



VIDHYUNMADANIKA

A Srishti School of Dance Production

*Choreographed by
Dr. Vasundhara Doraswamy &
Vani Ramesh*

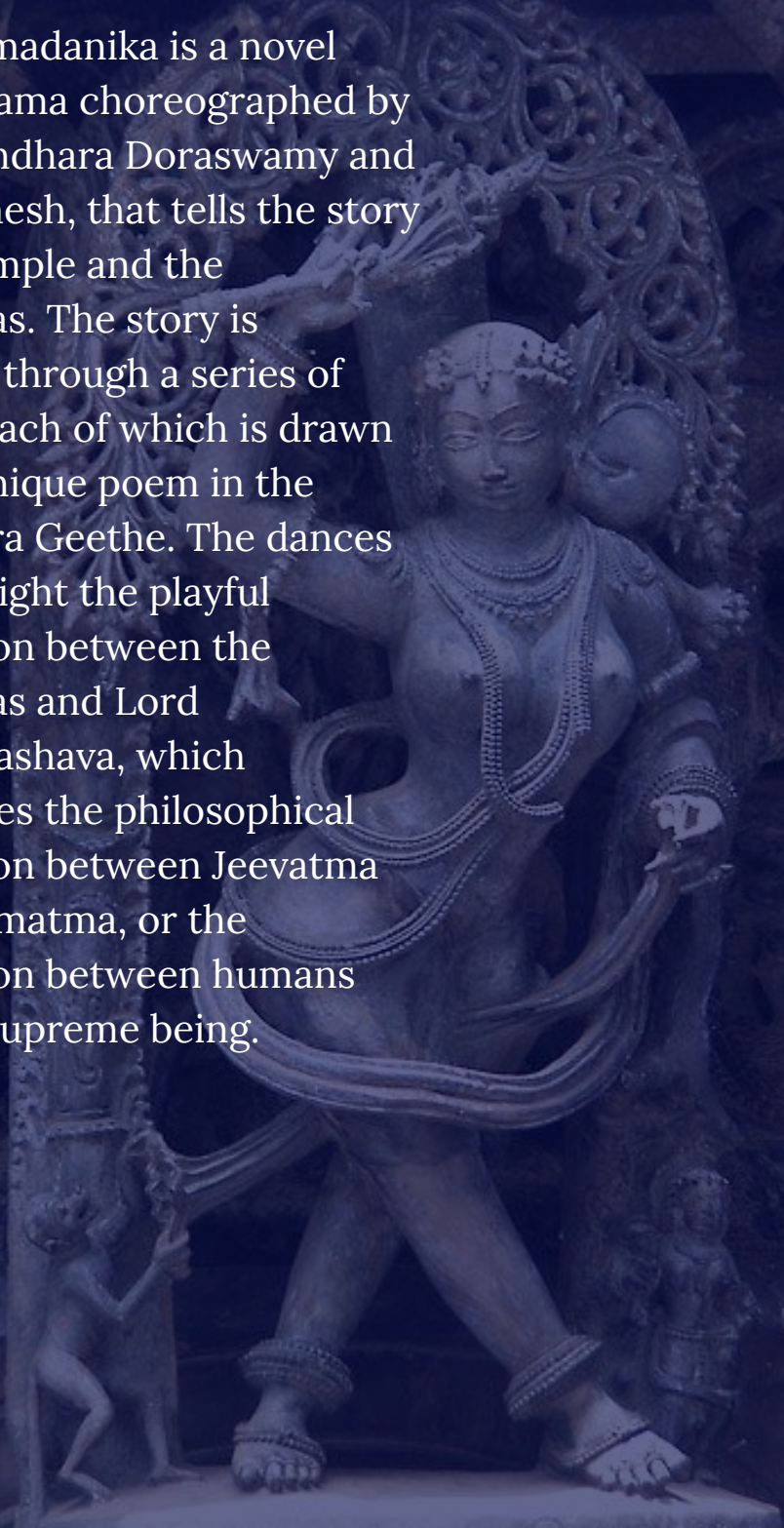
*Directed by
Vani Ramesh*

Today's dance performance brings to life the story behind the Chennakashava Temple in Belur, Karnataka. The temple, which is world renowned for its architecture and iconography, is uniquely adorned with forty-two stone sculptures of dancing maidens, called *madanikas*, and dedicated to Lord Chennakeshava, also known as Lord Vijaya Narayana or Vishnu.

