of the performance.



Touring (3-5 years)

\$35,000 - \$40,000

Exceptional works that have the ability to reach audiences will typically begin their touring cycle 1-2 years after the premiere. International and national touring often involves fostering strong partnerships with key presenters in first and second tier cities and a high level of grassroots audience and community engagement.



Strategic Markets

The Leela Dance Collective seeks to reach audiences and communities in key markets in the United States and India. These markets include first and second tier cities and those cities that define and shape the world market with respect to music, dance and performing arts.

United States

New York
Boston
Washington DC
San Francisco
Los Angeles
Seattle
Chicago
Austin
Denver



India

Mumbai
Kolkata
Delhi
Bangalore
Ahmedabad
Pune
Bhubaneswar
Hydrebad
Chennai



The Leela Academy

The Leela Academy provides comprehensive education in kathak dance for students of all ages. Grounded in the pedagogy of renowned kathak master Pandit Chitresh Das, Leela's curriculum creates a rich and challenging learning environment for students. In addition to weekly classroom education, students at Leela receive the opportunity to engage with India's finest classical artists along with a range of performance opportunities. Leela's educational program reflects its commitment to helping passionate and talented individuals achieve their full potential as artists, leaders, cultural ambassadors and global citizens.

Impact

330

Students

22

Educators

2300

Cumulative Hours
of Training

40%

