

# Kattaikkuttu E-News

April 2011

Transforming Culture |  
Transforming Lives

## *Kattaikkuttu Sangam*



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#### Obituary

With great sadness we announce the passing away of our auditor, Mr. S. Narayanan, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2011. All of us knew he was seriously ill, yet his demise has still taken up by surprise. He fought his illness bravely and with great will-power remaining optimistic that he would return to his normal life and career. We wish his family all strength to bear this great loss.

Mr. Narayanan, Managing partner of K.S. Aiyar & Co., Chennai, has been the statutory auditor of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam for the last eighteen years. He will be remembered for his commitment to the cause of the Sangam, his integrity and his vesthi-clad-appearance to present in person the audited statements to the members of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam on the occasion of its yearly General Body Meeting.





# the ART of FINANCE



2010-2011 has been a year of impressive artistic achievements and a greater visibility of the Kattaikkuttu theatre and the Kattaikkuttu Sangam. It has also been a year during which our work load has increased considerably as the result of the addition of an extra phase to the Gurukulam (the Apprenticeship Programme) and the financial insecurity which we have faced. Donor mandates have tightened and do no longer support grassroots culture as an integral part of development and identity.

Masha Dimitri's precarious balance on the tight-rope straddling the auditorium of the Kuttu Kalai Kudam symbolizes aptly the funding situation of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam during the past year.

Our intensive fundraising efforts finally have borne fruit: We are grateful to the Tata Social Welfare Board, India, for its commitment to support the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam for a period of three years. Interim funding to bridge the gap that had arisen after the conclusion of the JRD Tata grant was secured from Kalai Manram-Impulsis and the DOEN Foundation, both in The Netherlands, Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan, India, and a number of smaller funds and individual well-wishers.

We have also been able to further build our Corpus Fund through contributions from De Zingende Vlinder, De Zaaier Foundation and income from the performances by the Kattaikkuttu Young Professionals Company.



## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam: SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME 2011-2013



Our critical funding situation has set off a process of strategic brainstorming about the Sangam's long-term sustainability. We are happy to announce the establishment of a Sustainability Programme for 2011-2013. The programme strives to strengthen the capacity building and income generating potential of the Sangam and will be financially supported by DOEN, the Netherlands. In the next newsletter we hope to tell you more about our efforts to build new audiences for our traditional and innovative performances..

Left: V. Karthikeyan and P. Parandaman preparing for their 9<sup>th</sup> standard Exam.

# New artistic work – Exploring the boundaries of Kattaikkuttu



R. Mahalaksmi (15 years) as Sita.

**RAMARAVANA** was commissioned by Rustom Barucha and Veenapani Chawla for the 2011 Ramayana Festival of Adishakti Theatre Laboratory for Theatre Art Research in Pondicherry. Conceptualized and directed by P. Rajagopal and Hanne M. de Bruin, this play explores the richness of P. Rajagopal's performance style. It uses this style to intensify and question content and form and pushes traditional boundaries to create a new idiom.

RamaRavana is a critical re-imagination of a few selected scenes from the Indian epic, the Ramayana. It investigates how social conventions of "honour" and "virility", as well as a desire for power, motivate both Rama and Ravana to engage in atrocious deeds, including maiming, kidnapping and war. Women are the pivots and victims of men's virile actions and the pawns through which opposition and violence are being instigated and perpetuated. All the principal roles in RamaRavana were performed by girls. The play had the entire cast of the Kattaikkuttu Young Professionals Company on stage as chorus. Members of the chorus acted in multiple supporting roles. The tight script, including all songs and dialogues, was written by P. Rajagopal.



Left: P. Thilagavathi as Surpanakha. Top: After-performance discussion led by Rustom Barucha (left) and Hanne M. de Bruin (right).





Many more  
Ramayanas with  
Craig Jenkins and  
the Junior Students

Above: Craig Jenkins, professional storyteller from the UK, discusses a scene with the Junior students; Middle: the scene from RamaRavana where Ravana carries off Sita on his areal chariot. Below: The same kidnapping scene performed by the Junior students in their version of the Ramayana.

Following the terrific success of last year's storytelling workshop, Craig-Sir returned to the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam for the second time. Over a period of four months he worked with the new Junior students who had no or only very basic English. At the end of the workshop all Juniors put on their version of the Ramayana – in ENGLISH.



L. Shivashakti (12 years) paying homage to the buffalo.



In addition to close copies of Ramayana-scenes put up by the Senior students, the Juniors produced their own innovative work. This allowed us a glimpse into their perception of teacher-student relationships as well as the importance of local rituals carried out for a deceased Buffalo-friend.



Right top: R. Mahalakshmi as Sita during the performance of RamaRavana by the Kattaikkuttu Young Professionals; Below: A. Bharati (8 years) as Sita during a Ramayana storytelling-rehearsal of the same scene by the Junior students.

## OTHER WORKSHOPS

In January 2011 famous Swiss woman clown and acrobat Masha Dimitri gave a special comedy workshop at the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam. This enabled our two young professional clowns, M. Doraisami and P. Moorthy, to create new work. The comedy scene they developed can be performed as a stand-alone, but it can also be inserted into all-night Kattaikkuttu performances. Doraisami and Moorthy's enthusiastic reaction: "We need Masha Miss again – there's still so much to learn and she is so professional!"

Masha also gave intensive acrobatics training to the Senior Girls. The Girls want to become more physical in their performances.