The story of the temple and each of the forty-two *madanikas* is highlighted through a collection of sixty poems called the *Antahpura Geethe*, written by Padhma Bushan Sri D.V. Gundappa, a renowned literary figure of Karnataka.



Vidhyunmadanika is a novel dance drama choreographed by Dr. Vasundhara Doraswamy and Vani Ramesh, that tells the story of the temple and the madanikas. The story is depicted through a series of scenes, each of which is drawn from a unique poem in the Antahpura Geethe. The dances will highlight the playful interaction between the madanikas and Lord Chennakashava, which symbolizes the philosophical interaction between Jeevatma and Paramatma, or the interaction between humans and the supreme being.



1 | *Pushpanjali*

The program begins with a traditional invocatory Bharatanatyam piece where the dancers offer flowers to Lord Chennakeshava and seek his blessings.

Dancers: Anjana Raman, Mayuka Rajupalepu, Neha Sriram, Nidhi Gavva and Samhita Vinay



2 | The Belur Temple is Erected

At the request of his beloved queen, Shantala, the great Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana gives an order to the sculptor Jakkanacharya to construct a temple that is visually appealing to all and in reverence of Lord Chennakeshava. Upon receiving this order, Jakkanacharya, with the help of Queen Shantala, selects an ideal place to build the temple – the beautiful and picturesque area now known as Belur, Karnataka.

Using the queen, a beautiful dancer herself, as his muse, Jakkanacharya carefully sculpts forty-two *madanikas*, or dancing maidens, to adorn the temple. After completing these stone sculptures, Jakkanacharya, enthralled with his own art, begins to imagine the sculptures coming to life at night and dancing for the Lord.

Dancers: Preethi Ramamurthy, Sailaja Dokku, Shreya Raghuram, Chinmayee Yerraguntla, Shikha Raghuram, Ann Mathew, Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Pallavi Samudrala and Shivani Chinnakonda

3 | *Dancing With Sri Chennakeshava*

As the night falls, the madanikas come to life and dance with Lord Chennakeshava himself. The maidens become enchanted by the Lord and consider him the very personification of Sringara, or the sentiment of love. They describe Lord Chennakeshava as an ocean of beauty and grace who is a part of his own beautiful creation and bestows ultimate joy to the entire universe.

Dancers: Ann Mathew, Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Pallavi Samudrala and Shivani Chinnakonda

