



# Inspired by *l'Amour\** and the *Indian Cycle* of Marguerite Duras

The Annette Leday/Keli presents

## S.thala

*An Indian Suite*

*\*l'Amour: Love*

**"At the end of the book, at the end when the fire takes place, they are all three  
together on the beach and they form one person only and one place".**

*Marguerite Duras*

Premiered in January 2022

As part of the Bonjour India Festival organised by the Ambassade de France,

Institut Français Inde and the Alliances Françaises network in India

Trivandrum, Cochin, Chennai, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Pune, Delhi

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# • **S.thala** *An Indian Suite*

Conception: Annette Leday, Hélène Courvoisier  
Direction and choreography: Annette Leday  
Videos: Annette Leday  
Music: Carlos d'Alessio  
Technique: Cameo production Trivandrum

With

Hélène Courvoisier  
Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nair  
Sadanam Manikandan  
Annette Leday

Texts: excerpts from Marguerite Duras' L'Amour

Coproduction:  
Association Keli Paris.  
Ambassade de France and Institut Français Inde.  
Alliance Française Trivandrum.  
Mairie de Paris.  
Arta Cartoucherie.



- **Note of intent:**

Over the years, the creative work of the company involving artists from India and from France has in itself been a testimony of the need to unite beyond differences and diversities. This constant concern for dialogue and openness to others is expressed once again in S.Thala. At the end of her text L'Amour, though everything has collapsed, Marguerite Duras succeeds in reuniting all the constituent elements of a humanity to be rebuilt in harmony with nature.

Writer, playwright, screenwriter and film director, Marguerite Duras (1914-1996) is one of the major figures in the twentieth French literary and artistic world. In her multiform corpus, the texts and films of the “Indian cycle” occupy a central place. By revisiting Duras’ fantasized India and the very real one at the heart of her company’s productions, Annette Leday and her dancers propose a poetic visual approach of the organic Durassian writing through a choreographed free interpretation of the text L'Amour.

S.thala is the name of an imaginary city invented by Marguerite Duras. It is strangely close to the Sanskrit term sthala, which means location, space, room. For Duras places are very important, charged with meanings, ghosts and questioning. She often mixes her own personal environment with her imaginary locations. The place that concerns Duras in the so-called Indian Cycle is a forgotten, rejected, suffering, unmanageable world, that of the natives kept apart by the white colonials. Duras' link to nature echoes today's concerns and carries the apocalyptic anguish that goes with our time.

In the works of the Indian Cycle, the characters travel from one novel to the other often without sticking to a precise narrative, but referring as a leitmotiv to an initial event that happened during a ballroom party.

L'Amour is a mysterious non-linear fragmented text that evokes reiterated, transformed memories extracted from the organic magma of the Indian Cycle. In L'Amour the characters have been dislodged from the original books and projected into new narrative regions. A woman, a man, a traveller, a beggar, a rejected woman are among the somewhat anonymous characters inhabiting this ghostly world and its surrounding nature.



## • The choreographic writing:

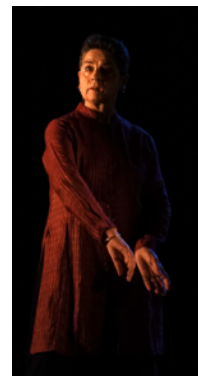
*"To immerse oneself in the work of Marguerite Duras is to enter into a sort of enigma and to try figure the meaning of her many variations, to let oneself be carried away by the flow of a mysteriously bewitching minimalist writing. Creating a contemporary dance performance is a bit like writing a poem. In S.thala we examine the puzzle of Duras' L'Amour without trying to reproduce or illustrate her complex narrative schemes. Our choreography explores the relationships and emotions of the "characters" and the emblematic atmospheres and images contained in her poetic universe." A. Leday*

The choreography presents a first period of movement and space exploration inspired by the many physical indications and themes contained in Duras texts. These dance modules are accompanied by the reading of short passages from the text l'Amour. We have chosen to read these short excerpts in French, accompanied by their English translations projected on a large LED screen, integral part of the representation. The show thus allows diverse audiences to hear the sound of the French language and discover the literary qualities of Marguerite Duras. In a second period the dancers perform an elaborate piece constructed and extrapolated from the first part explored figures and recurring elements.

Marguerite Duras on L'Amour:

***"I wanted, well I wanted to, can't really judge the result, write a completely physical, organic book."***

The show features two French and two Indian dancers. The "contemporary" aspect of my creations lies in the meeting of these dancers whose personalities and the profound nature of their energies I wanted to respect. My writing consists in searching in the diversity of styles and techniques the places where bodies and gestures can dialogue to create the meaning or colour that I want to give to my shows. Conducted for more than thirty years with a team of faithful dancers, this is a work of refining and searching for the essential, away from the codified constraints of the original styles. For S.thala we continue to build on the long body and creative familiarity between dancers. Here we explore the notions of slowness, pause, reflexive distancing of bodies as well as the contradictory and sometimes violent impulses of the universe of Marguerite Duras.



