August 25th, 26th and 27th, 2017
Onyx Theater, Wilson Annex Building
Second, Third and Fourth Concerts of the 2017-18 Concert Season
A Collaborative Performance
by KSU Department of Dance and KSU School of Music

"Savitri"

PROLOGUE
told through Bharatanatyam - Classical Indian Dance

    Jerry Fields, Percussions - Tabla and Dholak
    Souryadeep Bhattacharyya, Sarod

    Amir Sanders, Satyavan
    Lily Helmly, King Ashvapati (Father) and Yama - God of Death
    Jordan Slaton, Savitri

"SAVITRI"
Chamber Opera
Gustav Holst (1874-1934)

    Oral Moses, Death
    Deondria West, Savitri
    Jason Raphaël, Satyavan
Whenever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love.

- Mahatma Gandhi

The operatic heroine must possess three critical traits: courage, conviction, and cunning. The figure of Savitri is no exception. When faced with her beloved’s death, Savitri responds with strength and piety, but most importantly, love. Gustav Holst first encountered the story of Savitri during his studies of the Sanskrit language. Influenced by grand opera’s fascination with the 'East,' Holst’s Savitri is a late example of orientalizing opera. Interestingly, Savitri is a chamber opera – composed of just one act, unlike its lengthier 19th-century predecessors such as Puccini’s “Turandot” or Verdi’s “Aïda.” Whereas Puccini and Verdi employed exotic spectacle and – in Puccini’s case – an overt adoption of Chinese musical themes, Holst subtly references Indian scales. In composing Savitri, Holst opted to feature – not simply appropriate – the original Sanskrit text, taken from the episode of Savitri and Satyavan in the Mahābhārata.

Savitri was first written in 1908. At the time, India was a colony of the British Crown. While Holst’s engagement with Sanskrit texts, such as the Ramayana and Rig Veda, was sincere, it is crucial to recognize the context within which this interest in India took root: British imperial rule over the subcontinent. In bringing this project to fruition as a part of KSU’s Year of India, I wanted to recontextualize Savitri in light of authentic Indian traditions. Our goal is to move beyond a mere European representation of India, and arrive at an appreciation for India’s own rich artistic heritage. As such, as if almost by fate, I was introduced to KSU’s own Rifka Mayani who is extensively trained in the dance form Bharatanatyam. In tonight’s performance, you will see Savitri’s tale (prior to the start of the operatic plot) told through this mesmerizing dance form, immediately transitioning into the music of Gustav Holst. In this intimate venue, we invite you to breathe in the spirit of our heroine and find inspiration in the essence of Savitri.

Namaste.

- Todd Wedge
TODD WEDGE, Director

**Todd Wedge** received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and furthered his studies with a Master of Music in Vocal Performance and Literature from the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music. In 2015, Mr. Wedge was invited to join the voice faculty at Kennesaw State University where he is currently an Assistant Professor of Voice. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Wedge was the Director of the Vocal Music Department at the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts - a public arts magnet school that specializes in pre-conservatory curriculum for both classical voice and musical theater. He has been the fortunate recipient of awards from the Friends of Austria Lieder Competition, American Opera Society, Bel Canto Society, and the Loretta Kearns Award for Excellence in Music Education. In 2013, Mr. Wedge was selected by the San Francisco Classical Voice as “Music Educator of the Year” which lead to a nomination for the GRAMMY foundation “Music Educator of the Year” – for which he was a semi-finalist. In 2014, Mr. Wedge was nominated for the San Francisco Mayor’s Teacher of the Year Award and was selected to be a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Scholar in Vienna, Austria, where he focused his research on the operas of W. A. Mozart.

Mr. Wedge is frequently featured as the tenor soloist in the oratorio works of Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Bach, and Mozart, while also maintaining a robust recital schedule. Mr. Wedge was a young artist with the Chicago Opera Theater while also serving on the faculty at the University of Notre Dame School of Music and St. Xavier University where he taught studio voice and vocal pedagogy. Shortly thereafter, he was invited to join the GRAMMY award-winning men’s ensemble *Chanticleer*. Over the course of these three life-changing years, Mr. Wedge helped bring audiences to
their feet in over 200 cities and 13 different countries in some of the world’s most prestigious concert halls. In addition to the rigorous touring schedule, Mr. Wedge also spent considerable time in the recording studio and can be heard on the following albums: *And on Earth, Peace: A Chanticleer Mass; Let it Snow; The Best of Chanticleer; A Chanticleer Christmas; The Mission Road-Our Journey Back; (DVD & CD), and The Singing Life (DVD)*.

Mr. Wedge currently maintains a private vocal studio in Atlanta, GA, and is frequently seen as a recitalist, guest conductor, lecturer, and clinician in the Bay Area. He is a member of The Voice Foundation, NATS, NAfME, and ACDA.

