
MARGI

Organisation

Type of Institution: A registered society under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act No. 12 of 1955. Reg. No. 94/71

Year of Establishment: 1971

Brief History: Margi started as a society to promote classical arts by coordinating programmes of all types of classical dances like Bharatanatyam, Kuchuppudi, Odissi, Kathak, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam as well as Kerala theater arts of Kathakali and Kutiyattam.

It was the theatre legend Sri. D. Appukkuttan Nair who conceived and founded Margi and guided it till his demise in 1994. Co-founders were Dr. T.N.N. Bhattathiripad and Sri. K.V. Kochanian (who served later as Chairman, Kerala Kalamandalam). Sri. D. Appukkuttan Nair was the 'Sthapati' (Architect) of Kuthampalam (traditional performance space) at Kerala Kalamandalam, Cheruturuthy.

In 1974, a school for Kathakali was started with Guru Mankulam Vishnu Nampoothiri and a few students for the first time in Thiruvananthapuram. Till then, the capital city of Kerala had no training institute for Kathakali although the art had already spread far and wide. Later in 1980, all time great Kathakali maestro, Padmasree

Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair joined Margi as visiting Professor and served till his demise in 1990. Now the Margi Kathakali section has 30 senior and fully trained performing artistes, staging about 60 programmes in various venues, every year.

A Kutiyattam faculty was started in Margi in 1981 as a full time Gurukulam (in-house training) with Ammannur Madhava Chakyar as visiting Professor and Muzhikkulam Kochukuttan Chakyar as full time resident Guru for acting and Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nambiar for Mizhavu. Three young trainees Raman, Narayanan and Madhu were initiated in to the art.

This was at a time when the stalwarts were getting old and no younger generation of artistes was in sight due to the decadent state of the art. Fresh lease of life to Kutiyattam was provided by this new generation of artistes, who are now senior and excellent performers with perhaps the most extensive repertoire among all the institutions.

After 1988, service of Madhava Chakyar could not be availed of owing to his advancing age and his commitments with his own Gurukulam at Irinjalakkuda. Muzhikkulam Kochukuttan Chakyar continued as full time Chief Guru. By about 1989 the first batch of three artistes had completed their training and had become full time performers.

There were no female artistes in Margi to begin with. Kalamandalam trained graduates Sathi and Usha joined Margi in 1988, 1991. One more trained actor from the Pothiyil Gurukulam, Sri. Pothiyil Narayana Chakyar joined Margi in 1989, thus making up a full performing group of 4 male actors, 2 female actors and 5 percussion artistes (3 Mizhavu, 1 Timila and 1 Edakka)

With this excellent full-scale infrastructure, the trained actors embarked on an ambitious programme of extended training on revivals from old texts under the guidance of Guru Ammannur and D. Appukkuttan Nair. Thus Margi settled into training cum performing group, providing trainings in new productions and staging them with an average of one full scale performance every week from 1991 onwards.

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Funding Source

There is a basic recurring grant from the State Govt. of Kerala to provide salary support for artistes. From 1991 the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, started support to Kutiyattam. This is a composite grant inclusive of monthly payment for study of text, performance fee, costume and equipment etc. Another source is by way of salary grant from the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. Administrative overheads are minimal. The executive committee functions on a wholly voluntary basis.

Premises and Equipment

Margi Kutiyattam Centre is housed in an old building (annex) of Sri. Mahadevar Temple, Valiyasala, one of the oldest temples in the city. The performance space is a small auditorium with an old world charm and ambience, ideally suited for performance of Kutiyattam. It is in this auditorium that weekly Kutiyattam programmes are held for the last 25 years, covering the very large Margi repertory extending to over 250 days of performances. The arrangement is both traditional and cost effective. The premises belong to the Devaswam Board, which is under the control of the State Government and has been leased to Margi on minimal terms.

Margi has a full set of costumes and accoutrements to enact Kutiyattam. Percussion instruments like Mizhavu, Edakka, Timila (a Margi specialty) and cymbals and stage curtains are available. Their maintenance and replacements are very expensive in view of the large number of performances in Margi.