Student proficiency
& advancement

2.5

Average hours
of training per
student / per week

15%

% of hours training
with visiting faculty

10

of student
performances

3500

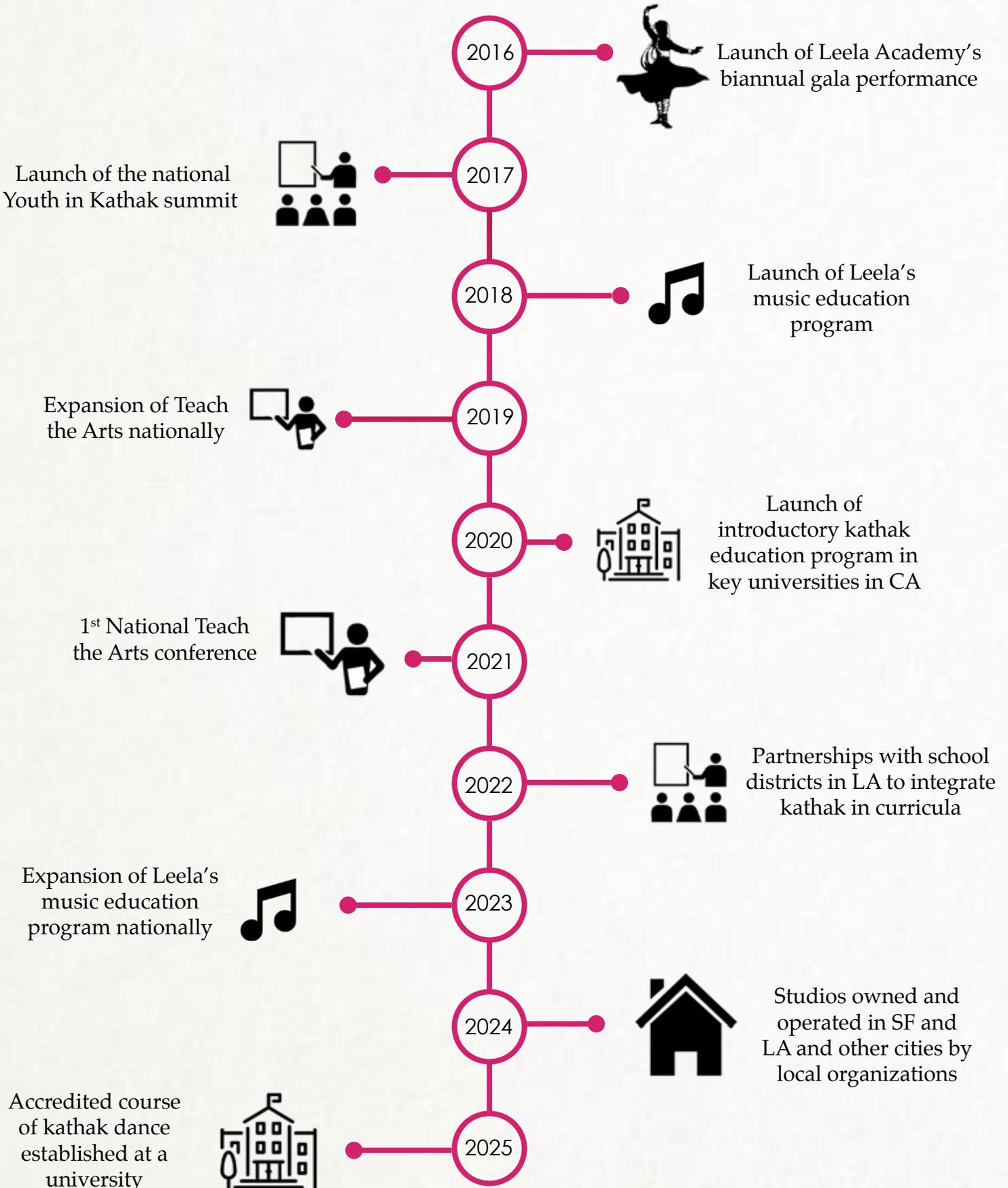
Audience members
reached

32%

% student attendance
at professional
performances

** The Leela Academy's scope of work includes its affiliate schools from around the world while its 2017 indicators are based on a sample student size based in Los Angeles school.

Leela Academy 10 Year Vision





Building New Audiences, Enriching Community Life

A recent study published by the National Endowment for the Arts documents the steady decline of arts audiences over the past two decades. Between 1992 and 2012, audiences for performing arts events (jazz, classical music, opera, ballet, and theatrical plays) decreased from 41% to 33.4%. While we don't have analogous data for the Indian performing arts, anecdotal evidence paints a similar if not more dire picture.

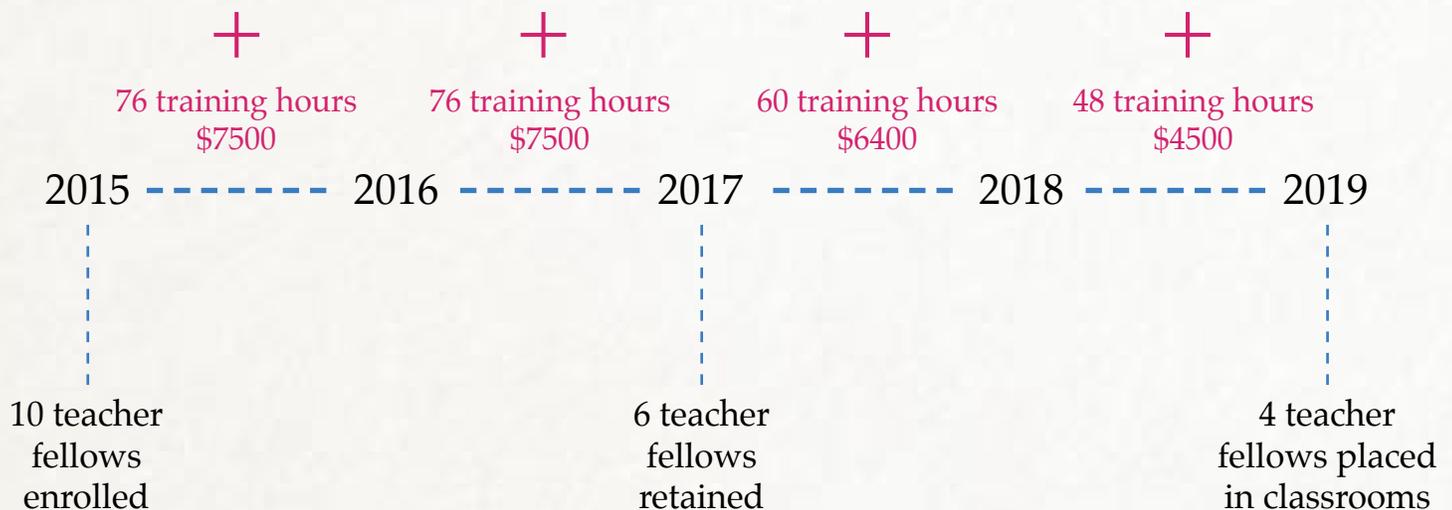
The Westernization of our global culture along with the advent of technology has dramatically transformed the ways in which newer generations of Indians and Indian Americans engage with arts and culture. Individual and family choices today, informed in large part by access and societal trends, overwhelmingly lean in the direction of entertainment versus art, whether it be at the movie theater, in the arena, or on the internet. Over time, these choices lead to our communities becoming artistically and culturally impoverished and disconnected from our heritage, our history and ourselves.

