SHARON LOWEN

Sharon Lowen's contribution to India has gone far beyond her achievement as one of Indian's leading performing artists of Odissi classical dance. In her 44 years in India, she has become an icon for recent generations of what can be accomplished on the basis of merit and passion without reference to caste, community or nationality. She has shown audiences in India and abroad that maintaining the highest standards of authenticity in classicism can appeal to all members of society while contributing new choreography, teaching, lectures and writing that moves the tradition forward and gives it vitality for new generations.

Sharon is hailed today as one of the leading performing artists of Odissi. A scholar, teacher and performing artist, Sharon had been trained since 1975 in Odissi by the doyen of the art, Padmavibhushan Kelucharan Mohapatra, in Manipuri by Minati Roy in 1969-71 and from 1973 by Guru Singhajit Singh in Delhi and Rajani Maibi and Thangjam Chaoba Singh in Manipur, in Mayurbhanj Chhau by Late Guru Krishna Chandra Naik and in Seraikella Chhau by Guru Kedarnath Sahoo.

Over the last four decades, Sharon has performed throughout India and the United States, Canada, Mexico, England, Brazil, Japan, Poland, Lithuania, Slovak Republic, Kuwait, Dubai, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan and Bangladesh. She has choreographed and performed Odissi dance in Telegu, Bengali, Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, Kashmiri, Dogra, as well as Sanskrit and Oriya for performances and festivals around the country and for numerous national programs for Doordarshan. Her six-week Festival of India-U.S.A. tour in 1985 accompanied by Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra culminated in their performance together at the New York Metropolitan Museum.

Solo recitals in India include: Khajuraho Dance Festival, Sangeet Natak Akademi Odissi Festival in Bhubaneswar, Sankat Mochan Hanuman Jayanti Festival, Varanasi, Kottakal, Kerala Temple Festival, Chidambaram, Konarak Festival, Orissa, Balamurali Krishna Trust, Madras, Nishagandhi Palace Festival, Trivandrum, Swatch Ganga Festival, Tulsi Ghat by Sankat Morchan Foundation and Ministry of Environment, Soorya Festival, Trivandrum, Simla Festival, Lucknow Tansen-Tyagaraja Festival, Kerala Kalamandalam Diamond Jubilee Festival, Chaitra Parva Festival, Seraikella, Bihar, Three Traditions Dance Festival, Chandigarh Rock Garden, Ardha Khumb, Allahabad, Brihadeshwari Temple, Thanjavur, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, Nehru Centre, Bombay, Raj Bhavan, Jaipur, Krishna Gana Sabha, Madras, Kala Mandir, Calcutta, Santineketan, West Bengal, Jawarhalal Nehru Manipur State Dance Academy, Imphal, and all venues of Delhi including for the visiting President of the Slovak Republic and benefit concerts for Action for Autism, Palna Orphanage, Deepalaya, Kargil families, the 50th anniversary of Independence, and choreography for 1000 children for the opening ceremony of the Haryana Sports Olympics.

Television and film productions include the award winning Telegu film, Swarna Kamalam directed by K. Viswanath in a feature role for Sharon as herself influencing the heroine to value her own Indian dance tradition, Central Television, England's documentary on Sharon and her dance in Orissa "Odyssey in Odissi, productions for Spain, U.S.A., South Africa and several Indian channels including Odissi and Chhau ballets for Doordarshan.

As a scholar, Sharon has done research and published on Shasta and Odissi for a Heidelberg, Germany publication and comparative studies in three forms of Chhau. Her recent book, The Performing Arts of India – Development and Spread Across the Globe, Shubhi Publications focuses on issues of transmission and authenticity in performance of India's classical performing arts by non-traditional exponents. Her book, Odissi, introduces this classical form in a Wisdom Tree set on 7 classical dance traditions of India written by prominent exponents of each form. She also wrote on

her Odissi guru Padmavibhushan Kelucharan Mohapatra for Roli Books. She has taught at colleges and universities throughout the United States and helped establish the School of Performing and Visual Arts and Communication at Central University, Hyderabad.

Sharon Lowen has choreographed and organized Chhau exhibitions and performances for traditional artists and organized a Seraikella Chhau seminar in Seraikella for the gurus and scholars of the tradition. Sharon Lowen was the first woman soloist of this previously all-male form, responsible for introducing Mayurbhanj Chhau to the United States at the 1978 Asian Dance Festival in Hawaii and later performed at the Olympic Arts Festival of Masks in Los Angeles and was responsible getting Chhau presented on Doordarshan' s National Broadcasts.

Sharon established and convened the pioneering Videshi Kalakar Utsavs– Art Without Frontiers for six years from 1990 with support from the Sahitya Kala Parishad. Due to this festival, more than 50 artists from around the world had the opportunity to exhibit their passion for Indian Sanskriti in front of the discriminating and appreciative audiences of Delhi. Side by side, annual seminars of distinguished gurus, artists and critics discussed issues and ideas for teaching and presenting the classical arts of India in the modern age, in India and abroad. Today, serious exponents of Indian performing arts are recognized in India and they return to their countries to spread Indian Sanskriti.

The Delhi Sahitya Kala Parishad awarded Sharon Lowen its prestigious Parishad Samman '92 for her Outstanding Individual Contribution to Indian Arts. Other awards and honors, include the Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's Acharya Narendra Dev Sarokar Samajic Samman by P.M. in 1991, the Rashtiya Ekta Award of the All India National Unity Conference, Delhi Ratan, All India Conference of Intellectuals, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Bharat Nirman Award for "Role of Women in Nation Building" in the field of Art and Dance, "Contribution to Odissi Dance" from NUPUR Dance and Music Institution, Bhubaneswar presented by Minister Kumar Patsani, Singar Mani Award for Manipuri Dance from Sur Singar Samsad Academy, Bombay, and Prayag Sangit Samiti, Allahabad.

Through *Manasa: Art Without Frontiers,* Sharon strives to promote excellence and understanding of visual and performing arts and is also active in several N.G.O.'s working with children.

Sharon Lowen, although an American by birth, has achieved "complete Indianess" as a dancer. Her soul has been so deeply nurtured in the Indian ethos and spirit that she has now been considered as a dancer "who has shown with total conviction how dance is a language away and above any barrier of race and nationality."