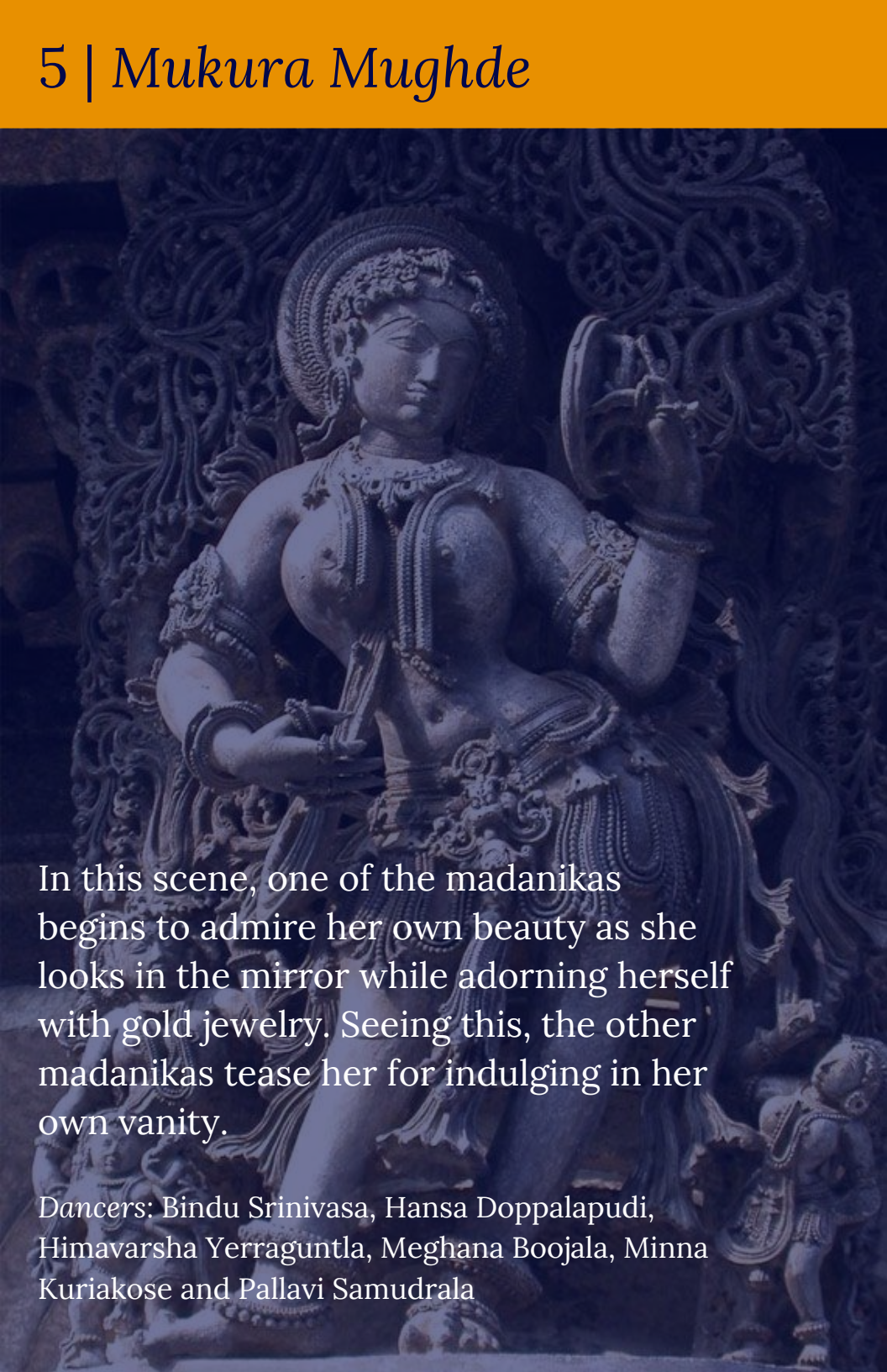
4 | *Vishnu Stuthi*

The madanikas dance in praise of Lord Narayana who is none other than Chennakeshava himself. They depict Lord Narayana sleeping on Adishesha and with Goddess Lakshmi serving at his feet.



Dancers: Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose and Pallavi Samudrala

