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Homecoming dance

BY REVATHI MURUGAPPAN

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Creative link: Sooraj Subramaniam started his dance training with Ramli Ibrahim when he was nine. - Photo by Kajal Nisha Patel



Europe-based dancer Sooraj Subramaniam subscribes to the enchanting and passionate side of his craft.

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IT'S always refreshing to see how much our local dancers have blossomed after living abroad for years.

Former Sutra dancer Sooraj Subramaniam will present his homecoming performance called *Interface*, a blend of the traditional and modern, at Sutra House in Kuala Lumpur.

The two-show series starts tonight. Presented by Sutra Foundation, the one-hour show will feature Sooraj, along with local artist Weijun and the Sutra Dancers.

The performance features three segments – an odissi selection with the Sutra dancers, Sooraj in a solo from *Prelude L'après-Midi d'un Faune (Prelude To The Afternoon Of A Faun)* (reprising an excerpt from Datuk Ramli Ibrahim's recent performance at the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas in Kuala Lumpur), and an improvisational contemporary duet with Weijun called *Temu*.

"Weijun and I haven't met in years so without being overly narrative, *Temu* is about the meeting of old friends," explains Sooraj in a recent interview.

"I used to be very timid but going abroad has made me bolder (on stage). Once I've had my 15 seconds of fame on stage, I'm happy to be away from the limelight. I've often wanted to come home and perform but couldn't fit it into my schedule, until now," he adds.

Under Ramli's watchful eye, Sooraj and his sister Chaandini began training at the Sutra Dance Theatre in the Indian classical dance styles of bharatanatyam and odissi in the late 1980s.

The duo emerged as Sutra's bright sparks and some dance enthusiasts might remember the 1.8m Sooraj as the lanky, gawky teenager who often graced the stage back then.

"I used to hate being tall, thin and gawky but now I realise there's a lot of good art that can be made that's not textbook beautiful.

"Before I used to fight internally with my body to strive for what's right and how the body should look, but all that has changed," says Sooraj.

After SPM, he went to study veterinary science in Australia.

Just before completing his degree from Murdoch University in Perth, Sooraj started having doubts about the course he was pursuing.

Something was amiss.

His soul needed nourishing so he switched to performing arts to fulfil his artistic needs.

Later, he graduated in classical ballet and contemporary dance from the Western Australian Academy for Performing Arts in Perth.

He subsequently moved to London.

Since 2007 Sooraj has toured Britain and Europe performing with various dance companies.

He is currently based in Belgium.

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Chaandini took a different path and became a paediatrician.

She now lives in the Gold Coast, Australia, with her family and hardly dances.

“I’ve grown a little outside Sutra so it’s great to come back to my roots and get Ramli’s personal input,” says Sooraj.

“I miss those days of dancing with my sister. If I could be an eternal student, I would!” Does he prefer one dance genre to the other?

“I feel I’ve got a finger in each pot. It’s like the heart having many chambers but the blood flowing through it is the same.

“I’ve great respect for people who can focus on only one thing and become a master of it.

“I recently started learning kathak and absolutely adore it. My forte is ... when I can turn on the charm!” he jests.

Naturally, he is a little nervous about performing here, especially since the dance scene has grown over the past two decades.

“I’ve got big shoes to fill but I think it’ll be a positive experience,” he says.

“There’s a small narcissistic part of me that hopes the gawkiness will be able to charm the audience.”

> Interface will take place at 8.30pm today and tomorrow at Sutra House, 12 Persiaran Titiwangsa 3, Kuala Lumpur. Entrance is by a donation of RM30. For more information, call 03-4021 1092.

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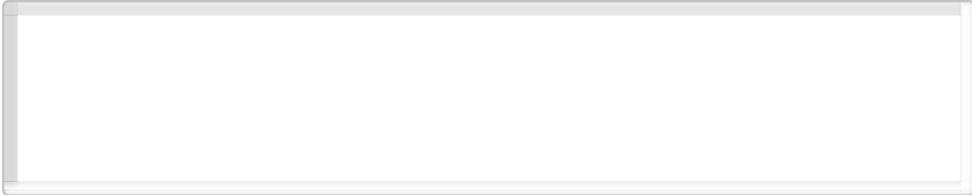
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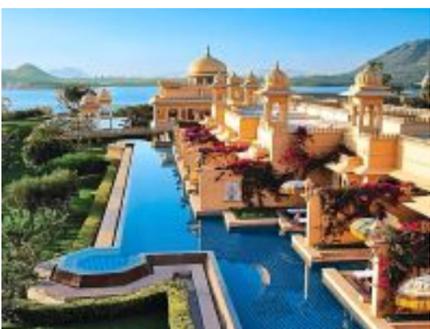


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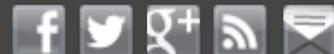
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