We at The Leela Academy are keenly aware of this larger context in which we operate. We seek to serve not only the children and youth that participate in our educational programs but also the communities in which we are embedded. Our work begins in the classroom but extends far into our communities where we endeavor to increase access to world-class Indian classical music and dance. Free concerts, family programming at professional arts venues, and performances in schools are some of the ways in which we strive to integrate the classical Indian performing arts into everyday community life. In doing so, we hope to build new audiences for classical Indian dance and music, enrich our communities, and advance India's rich artistic and cultural heritage.



The Making of an Arts Educator

Leela's Teach the Arts program works to train a new kind of educator- one that will enter into a long-term relationship with their students that extends far beyond the classroom and shepherd their development as self-defined artists and leaders. The program provides rigorous training in subject matter specifics and teaching pedagogy along with extensive leadership development. And as such, it demands a significant investment of time and resources from both the organization and those dedicated and talented individuals that chose to undertake the task of becoming an arts educator.





Lineage

The Leela Institute's vision is inspired in large part by the vision of Smt. Nilima Das, founder of Nritya Bharati, one of India's leading dance, music, and fine arts institutions during the mid-20th century. As India fought for and won its independence from British rule - a regime that systematically marginalized the subcontinent's rich artistic heritage - Nritya Bharati was at the center of a great renaissance for Indian art. Smt. Nilima Das' son, Chitresh Das, was born in the midst of this renaissance and grew to become one of India's foremost kathak artists. He pioneered the art form's spread in the West, founding the Chitresh Das Dance Company and the Chhandam School of Kathak in San Francisco in 1979. Between 1979 and 2015, Das created more than 50 artistic works that toured around the world to critical acclaim and trained a new generation of kathak dancers that have gone on to boast successful careers of their own. The principal artists of The Leela Institute are proud senior disciples of Das and are dedicated to preserving the rich legacy they have inherited while continuing to advance the art form of kathak.

The Leela Endowment

The Leela Endowment is the first and only one of its kind, providing the financial infrastructure necessary to advance and elevate Indian classical dance and music on the world stage. It aims to provide direct financial support to emerging and established artists that serve as India's artistic and cultural ambassadors through annual fellowships ranging from \$10,000 - \$25,000.