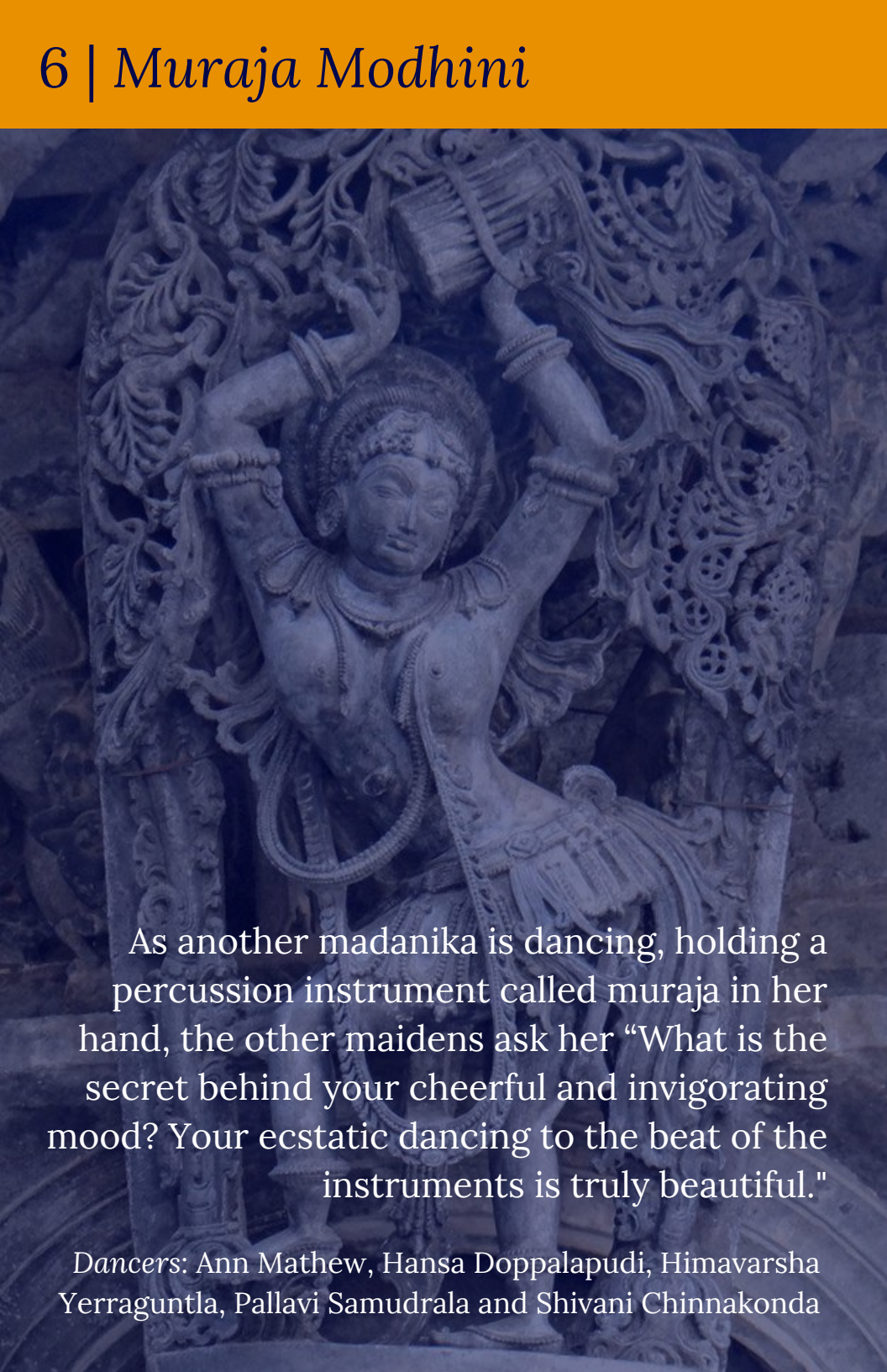
5 | Mukura Mughde



In this scene, one of the madanikas begins to admire her own beauty as she looks in the mirror while adorning herself with gold jewelry. Seeing this, the other madanikas tease her for indulging in her own vanity.

Dancers: Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose and Pallavi Samudrala

6 | *Muraja Modhini*



As another madanika is dancing, holding a percussion instrument called muraja in her hand, the other maidens ask her “What is the secret behind your cheerful and invigorating mood? Your ecstatic dancing to the beat of the instruments is truly beautiful.”