- **Artistic notes:**

**The title:**

During our readings we were intrigued by the name S.thala, an imaginary city regularly mentioned in the work. Despite our research we have never discovered how and why Marguerite Duras invented that name. We found it very close to the Sanskrit term sthala (स थल), which means location, space, room. Knowing that Marguerite Duras is always interested in places we decided to choose S.thala as the title of our new production.

**Images:**

Echoing this astonishing coincidence, the performance is punctuated with video images featuring some emblematic places dear to Duras and places in India that bear the trace of our own creative path.



**The subtitle:**

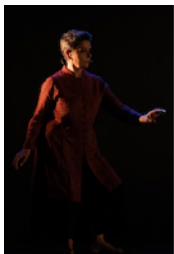
"An Indian Suite" refers to the quasi-musical form of Duras' "Indian cycle", which can be compared to a set of instrumental compositions, originally in dance style, to be played in succession. A suite can also refer to a set of reception rooms reminding us of the original ball room in Duras' novels.

**Music:**

The soundtrack takes up and diverts some of the musical themes of Duras' films, in particular the iconic India Song of the eponymous film. We also use Indian musical tracks and sounds from other sources: excerpts from radio interviews with Marguerite Duras to hear her voice, sounds from the sea.

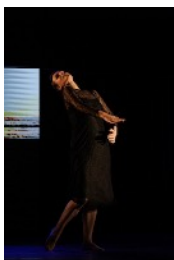
- **The team:**

**Annette Leday**



For many years, choreographer, director and translator Annette Leday has been developing an original approach to inter-cultural contemporary creation between France and India. After an immersion of ten years in the traditional form of the Kathakali she decided to innovate and created the Annette Leday/Keli company for which she directed a dozen contemporary creations based on the traditions of dances and theatres of India and France. A graduate of the Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, she is fluent in Malayalam.

**Hélène Courvoisier**



After training in classical and contemporary dance at the Ecole de Danse de Genève, Hélène Courvoisier danced in the choreographies of Maryse Delente and Martin Padron. She joined the Annette Leday/Keli company in 1997 and has taken part in all the creations since. In 1998 she toured India with Annette Leday for a series of workshops for young dancers. Since 2009 she conducts a personal choreographic research and creates dance performances in the street and other public spaces.

**Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nair**



From 1978 to 1988 Unnikrishnan studied Kathakali at Kalamandalam, the largest government institution in Kerala. While pursuing his professional carrier as a Kathakali performer in Kerala, he has also taken part in all the creations and international tours of the Annette Leday/Keli company since 1988.

**Sadanam Manikandan**



From 1982 to 1992, Manikandan studied Kathakali at the Gandhi Seva Sadanam institution in Kerala. From 1992, he took part in all the shows and international tours of the Annette Leday/Keli company. In 1995 he received a UNESCO grant for his participation in the company's Cinderella Otherwise. He is now a teacher at Sadanam and participates in all the professional performances of the troupe.

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- **The Annette Leday/Keli company:**

The artistic project of the Annette Leday/Keli Company is to orient and evolve rare traditional performance techniques towards contemporary creation. Building on Annette Leday's pioneering choreography, the company has established a constant dialogue between artists from India and from France and has developed an original process of exchanges ever since its creation in the nineteen-eighties. A new vocabulary has emerged from this contact where the different techniques enrich each other. The company has toured many times in India and all over the world with its different productions.

The main productions involving Indian dancers and French dancers are:

*Kathakali-King Lear*, *La Sensitive*, *Trans-Malabar*, *Cendrillon Ailleurs*, *La tempête*, *L'Étoffe des Songes*, *Big-bang.org*, *Mithuna*, *Sthala*.

- **Schedule:**

November 2019: first creative workshops at Walden Irinjalakuda.

August 2021: Annette and Hélène continue the preparatory workshops at Arta, Cartoucherie de Vincennes, Paris.

December, January 2022: rehearsal camp and residency at Natyashram Trivandrum.

January and March 2022: Tour in the Alliances Françaises de l'Inde as part of the Bonjour India festival organised by the French Embassy, Institut Français Inde and the Alliance Française network: Trivandrum, Cochin, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Pune, Mumbai, Delhi.



Mai 2023: Performances at the Théâtre du Soleil Paris.



## • Press and public feedback in India:

"Tales of a magical city.