We thank the Swiss Arts Council Prohelvetia for making Masha's travel to India possible.



R. Mahalakshmi and S. Jothi with Masha Dimitri in the background during the Girls Acrobatics training.

Katja Groll came back to the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam as a volunteer guest teacher. She ran a 2-weeks acrobatics workshop for the Junior students. Her partner, Urs Moersch, put in his technical knowledge and hard work to help build an oven and a kennel for Tiger and Lion, our two dogs.

Frankie Nichols, UK, gave a fantastic and much needed Voice training Workshop and Shirley Paati, USA, provided continuous English classes.



Diana Ambache explaining a point to musician T. Veluchami during a harmonium class.

In addition to teaching English for six months, Diana Ambache, a professional musician from the UK, also taught two of the KYPC musicians the beginnings of Western music. J. Loganathan and T. Veluchami learned to read Western musical notation and play the harmonium with two hands. After Diana's return to the UK Loganathan has continued his classes with her over SKYPE.

During Diana's stay her husband Jeremy Polmear – also a professional musician – visited her and the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam. Read about his experiences at the school, at:

<http://www.oboeconcerts.com/travels/Kuttu.htm>.

Hanne M. de Bruin, ATSA Fellow 2011-2012, attended an arts management workshop in New Delhi during the first two weeks of March. For a personal report of her experiences, please see E-rang (the two-weekly e-journal of the Indian Theatre Forum), number 18 at [http://theatreforum.in/erang/?issue\\_id=18](http://theatreforum.in/erang/?issue_id=18).



## THEATRE FESTIVAL 2011

From 15 to 21 March 2011 Natya Parampara, a 6 days Seminar, Documentation and Festival of Terukkuttu/Kattaikkuttu of Tamil Nadu, took place at the premises of the Kuttu Kalai Kudam. The Kattaikkuttu Sangam hosted the Festival on behalf of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the national academy for artistic heritage, including music, drama and dance based in New Delhi. V.R. Devika was the coordinator and the chief guests were Ms. Leela Samson, Chairperson of SNA, and dancer Ms. Padma Subramaniam.

### Summer holidays and wanting to do something you've never done before?

Now is the time to experience Kattaikkuttu Live during one of the upcoming all-night village performances by Kattaikkuttu Young Professionals Company. Below the performance schedule of the KYPC (changes may occur). For further information please contact the Sangam's office.



Top: The premises of the Kuttu Kalai Kudam during the Theatre Festival 2011; Below: KYPC's Festival performance of "Vilvalaippu" with R. Mahalakshmi (left) as Draupadi and P. Rajagopal (right) in the role of Panchalan. Below: All-night village performance by the KYPC.



| Date       | Place                 | Performance   |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 01-05-2011 | Keezhvellam           | Kuravanchi    |
| 06-05-2011 | Durinchapuram         | Pakatai Tukil |
| 10-05-2011 | Daamal                | Vilvalaippu   |
| 24-05-2011 | Paalvaarttuvanraan    | Pakatai Tukil |
| 31-05-2011 | Keeranalluur          | Pakatai Tukil |
| 05-06-2011 | Arukaavuur Colony     | Not known     |
| 12-06-2011 | Narkunram Mettukuppam | Kuravanchi    |
| 22-06-2011 | Moranam               | Kuravanchi    |





## Announcements

Good-bye and good-luck to V. Thiruvankadam.

Thiruvankadam joined the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam in June 2007. After passing his 9<sup>th</sup> standard at the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam he has now decided to join main stream education (10<sup>th</sup> standard) in order to opt for the science-computer stream.

- The Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam will be closed for Summer Holidays from 22 April to 15 June 2011.
- ADMISSION OF NEW STUDENTS (8-14 years) is open; preference will be given to girls. Admission request forms can be obtained from the Kattaikkuttu Sangam's office (please see the address below).

We are looking for the following suitably skilled persons:

- Marketing Manager responsible for marketing the traditional and innovative performances of the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam.
- Teacher able to handle 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standards Maths and Science.

For further information please contact Dheeraj Shet (Institutional Manager), [dheerajshet@gmail.com](mailto:dheerajshet@gmail.com) or call us at (0)99 44 369 600.

## Contact us

If you have any questions, would like to book a long or short performance or workshop, would like to work with us, volunteer, run a workshop with the children or have any other queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Telephone: +91 (0) 44 2724 2044 or +91 9944 369 600

E-mail: [kattaiku@vsnl.com](mailto:kattaiku@vsnl.com)

Website: [www.kattaikkuttu.org](http://www.kattaikkuttu.org)

Website for children: [www.kattaikkuttu.org/kids](http://www.kattaikkuttu.org/kids)

### Donations

For Indian donors a donation is 50% tax exempt.

Local donations (within India) can be sent to the Kattaikkuttu Sangam's account **10943781408** with the State Bank of India, Kanchipuram (Branch code 085).

International donations can be sent to the Kattaikkuttu Sangam's account **0853/10943781419** with the State Bank of India, Kanchipuram Branch through the State Bank of India, Meenambakkam Airport - Foreign Branch, SWIFT CODE: **SBININBB298** (India has no IBAN codes yet)

All donations will be acknowledged; the Sangam has 80G & FCRA registration.

Postal address: Kattaikkuttu Sangam @ the Kuttu Kalai Kudam, 36 Punjarasantankal Village, Aiyankarkulam Post-631502, Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu, India.