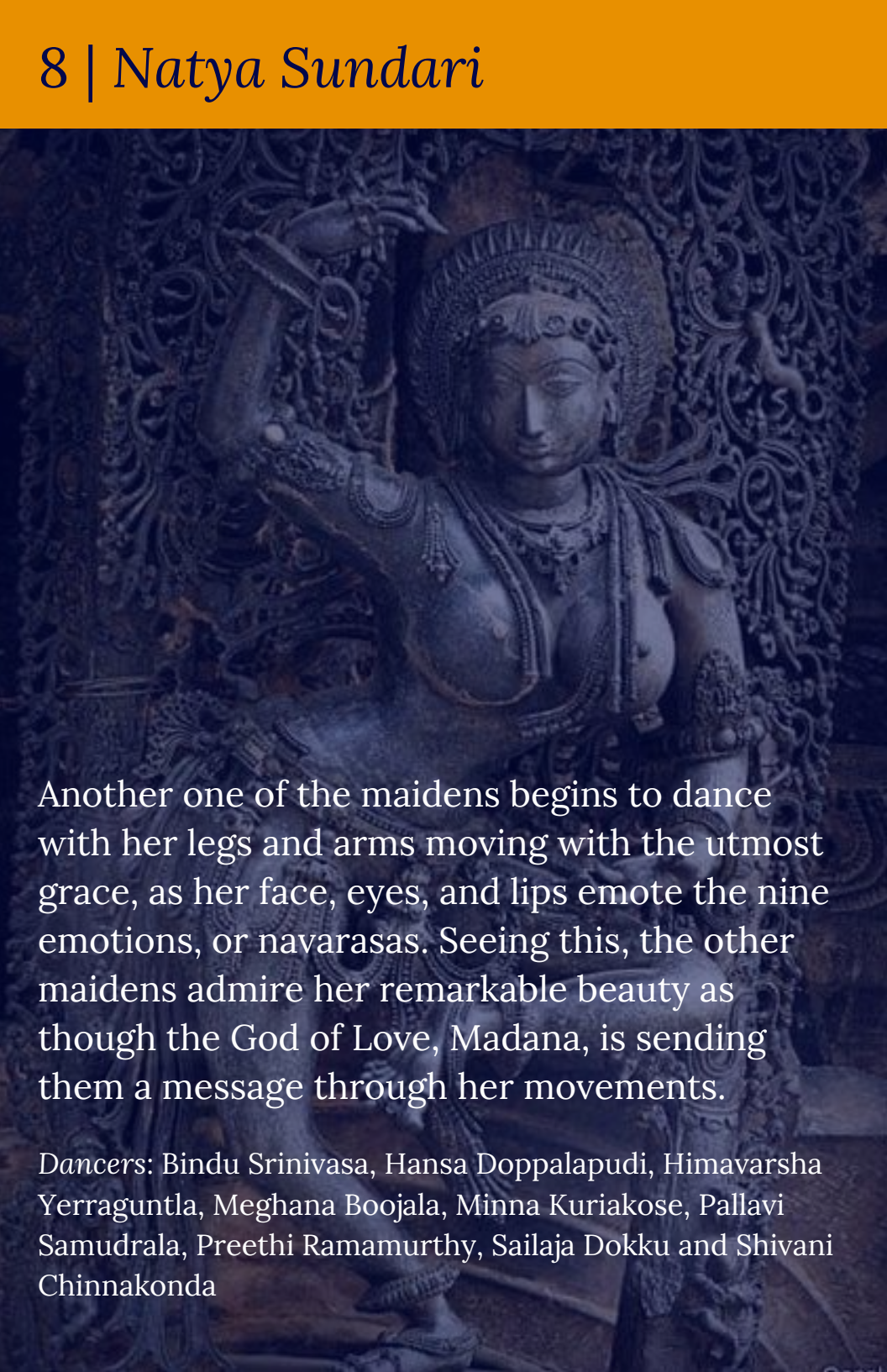
Dancers: Ann Mathew, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Pallavi Samudrala and Shivani Chinnakonda

7 | Koravanji

As one of the madanikas, who is disguised as a fortune teller, dances to the beating drums, snapping her fingers, twisting and elegantly flexing her body, the other maidens, enthralled by her dancing, begin to follow her lead and imitate her movements.