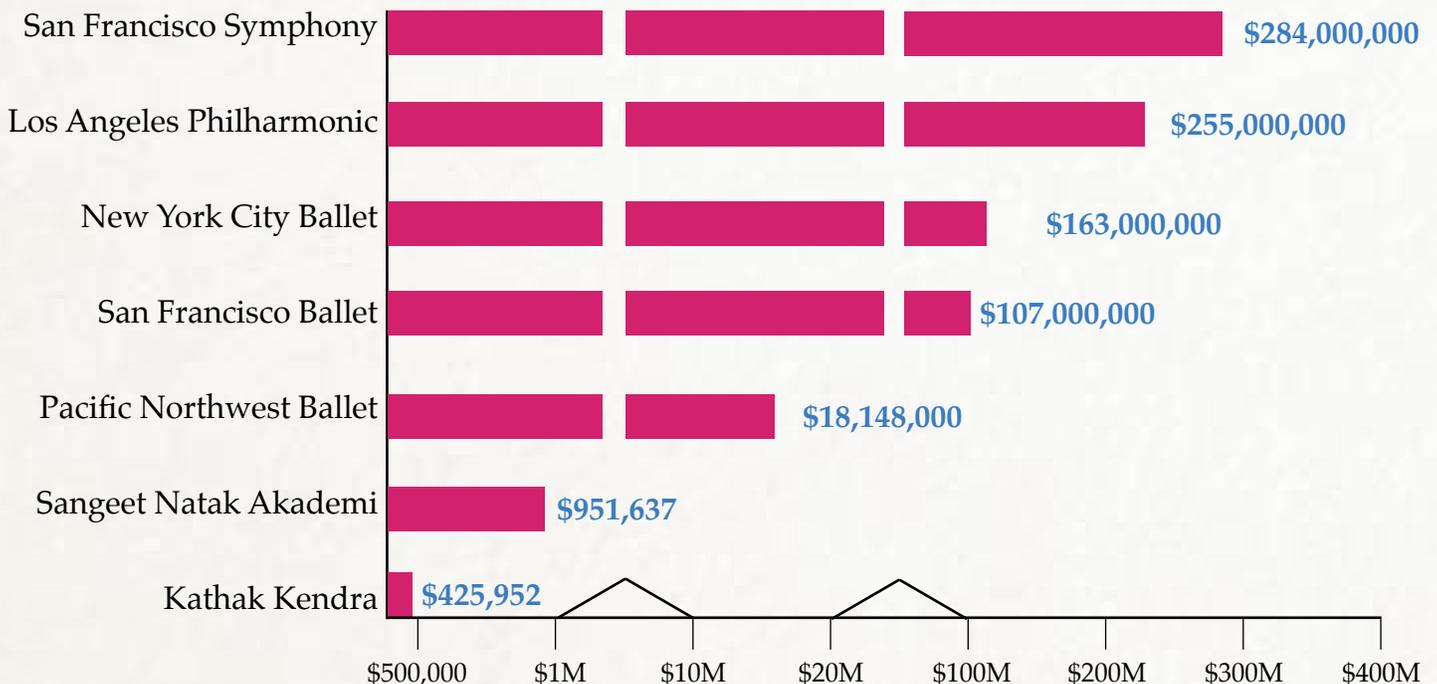
Leela Endowment Timeline



First 3 Fellowships
Granted



A Snapshot of Arts Endowments in the US and India



The Leela Institute Donors

*Includes donors for both The Leela Endowment and The Leela General Fund.

FOUNDER'S CIRCLE (\$25,000 TO \$49,999)

Anonymous
Shaila and Dinesh Mehta
Meera and Jasvant Modi
Drs. Irma and Ushakant Thakkar
Bina and Yogesh Nivas Family
Gita and Subramaniam Janakiraman

LEADERS (\$5,000 TO \$24,999)

Anonymous
Anonymous
Uma and Avadhesh Agarwal
Poonam and Prabhu Goel
Rachna Nivas and Prakash Janakiraman
Nalini and Uka Solanki
Leah and Gary Schoolnik
Neelima and Milind Bhat
Pratima and Navin Doshi
The Nair Family
Jyotsna and Sharad Patel
Chandrika and Sumant Patel
Aruna and Dinker Shah
Kinna and Nitin Shah
Hetal and Kunal Sharma
Kusum and Harkishan Vasa
Rita Singhal and Swamy Venuturupalli

AMBASSADORS (\$1,000 TO \$4,999)