A grand flourish of the emotions on stage surrounded by the fluidity and enigma of narration. S.thala a performance inspired by the magical writing of French writer Marguerite Duras, blends theatre and dance. Annette and her dancers parade a poetic visual approach to Durassian writing. "

**The New Indian Express Trivandrum January 2022**

"The performance starts slowly with a set-up of the stage and the repetitive noise of the waves, but the music and movements of the dancers quickly get faster and the spectators get carried away with them. Throughout the show, the rhythm accelerates, slows down, accelerates, slows down... The projected images follow the same rhythm and the sound of the sea alternates with the music that the slow voice of the narrator interrupts during quiet periods.

A show to see and listen to share time and emotions of love!"

**Le Petit Journal de Bombay avril 2022**

" I found both your conception and your execution intense, original, bold and inventive. Dance and words merged in an unusual and creative way, and they set me thinking about how choreography can step out of the ordinary and walk into a different realm."

**Latika Padgaonkar Pune April 2022**

"Ah but how beautiful was this show! Interdisciplinarity was the word of the day with this interpretation mixing dance, theatre, reading... An invitation to travel giving both the desire to go back in the narrative and the impression of already being there... The little complicit looks, the emotions created, shown, transmitted through the body even more than through the face. The reading made all the more powerful as it gave the impression of being almost without emotion..."

**Nisha-Lit Pune Avril 2022**

"Unique dance show at Bonjour India 2022 awes French, Indian audience.

**mathrubhumi.com Aryadev B. Delhi April 2022**

"Bonjour India: S.thala, union of French literature and Indian gestures, leaves audience mesmerised. The dance performance left the viewers awestruck."

**India TV Lifestyle Desk Delhi April 2022**

"The act was a contraction of emotions and locations. With pinch of turbulence of the ghostly and uncertainty. The body movement, facial expression were accompanied by brilliantly choreographed Light, Sound and Visuals of India. French S.thala was well perceived by the Indian audience."

"It was amazing. It was a visual treat for me. I really enjoyed it"

"It was beautiful. Some moments were very close to heart. They said things without speaking anything and just with the facial expressions and gestures. It was very beautiful."

**Jaano Junction Delhi April 2022**

## • Technical rider:

### Number of persons in the company: 6

3 dancers + 1 choreographer + 2 technicians

### Local staff required:

Stage manager and local technicians for setting up.

**Technical set-up:** Minimum 4 hours if basic lights pre-set.

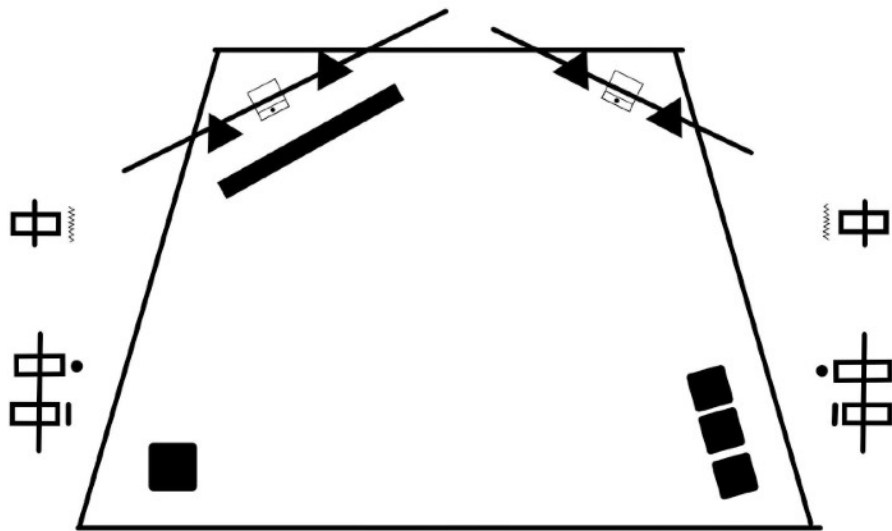
**Show duration:** 1 h

## • Lights:

Zoom Profile	4
Profile 50*	2
PC Spot	2
Fresnel	6
LED RGBW	4
Moving wash – LED	2
Control Desk	1
Blinder (4 way)	2
DMX Dimmer Pack (2 kVA, 6 Channel)	1

## • Sound:

Sound system	
PA system	5000 w
Monitor Speaker	02
Head on mic	01
Cordless Mic	02
Mixer	01



**To be provided by the venue:**

LED Wall ( 6ft height x 8ft width P3) + LED technician

4 strong simple wooden chairs (sample photo here )

**Stage Plan:**

Opening: minimum 12 meters, depth: minimum 8 meters Floor

Should be smooth and regular or dance carpet.

Black backdrop and side wings.

**Dressing rooms:**

Dressing rooms with hangers, mirrors, chairs.

Costume ironing facility.

To be provided in the dressing rooms: sparkling and carbonated mineral water, fresh fruits, salty and sweet biscuits, fruit juices, tea bags (strong), milk, sugar, a kettle and cups, rolls of tissue paper.

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