Dancers: Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Pallavi Samudrala, Preethi Ramamurthy, Sailaja Dokku, Shivani Chinnakonda and Shreya Raghuram

8 | *Natya Sundari*



Another one of the maidens begins to dance with her legs and arms moving with the utmost grace, as her face, eyes, and lips emote the nine emotions, or navarasas. Seeing this, the other maidens admire her remarkable beauty as though the God of Love, Madana, is sending them a message through her movements.

Dancers: Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Pallavi Samudrala, Preethi Ramamurthy, Sailaja Dokku and Shivani Chinnakonda

9 | *Kapata Bhairavi*

In this scene, one of the madanikas is dancing violently, emulating Bhairavi. When the other maidens see her dancing like that, they ask her “Why have you dressed up as make believe Bhairavi? Why do you dance so ferociously with a spike, a human head and a hollowed skull in your hands?”

Dancers: Bindu
Srinivasa, Himavarsha
Yerraguntla, Meghana
Boojala, Minna
Kuriakose, Preethi
Ramamurthy, Sailaja
Dokku, Shivani
Chinnakonda and
Shreya Raghuram

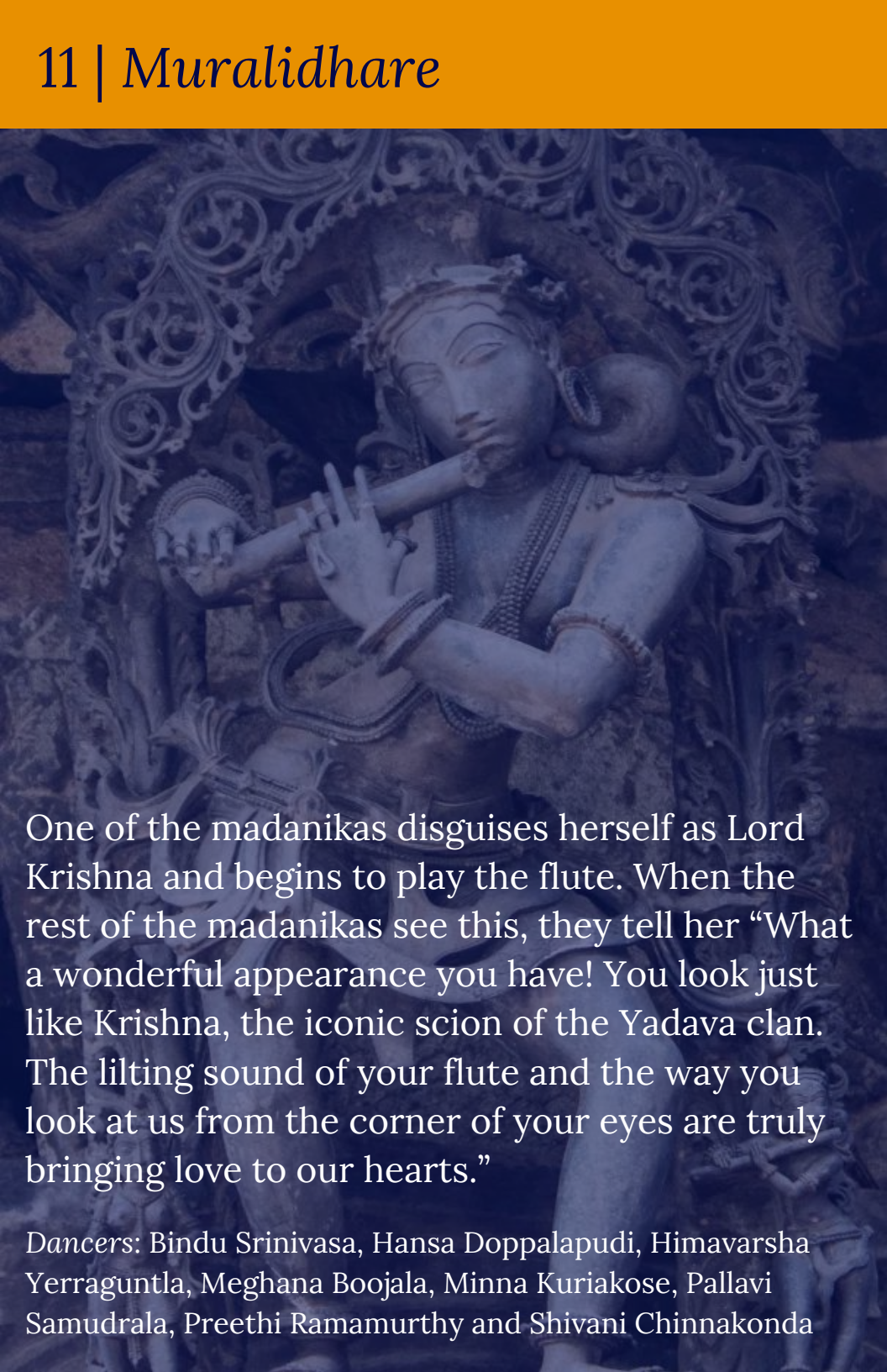
10 | Holi & Kolata (Raas)