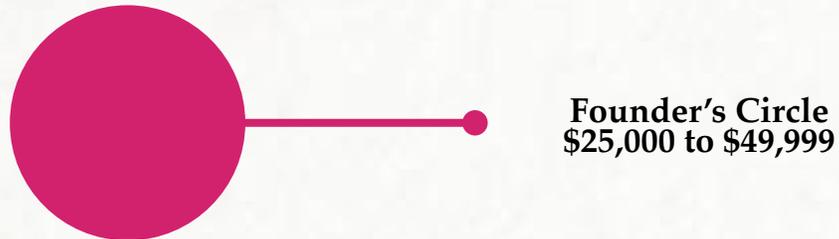
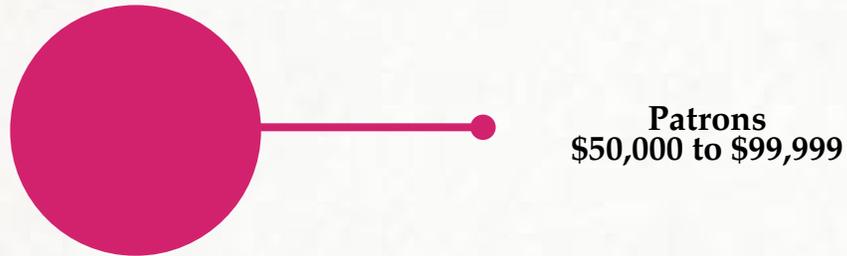
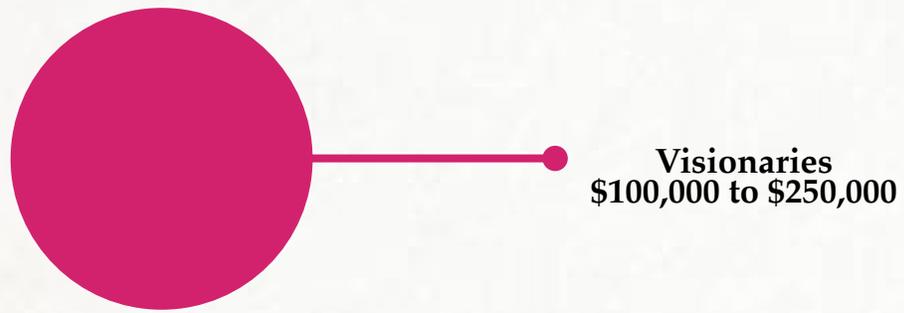
Ava Arya and Rakesh Jain
Bala and Krish Krishnamurthy
Rakshitha Ballal and Pravin Dadhoti
Sandhya and Sekhar Kanapuram
Meena and Jitendra Mehta
Vineet and Soni Agarwal
Chhandam Youth Dance Company
Ronda Berkeley and Mel Green
Vinuta and Laxminarayan Bhat
Minal and Neil Doshi
Shobhana Gandhi
Laxman Rao & Shaily Mahendra
Ruchi Mathur and Mark Pimentel
Madhu and Babu Mehta
Shobha and Nitin Mehta
Kanan and Sanjay Panchal

Pravin Patel
Ann Petersen and Leslie Pam
Indira and Yalamanchilli Rao
Sanjay Sharma
Robyn Friend and Neil Siegel
Sarv Mangal Trust
Vinita and Amar Singh
Usha and Sudesh Sood
Keerthy Sundar

FRIENDS (\$100 TO \$999)

Hima Chintalapati
Gita and Mukesh Desai
Rajani Dinavahi & Abizer Gaslightwala
Deepa Gupta
Nootan and Arvind Halani
Divya Jain
Anjana and Vikram Kamdar
Kumud and Suren Kapadia
Erika and Sathvik Krishnamurthy
Bharathi and Kanaiya Mahendra
Roopa Maniar
Vandana and Kaushik Master
Mitali and Hitesh Mehta
Nila and Arvind Mehta
Rama and Jayant Mehta
Sheila and Kishore Naik
Koji Oka
Mitula and Raj Patel
Sharda and Mahesh Patel
Pranav Popat
Bhanu and Vandana Sardesai
Evanthia Spanos
Raghu and Durga Toppur
Cheryl Templeton
Shaila and Vijay Chauhan
Sureka Vashi
Chhaya and Jairaj Samtani
Leepi and Ravi Mahalingham
Vijay and Madhu Chheda
Nirmal and Tara Sethia
Vidula Bapat and Vikram Gore
Seema and Kiran Kamat
Mitula and Rajendra Patel
Sanjay Aurora and Natasha Shah

