

arts & entertainment

Husband-wife dance team keeps tradition alive

By Bonnie Lutz

Instead of strobe lights and bumping to the latest sounds, two dancers will wear bells on their ankles and before their performance pray to their god in gratitude for the earth to dance on.

K.P. and Katherine Kunhiraman, a husband and wife team, will perform two styles of dance from India, Bharatanatyam and Kathakali in the Centennial Room 8 p.m. Saturday. They are sponsored by the Universal Arts and Educational Association, a non-profit organization, with help from the Nebraska Arts Council.

Kunhiramin, the male dancer, uses only his first name and his mother's name, a custom in parts of India. His father also was a dancer, so he is carrying out a family tradition. Kunhiramin has studied and taught dance since 1947.

Many members of her family are painters, and she said she believes exposure to art helped her as a dancer.

Dancing outlawed

All dance styles in India originally were part of worship in temples, but when India was occupied by the British, dancing was outlawed, Katherine said. This prohibition still exists on the books, and if not for recent revival and research on the dances, these traditional art forms could have died, she said.

Katherine explained that a great deal of research has been done to understand dance styles and to "restore ancient purity of style."

All respected, traditional Indian dances follow Natya Shastra, regulations for dance and theatre which were established 2,000 years ago by a religious scholar, Bharata Muni, Katherine said.

This uses psychoanalysis and lists stereotyped reactions people would give in certain circumstances. For instance, a proper woman would only smile at something humorous, someone in a lower status would show her teeth, and someone completely unaccepted would laugh loudly, Katherine explained.

Women can dance

Katherine explained that one dance style, Kathakali, is taught to children like ballet and tap dance in the U.S. She said dancing once was reserved for men, but is now considered an asset for women.

She described the dance forms as perfect yoga, and mathematical and geometric expressions.

All parts of the body are used in the Indian dancing, to express emotions of the characters, and all dancers train rigorously.

There are many exercises for the eyes, head and neck, and numerous turns, stands, walks and jumps. Each has a separate dictionary, defining the meaning for each movement.

Oil massages

The body is massaged for days at a time with medicated oils, and muscles and bones are trained to move in unnatural positions, Katherine said.

Some traditional dances were performed from dusk to

dawn, so dancers had to be in good shape. The dances still are strenuous and dancers must wear heavy costumes and head ornaments, she said.

Kunhiraman wears a carved wooden crown weighing six to eight pounds, which is pagoda-shaped and set in stones, wings of beetles and peacock feathers.

Music is an important part of the dance forms. It sets the rhythm and mood for the dancers, as well as providing the base for stories the dancers tell, Katherine said.

"Music can stand out on its own, dance cannot," Katherine explained.