RIFKA MAYANI, *Choreographer and Artistic Director*

*Rifka Mayani* is a graduate from one of India’s premier dance institutions - Sri Rajarajeshwari Bharatha Natyam Kala Mandir, Mumbai. Since her initial training at the tender age of 6, Rifka has studied and performed this Indian classical art form for more than 35 years under the tutelage of Guru Kalyan Sundaram Pillai. Her performances over the years, both in India and the USA, have included several original works by her Guruji. In addition to her intensive study of Bharatha Natyam, Rifka’s academic pursuit has led her to earn several degrees - an MBA from Kennesaw State University (KSU) in 1997; a Bachelor's in Law (LLB) in 1994 and a Bachelor's in Arts (BA) with a Political Science concentration in 1991; both from the University of Mumbai, India. Rifka currently serves as the Executive Director for Enterprise Systems and Services within the University Information Technology Services Division and part-time instructor of Dance within the College of the Arts at KSU.

For over 20 years, either as a guest lecturer, instructor or through her performances, Rifka has brought classical Indian dance to the KSU community. Students in her classes who are chiseled performers in western dance styles have had an opportunity to learn the traditional Indian art form
and add a whole new dimension to their dance repertoire. Under Rifka’s direction selected students have been invited to perform at the Indian Faculty Staff Association Annual Celebration Gala. In addition, a collaboration between the school of music’s chorus class and Rifka’s special topics in dance class lead to a grand performance of “Jai Ho” from the movie *Slum Dog Millionaire*. The dancers were later invited for a repeat performance to the Phillips Arena in Atlanta for the opening night of the Atlanta Braves versus Chicago Bull’s basketball game.

Rifka is also the artistic director and choreographer for Tandav Themes Dance Academy, an Indian Classical Dance School of "Bharatha Natyam" in Atlanta, for young aspirants of the chiseled dance discipline. Through this school, Rifka imparts knowledge of this ancient art from in the pure Thanjavur style. As Choreographer & Artistic Director for Tandav Themes Dance Academy, some key performances with students include: *Rhythms of India; Who's Who Among Asian Americans, Leaders and Legends Awards, Asian American Heritage Foundation Gala*, to name a few.

JUDITH COLE, *Music Director*

Judy Cole, Artist-in-Residence in Collaborative Piano, is known nationally as a pianist who can perform comfortably in almost any genre, from classical to musical theatre, from jazz to country. She has been Musical Director for many musicals and operas over the years, and is thrilled to collaborate with Todd Wedge and our fine cast of students to produce *Savitri* here at KSU. Professor Cole teaches Accompanying, Sight-Singing for Musical Theatre and Piano, and is also the Assistant Director for Opera Theatre.

Judy plays for services at The Temple in Atlanta, and still does frequent gig work throughout the area - and she is about to become a grandmother for the second time!
about the dancers

Jordan Slaton (Savitri) is a junior dance major with a modern concentration. She has been dancing since she was three years old and has experienced several different dance styles throughout her training. She recently took Gaga master classes with the Batsheva Dance Company in Israel. After graduation, Jordan aspires to join a modern company and while also developing her skills as a choreographer.

Amir Sanders (Satyavan) is a junior dance major with a ballet concentration. Amir has been training in ballet since the age of seven. Her most memorable performance was on So You Think You Can Dance for her favorite ballerina, Misty Copeland.

Lily Helmly (King Ashvapati / Father and Yama - God of Death) is a sophomore dance major with a ballet concentration. She has trained in ballet, jazz, modern and tap since the age of three. In her first year, she participated in both dance production and the KSU Dance Company.
about the singers

ORAL MOSES, Gospel Choir and Professor Emeritus of Voice

Oral Moses has been on the Kennesaw State University voice faculty since 1984, as Professor of Voice and Music Literature. Dr. Moses also performs regularly throughout the United States and Europe singing concert works, oratorio, recitals and a wide variety of art song repertoire with special emphasis on vocal works of African-American composers.

Dr. Moses has had numerous successes with American opera companies performing major roles in *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Regina*, *Ia Boheme*, *Albert Herring*, *Tremonishia*, *Rigoletto*, and *The Magic Flute*. Symphonic engagements include work with the Nashville, Jackson, Detroit, Lansing, Tacoma and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras. In 1983, he toured Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Austria and ended in Berlin singing the role of Porgy in Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*.

The South Carolina native began his singing career as a member of the United States Seventh Army Soldiers Chorus in Heidelberg, Germany, and a member of the famed Fisk Jubilee Singers while attending Fisk University where he received his undergraduate degree. He was then awarded a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship for further study in vocal performance and opera in Europe. Upon his return to the states, he attended the University of Michigan where he earned a MM and DMA in vocal performance and opera.

Deondria West (Savitri) is native of Cordele, Georgia, and is currently a junior working toward her degree in Choral Music Education while studying voice with Professor Todd Wedge. During her studies at KSU, she has been selected to perform in numerous master classes with distinguished artists such as Stephanie Blythe and Lawrence Brownlee. She is a member of the KSU Chamber Choir and Gospel Choir as well as the opera program. Deondria is a part of numerous organizations such as the Georgia Music Educators Association, the America Choral Director’s Association, and a founding member of the KSU Chapter for the Student National Association for Teachers of Singing – of which she is the vice president.

