

DIASPORA TWILIGHT SERIES 1 : The DAM(N) Project

6pm, Wednesday 15 May 2013

Ian Hanger Recital Hall

Conceived and developed by Queensland based composer Leah Barclay, Sydney-based producer Jehan Kanga and Shakthi Sivanathan, the director of Curious Works (Sydney).

Introduction / conversation (10 minutes)

Performance (45 minutes)

The DAM(N) Project is a large-scale interdisciplinary arts project that connects Australian and Indian communities around the common concern of global water security.

The project presents the lives of remote communities in the Narmada Valley of North India, displaced by large-scale dam development securing hydropower for Indian cities. This holistic project integrates innovative technology, diverse community perspectives and true stories of resilience to create an immersive performance combining projections, choreography and sound. The projections feature dancers Meghna Nambiar, Ronita Mookerji and Sylvester Mardi from Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, India's leading contemporary dance company.

The first stage of this intercultural project was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and involved working directly with remote communities in the Narmada Valley of North India.

This performance draws on material from our first creative development journey into the heart of India capturing visual footage and field recordings in the affected landscapes. The source material is predominately from the regional area of Jobat, where we collected stories and solidarity songs from over 20 displaced groups who had gathered at a satyagraha (non-violent protest). * Embedding ourselves within both the satyagraha and remote affected communities was a vital part of capturing a complete story across the widely varied landscape.

In Badwani we interviewed Dayal Solanki, a young adivasi (Indigenous of Badwani) whose story became the common thread for our journey. He became our guide, leading us to the extremely remote village of Badal, accessible only by fishing boat from a makeshift wharf one hour from the nearest town. The region, which is now almost completely submerged under a reservoir, was formerly one of the most agriculturally productive regions in India.

We stayed in Dayal's home, a wooden shelter perched on the arid crest of a mountain, and were welcomed by his family who told their stories of displacement and the hope they placed in their children. In addition to the satyagraha recordings, the source material in this performance is drawn from Dayal's father playing traditional bansuri flute, his sisters singing and playing on the cliffs and the sparse and unsettling soundscapes of the submerged Badal village. The visual projections draw on a series of site-specific dances at various locations during our trip, including the Jobat Dam and submerged sites. Each movement of the work draws from our experiences onsite, ranging from abstract explorations of the powerful Narmada River to the songs of hope from the children.

During our trip we facilitated workshops and enabled the children to collect images, video and sound to tell stories from their perspectives. The incorporation of these capacity-building workshops within the broader project will showcase the long-term contribution that creative empowerment can make to communities in struggle.

Ultimately, the DAM(N) project is designed to connect global communities around the common concern of global water security and reveal the ramifications of damming rivers that hold cultural and spiritual significance for indigenous communities world-wide.

During our trip we facilitated workshops and enabled the children to collect images, video and sound to tell stories from their perspectives. The incorporation of these capacity-building workshops within the broader project will showcase the long-term contribution that creative empowerment can make to communities in struggle.

Ultimately, the DAM(N) project is designed to connect global communities around the common concern of global water security and reveal the ramifications of damming rivers that hold cultural and spiritual significance for indigenous communities world-wide.

This first stage of The DAM(N) Project highlights the validity of community engagement, social activism and digital technology in environmentally engaged interdisciplinary art practice. While the initial stage is focused on the relationship between Australian and India, the long-term vision for The DAM(N) Project expands into other communities and cultures worldwide.

www.thedamnproject.com

© Leah Barclay, 2013

** Satyagraha is also the title of the 1979 opera by Philip Glass, referring to Gandhi's concept of non-violent resistance to injustice. The text of the opera Satyagraha is from the Bhagavad Gita, and is sung in the original Sanskrit.*

Leah Barclay is an award winning composer, sound artist and curator working at the intersection of art, science, technology and the environment. Her work has been commissioned, performed and exhibited to wide acclaim across Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Europe, India, China and Korea. Barclay's adventurous nature has led her to complete projects on the floor of the Australian ocean, desolate lava caves in New Zealand, the Amazon Jungle and the evocative backwaters of South India. She is passionate about the role interdisciplinary art can play in community empowerment, social activism and cultural change.