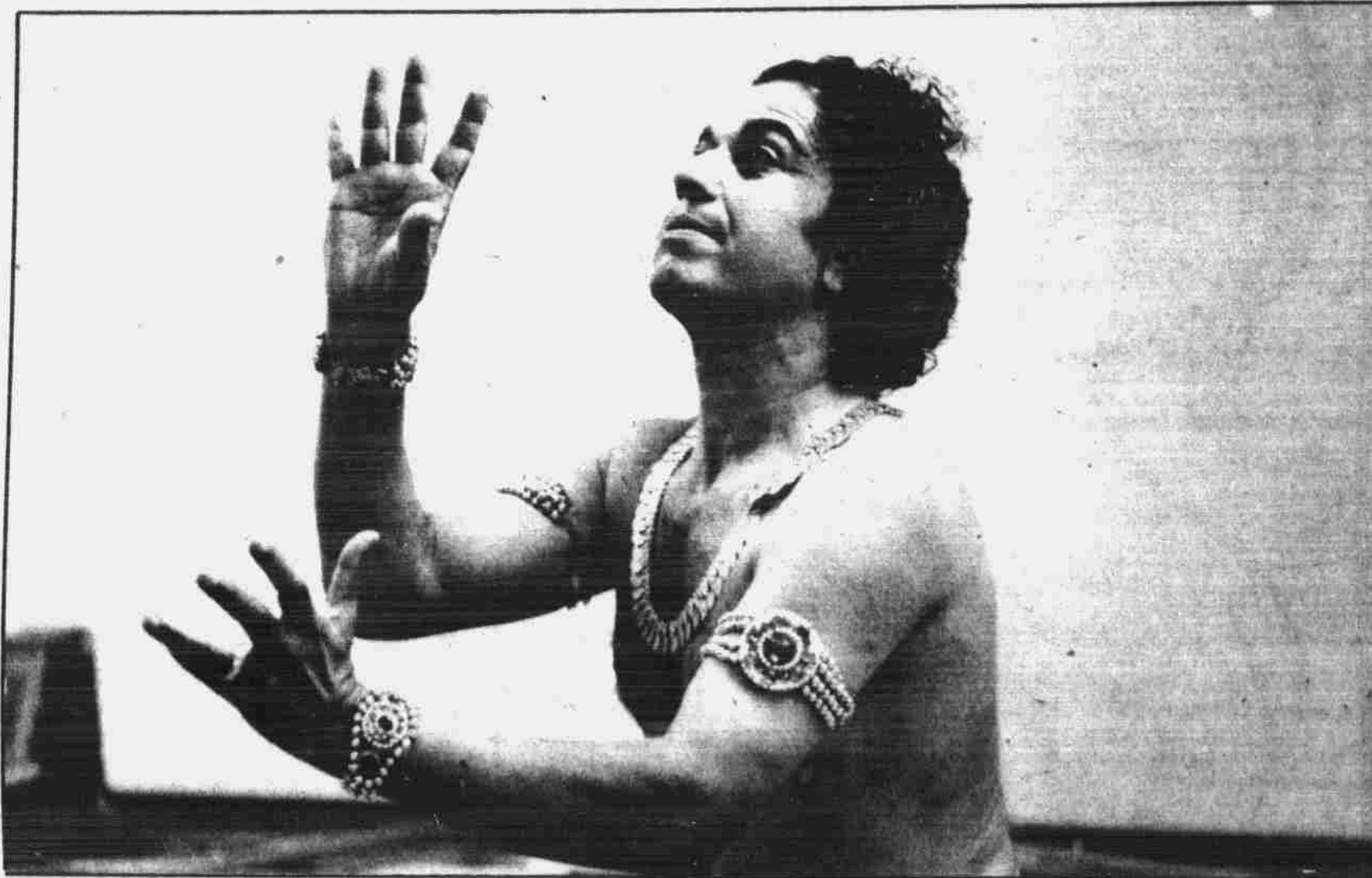


Photo by Ted Kirk

K.P. Kunhiraman comes from a family of Kathakali dancers. Kathakali dances are stories taken from Hindu mythology.

George Burns lends his presence to 'Oh God'

The immense crowds lining up to see Carl Reiner's new film, *Oh, God!*, expected light entertainment with a huggable performance by George Burns. They were not disappointed. Eighty-one-year-old Burns and John Denver, in his screen debut, tune in on the audience's wavelength and give 'em what they want.

Playing to the audience is a specialty of the film's writer, Larry Gelbart.

He wrote a couple television seasons of the popular show, *M*A*S*H*. Reiner has been involved with TV for over two decades (He comments on TV's excessive reruns by having God turn off Reiner's own *Dick van Dyke Show*).

The material is reasonably funny, but some of Burns' lines such as, "Only God can make a tree, right? Try making a mackerel from scratch!" are shameless imitations of Woody Allen's writing.

J. Marc Mushkin private showings



The plot is simple: Denver as a supermarket assistant manager is called upon by God (Burns), to spread the word that God is alive and wants people to love each other. Denver, understandably, has trouble convincing the world and God isn't giving him much help.

One gag

But there is a point about an hour into *Oh, God!* where you realize that's it! There is only one gag to this movie.

After three or four episodes of Burns embarrassing Denver, I began to wonder if anything was ever going to happen.

Something does happen. Paul Sorvino's delightfully hammy and accurate performance as the evangelist saves the film from getting into a boring rut.