Training Faculty

Guru/Teachers:

(fully trained performing artistes):
Guru Padmabhushan Ammannur Madhava Chakyar - Acting
(Chief Guru till 1989. Also provided Attaprakarams for almost all new revivals in Margi)
Guru Muzhikkulam Kochukuttan Chakyar - Acting (served as full time Guru till 2000. Now works as Visiting Professor under SNA scheme)
Guru P.K. Narayanan Nambiar - Mizhavu (consulting Visiting Professor for special productions like Mantrankam, Mathavilasam etc.)
Kalamandalam Easwaranunni - Mizhavu (left Margi to join Kerala Kalamandalam

Performance Repertory

Play	Act	Choreography (Attaprakaram)	No. of days
Subhadradhananjayam by Kulasekharavarman	I	Traditional	11
Subhadradhananjayam by Kulasekharavarman	II	Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar	12
Tapatisamvaranam by Kulasekharavarman	I	Traditional	8
Abhisheka Nataka by Bhasa	Balivadhama	Traditional	5
Abhisheka Nataka by Bhasa	Toranayudham	Traditional	6
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Parnasalankam	Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar	16
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Surpanakhankam	Traditional	5
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Mayasitankam	Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar	17
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Jatayuvadhankam	Traditional	6
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Asokavanikankam	Traditional	14
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Anguleeyankam	Traditional	32
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra ending with Bharatavakyam	Agnipravesankam	Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar	14
Pratijnayaugandharayanam by Bhasa	Mantrankam	Guru P.K. Narayanan Nambiar	22
Mathavilasam by Mahendravikrama	One Act Play	Guru P.K. Narayanan Nambiar	5
Svapnavasavadatham by Bhasa	Svapnankam	Margi Sathi	1
Srikrishnacharitham Nangiarkuthu	All the episodes	Guru P.K. Narayanan Nambiar	41
Sriramacharitham Nangiarkuthu	Episodes in progress	Margi Sathi	41

teaching faculty in 1983)

Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan

Nambiar - Mizhavu

(senior Mizhavu Artiste and teacher.

Also performs Patakam)

Margi Madhu - Acting

(left Margi to join SS University of
Sanskrit in 1997)

Margi Sajeew Narayana Chakyar - Acting

Margi Sathi - Acting

(left Margi to join Kerala Kalamandalam
teaching faculty in 2005)

Margi Usha - Acting

Pothiyil Narayana Chakyar - Acting

(on Junior fellowship of Govt. of India)

Margi Raman Chakyar - Acting

Kalamandalam Raveendran - Acting

Kalamandalam Krishnendu - Acting

Margi Raman Unni - Mizhavu

Kalamandalam Achuthanandan - Mizhavu

(left Margi to join Kerala Kalamandalam
teaching faculty in 1998)

P.K. Hareesh Nambiar - Mizhavu

Kalamandalam Dhanarajan - Mizhavu

Margi Subramanian Potty - Edakka

(Expired in 2005)

Kalamandalam Mohanan - Timila

R.L.V. Somadas - Makeup & Costume

Margi Raveendran - Makeup & Costume

Major Publications

- Margi Souvenir, 1971, a special issue on Kutiyattam, edited by D. Appukkuttan Nair.
- Margi Souvenir, 1976, a special issue on Kutiyattam, edited by D. Appukkuttan Nair.
- 'Kutiyattam', a commemorative volume on Guru Muzhikkulam Kochukuttan Chakyar, edited by Dr. P. Venugopalan.

Other Informations

UNESCO Proclamation: Margi Kutiyattam group performed in France on a month long

tour during November 1999 under the sponsorship of Ms. Milena Salvini. It was during this tour that UNESCO took notice of Kutiyattam as heritage art. Further to this, candidature material was submitted to the UNESCO by Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan, Vice-President of Margi, for evaluation by an international jury following which, UNESCO proclaimed Kutiyattam as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, in May 2001. Margi has the role of the National Implementing Agency, in the follow up of the proclamation.

A select Margi group performed along side with other Kutiyattam artistes from Kerala at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris to commemorate the UNESCO proclamation in May 2001.

Margi Kutiyattam group also performed in a German festival in Berlin and in Valladolid, Spain in 2002.

Later on Margi was a main participant in the GIMHE International Festival in South Korea which was got up to showcase the world heritage arts proclaimed as such by the UNESCO in 2005.

Video Documentation:

- A 100-hour Video documentation of the Sangit Natak Academi produced by Dr. Heidrun Bruckner for the University of Tübingen, Germany, in cooperation with Kutiyattam programme of Margi. The video covers the Margi revivals of the Ascharyachudamani Acts, Bhasa's Mantrankam and Nangiarkuthu.
- The video documentation by the renowned Filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan as the candidature material for the UNESCO proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.