Jehan Kanga is an interdisciplinary artistic director, creative producer, multi-instrumentalist and associate artistic director with The Song Company. Jehan is also a published researcher in materials chemistry and is undertaking a PhD researching photonic, electronic and magnetic properties of new high porosity coordination framework materials. His scientific research comes from his interest in the intersection between science and art, and the relationship those fields have with major social and environmental movements particularly the issue of energy and water scarcity and impact this has on communities around the world.

As its Director, **Shakthi Sivanathan** has led CuriousWorks to deliver a series of creative initiatives that have had sustainable and innovative outcomes for all Australians. His first initiative was The Migrant Project, which brought together 40 Sydneysiders with cultural and artistic ancestries from across the globe. All of this work has focused on respectful collaboration with some of Australia's most marginalised communities and the ongoing sharing of contemporary, untold, Australian stories through traditional and digital distribution methods.

Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts is a one of its kind organisation in India creating a context for the development of contemporary cultural expressions, particularly the performance arts, by facilitating new expressions in dance and digital arts in the country through many distinct but interlinked programmes such as Education and Outreach, National and International Platforms for exchange and performance, Strategic Movement and Digital Arts Development, Research and Documentation, the Attakkalari India Biennial and new performance works by the Attakkalari Repertory. It is a multifaceted institution that works with contemporary physical expressions and digital art. It is an umbrella organisation for movement arts in India and spearheads pioneering projects internationally.

DIASPORA TWILIGHT SERIES

A glimpse into Indian music and its presence across the globe

Bringing to light aspects of Indian culture barely acknowledged in the Lonely Planet guides of recent generations, the Diaspora series hints at the manifold ways in which Indian culture has permeated into the West in the past 150 years or so.

6pm, Tuesday 14 May - THE RIG VEDA

The first Diaspora concert begins with ancient Vedic chants, sung in Sanskrit by leading scholar-singer Ritwik Sanyal. That leads into Sanskrit settings of the Mass by Australian composer Greg Schiemer, a devotee of Indian culture for over 40 years. A short multimedia piece by Leah Barclay blends into a selection of Gustav Holst's glorious Rig Veda hymns for female voices and harp.

6pm, Wednesday 15 May - THE DAM(N) PROJECT

Brisbane-based composer Leah Barclay is the central figure in the ensuing Diaspora concert - The DAM(N) Project connecting Australian and Indian communities around the common issue of global water security. In a deeply moving integration of recorded sounds, live music and dance, as well as projected images, Leah and her co-collaborators probe one of the most critical issues facing the future of the planet.

6pm, Thursday 16 May - FLAMENCO-INDO JAZZ

The third Diaspora concert explores the little known origins of Flamenco, which developed from gypsy music with roots in India, and mixes it with jazz - another vibrant child of musical diaspora. Improvisation is a critical dimension in both jazz and Indian music. A quartet of musicians, led by pianist-composer Steve Newcomb and tabla virtuoso Dheeraj Shrestha, explore the common-ground between flamenco, jazz and Indian music, providing some illuminating illustrations of a fusion form that is little known or recognised.

6pm, Friday 17 May

The final Diaspora concert celebrates the centenary of the opening of the Royal Opera House in Mumbai. What was once one of the most glowing and ostentatious symbols of the British Raj in India is more recently a déclassé cinema and venue for fashion shows. While the Maharashtra government finally restores the building, our program restores the content of this imposing grand dame to her former glory with excerpts from 19th century French opera. These reveal the Francophile fascination for all things orientales et exotiques. Join Maharajahs and Maharanis as you are invited with the upper crust of Bombay society to share the soaring melodies of Bizet, Delibes and Massenet.

ENCOUNTERS: INDIA

13 - 19 May, South Bank Brisbane
encountersfestival.com.au

Queensland Conservatorium

Griffith University

140 Grey Street
South Brisbane Qld 4101

General Enquiries

(07) 3735 6111