Upon hearing the mellifluous flute sound of Lord Krishna, all the madanikas eagerly await Krishna's arrival. As Krishna enters with one of the madanikas, they all get excited and begin to play games, throw colored water and powder on each other, and play in the river. Lord Krishna and the madanikas enjoy each other's company so much that they begin to do a dance with sticks, known as Kolata or Raas.

Dancers: Ann Mathew, Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Nidhi Gavva, Pallavi Samudrala, Preethi Ramamurthy, Sailaja Dokku, Shivani Chinnakonda and Shreya Raghuram



11 | *Muralidhare*

A stone sculpture of Lord Krishna playing a flute, set against a background of intricate carvings. The sculpture is the central focus, showing Krishna in a three-quarter view, playing a flute. He is adorned with jewelry and a crown. The background features a complex, swirling pattern of carvings, possibly representing a forest or a celestial realm. The overall tone is dark and artistic.

One of the madanikas disguises herself as Lord Krishna and begins to play the flute. When the rest of the madanikas see this, they tell her “What a wonderful appearance you have! You look just like Krishna, the iconic scion of the Yadava clan. The lilting sound of your flute and the way you look at us from the corner of your eyes are truly bringing love to our hearts.”

Dancers: Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Pallavi Samudrala, Preethi Ramamurthy and Shivani Chinnakonda

12 | Kalahantarite, Latangi & Thillana

In this scene, Lord Krishna comes to join with Madanikas who are dancing with each other. As he approaches them, the Lord is pushed away by a few of the maidens. Quickly realizing their mistake, the madanikas begin to worry that they have upset Lord Krishna and he may be angry with them.

As they begin to repent for their actions, Lord Krishna enters and consoles their worried minds, letting them know that he is not at all angry, and cheers them up. Relieved that Krishna is not angry with them, the madanikas rejoice knowing that they have won the heart of the Lord. All the Madanikas dance alongside Lord Krishna in ecstasy and each of the madanikas show their eternal love towards him in their own way.

Dancers: Ann Mathew, Bindu Srinivasa, Hansa Doppalapudi, Himavarsha Yerraguntla, Meghana Boojala, Minna Kuriakose, Pallavi Samudrala, Preethi Ramamurthy and Shivani Chinnakonda

13 | *Finale*

As the madanikas are dancing with joy, the sun begins to rise and Lord Chennakeshava and all the madanikas turn back into stone sculptures. Jakkanacharya then enters the temple premises with King Vishnuvardhana and Queen Shantala to show them the temple he has sculpted with his own hands.



Seeing the marvelous temple, the King is overjoyed and rewards Jakkanacharya handsomely for all his hard work. The King and Queen then inaugurate the Belur temple by offering their obeisance to Lord Chennakeshava.

CREDITS

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Venue for Practice: Sujatha & Ranganath Samudrala Residence
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Performance Venue: JCC Bender Auditorium (Maytal Regev & Ellen Craft)

JCC Technician: Noel Kendall

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