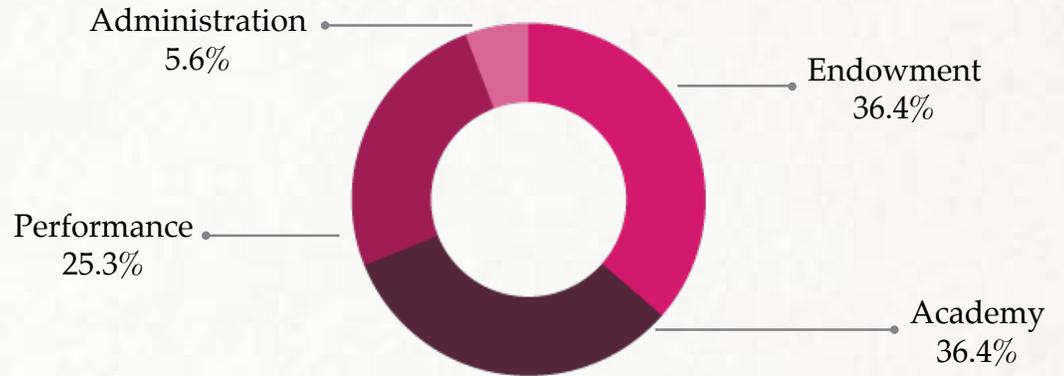
Choose your Donor Community



Financials

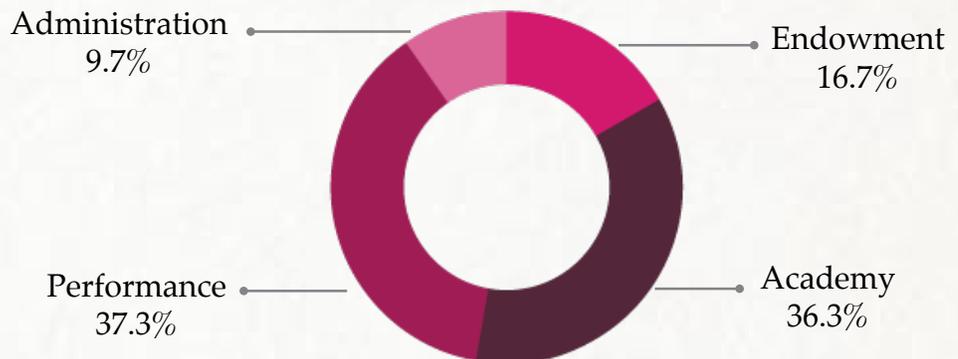
Income by Program Area

Total Income
\$237,731



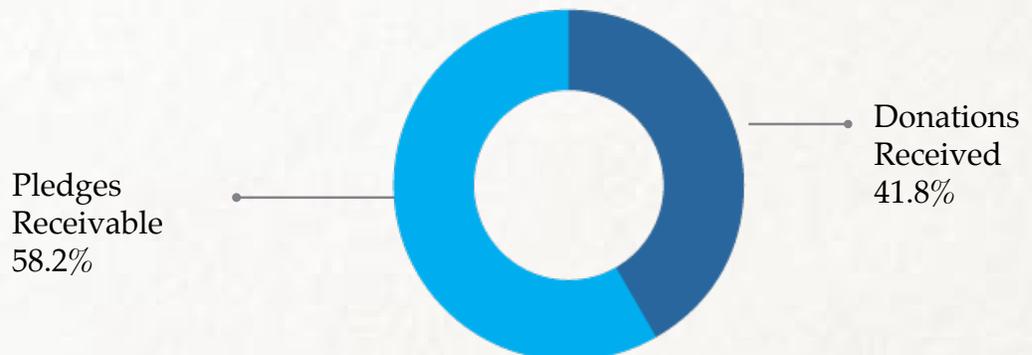
Expenses by Program Area

Total Expenses
\$160,243



Endowment Status

Total Raised
\$455,144





Our Team

Principal Artists

Seibi Lee
Rachna Nivas
Rina Mehta

Soloists

Sarah Morelli
Shefali Jain

Guest Artists

Seema Mehta, Kathak Artist
Jayanta Banerjee, Music Composition & Sitar
Debashis Sarkar, Vocals & Harmonium
Vaibhav Mankad, Vocals & Harmonium
Satyaprakash Mishra, Tabla

Teacher Fellows

Navneet Bal

Suchitra Paranjpe
Rakshitha Ballal
Ritu Joshi
Soni Goel
Vidula Gore

Board of Directors

Harkishan Vasa, Chair
Ruchi Mathur, Vice Chair
Dinesh Mehta, Treasurer
Ronda Berkeley, Secretary
Dinker Shah
Nitin Shah
Swamy Venuturupalli
Hetal Sharma
Trina Chaudhuri
Neelam Pathikonda

Our Funders, Presenters, & Partners

Funders

National Endowment for the Arts
California Arts Council

Presenters & Partners

The Green Music Center

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
College of Holy Cross
Aratani World Series
Foundation for Excellence
Drive East Festival
Self Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles

Our Affiliates

Chhandam, Bay Area
Chhandika, Boston

Chhandam Nritya Bharati, Mumbai
M-Do, Toronto





www.leela.dance

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