I suppose folks who follow the Billy Graham set will be a bit put off by Sorvino's character. But for the rest of us, it is a very satisfying attack on the holy-roller, pass-the-plate type of circus tent faith. In fact, the audience applauded when God accused Sorvino of being a phony and getting rich from "religion."

For such a lightweight movie, some other pretty heavy attacks are made. While it is easy to listen to Burns recite his "peace and love" message, his comments on organized

religion lead to a lot of uncomfortable mumbling in the audience.

Christian audience

How is a primarily Christian midwestern audience supposed to react to Burns' answer to Denver's question "Is Jesus your son?"

"Yes, and so is Buddha and Muhammad and you and..."

I wonder if anyone took all of this seriously enough to think about the celluloid theology handed us? I think few did because audience reaction to Burns didn't change much after it became obvious that this God is not very

religious.

I can't help thinking, that this light comedy attack on religion, whether you agree or not, is a bit offensive. I guess I just don't like having anyone in a movie tell me what to think—even if he is God!

The reason this film draws such good crowds and why people are willing to disregard the aggressive theology is simply George Burns. He gives life to the scenes he is in, and creates a void in the scenes he is not in. I shared the audience's sigh when he first appeared—because he is this movie.

Oh, God! is playing at the Cinema 1.

Filmmaker Nelson's surrealist style is 'nothing for audiences to fear'

By Charlie Krig

A West coast filmmaker is coming to UNL Tuesday as the second participant in the Sheldon Film Theatre Film-makers' Showcase.

Gunvor Nelson will present her seven major works for showing and discussion during her Lincoln visit. Dan Ladely, Sheldon Film Theatre director, called Nelson a "very articulate" woman who easily communicates with audiences.

"I base my judgment on a film I saw of her's, *Moon's Pool* and also upon some inquiry I made to a filmmaker and film distributor," Ladely said.

He said her films have a "mixture of documentary and surrealist style" but there is nothing for audiences to fear. "They might learn something (from the films and discussion)," he said.

Film quarterly

In the spring 1977 issue of *Film Quarterly*, June M. Gill said Nelson's films "reveal the organic forces in the lives of their characters and develop an intimate communication with nature."

Gill said Nelson uses "a highly crafted style to explore nature and the interior," and that her films deny specific feminist intent but "they are significant to the women's movement in that they describe with clarity, sensitivity, and humor the paradoxes of women's experience in contemporary America."

Six films will be shown Monday at 1 and 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday at 1, 3 and 7:30 p.m. *Kirsa Nicholina* is the story of a child born to a couple in their home and has a guitar music score composed by the child's father. The 16-minute film portrays birth as a primitive mystery, not a medical, antiseptic experience.

Schmeerguntz is a 15-minute satire of the conflict between the media image of the American woman and her daily reality. It is a carefully edited collage of many women's roles: pregnant mothers vomiting with morning sickness and Miss America contestants, mothers cleaning excrement from their baby's bottoms and commercials of cooing mothers and their idyllic infants.

Take Off concerns a strip tease that goes beyond humor and imagination. The ten-minute film is designed to upset both sexist and feminist expectations.

My name is Oona

A surrealist, lyrical fantasy of imaginative human beings, creatures, places and events is the theme of *Fog Pumas. My Name is Oona* is a ten-minute film concerned with the fragments of a girl's consciousness. The girl repeats her name throughout the entire film until it becomes a magic incantation.

Moon's Pool is a 15-minute film of naked bodies under water intercut with shots of natural landscapes that results in a complex view of sexuality.

Nelson's one feature-length film, *Trollstenen*, will be shown at 3 and 7:30 p.m. on Thursday. It is a highly stylized portrait of Nelson's family as her family members recall their childhoods in her native Sweden. Her father owns a newspaper that has been in the family for years; her mother is an ardent gymnast and sportswoman. The parents encouraged their children to develop their individuality, courage, creativity and self-reliance.

The siblings discuss their upbringing with a combination of nostalgia and clear-headed criticism of the family's strict and conservative ideals. The film includes old photographs, live-action footage and home movies to contrast with the lush Swedish landscape.