Jason Raphaël (Satyavan) is originally from Brooklyn, New York, and is in his senior year studying Choral Music Education at KSU while also studying voice with Dr. Oral Moses. Jason has been featured as the tenor soloist in KSU’s performance of Handel’s Messiah and was a scholarship recipient of the 2016 Musical Cascades at Morehouse College. Jason has performed at the 2016 ACDA Southern Division Conference with the KSU Men’s Ensemble as well as Dr. Ivan Pulinkala’s Metamorphosis in the spring of 2017.
women's chorus

Xandrya Edwards, *Class of 2020*
Ziara Greene, *Class of 2019*
Mary Allison Hamby, *Class of 2019*
Sierra Manson, *Class of 2019*
Claire Pappas, *Class of 2019*
Callaway Powlus, *Class of 2020*
Abigail Snyder, *Class of 2021*

acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the following people for their incredible support throughout this project: Ken Jin and the Confucius Institute, Dan Paracka and the Year of India Committee, Dr. Ivan Pulinkala and Dr. Stephen Plate, Shawn Rieschl Johnson, Joseph Greenway, Daniel Hesketh and Eileen Moremen.
Music Education
Judith Beale
Janet Boner
Nancy Conley
Kathleen Creasy
Charles Jackson
Alison Mann
Angela McKee
Richard McKee
Judith Cole
Edward Eanes
Kelly Francis
Jennifer Mitchell
Barbara Cook
Elizabeth Koch Tiscione
John Warren
Andrew Brady
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Luke Weathington

Music History & Appreciation
Drew Dolan
Edward Eanes

Music Theory, Composition, Technology
Judith Cole
Steve Dancz
Kelly Francis
Jennifer Mitchell
Laurence Sherr
Benjamin Wadsworth
Jeff Yunek

Woodwinds
Kelly Bryant, Flute, Chamber Music
Robert Cronin, Flute
Todd Skitch, Flute
Christina Smith, Flute
Cecilia Price, Flute, Chamber Music
Barbara Cook, Oboe
Elizabeth Koch Tiscione, Oboe
John Warren, Clarinet, Chamber Music
Andrew Brady, Bassoon
Sam Skelton, Saxophone
Luke Weathington, Saxophone

Brass & Percussion
Doug Lindsey, Trumpet, Chamber Music
Ryan Moser, Trumpet
Mike Tiscione, Trumpet
Jason Eklund, Horn
Richard Williams, Horn
Tom Gibson, Trombone
Nathan Zgonc, Trombone
Brian Hecht, Bass Trombone
Jason Casanova, Tuba / Euphonium
Paul Dickinson, Tuba / Euphonium
Marja Kerney, Percussion
John Lawless, Percussion

Strings
Helen Kim, Violin
Kenn Wagner, Violin, Chamber Music
Catherine Lynn, Viola
Paul Murphy, Viola
Charae Krueger, Cello
James Barket, Double Bass
Joseph McFadden, Double Bass
Elisabeth Remy Johnson, Harp
Mary Akerman, Classical Guitar

Voice
Jessica Jones
Eileen Moremen
Nathan Munson
Valerie Walters
Todd Wedge
Jana Young

Piano
Judith Cole, Collaborative Piano
Julie Coucheron
Robert Henry
Huu Mai
John Marsh

Jazz
Justin Chesarek, Jazz Percussion
Wes Funderburk, Jazz Trombone, Jazz Ensembles
Karla Harris, Vocal Jazz
Tyrone Jackson, Jazz Piano
Marc Miller, Jazz Bass
Rob Opitz, Jazz Trumpet
Trey Wright, Jazz Guitar, Jazz Combos

Ensembles & Conductors
Leslie J. Blackwell, Choral Activities
Nancy Conley, Philharmonic Orchestra
Trey Harris, University Band, Marching Band
Alison Mann, Choral Activities
Oral Moses, Gospel Choir
Eileen Moremen, Opera
Nathaniel F. Parker, Symphony Orchestra
Dobra Traficante, Wind Symphony, Marching Band
David T. Kehler, Wind Ensemble

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Ensembles in Residence
KSU Faculty Jazz Parliament
Georgia Youth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus
KSU Faculty Chamber Players
Summit Piano Trio
KSU Community and Alumni Choir
Welcome to the Bailey Performance Center!

The School of Music at Kennesaw State University is an exciting place! We have a wonderful slate of performances planned for this year's *Signature Series*, and if you have not yet purchased your season tickets, I encourage you to do so as soon as possible. The Atlanta Symphony returns again this year as well as a wonderful slate of other performances.

The Dr. Bobbie Bailey and Family Performance Center is celebrating its 10th Anniversary Season this year. When this building opened in October of 2007, it was transformational for the School of Music and for KSU! It continues to be a jewel in our crown and musicians from around the world love to perform here because of the wonderful acoustic properties of Morgan Hall.

We would love to have you join us the weekend of October 7th-8th. We will have an alumni recital on the 7th and a grand celebration Sunday afternoon October 8th, with full choir and orchestra to celebrate all this Center has meant to us these past 10 years! In honor of the Bailey 10th Anniversary, we will officially launch our *Name a Seat Campaign* during our celebration in October. What a wonderful way to honor a loved one or to provide for future programming for Morgan Hall.

I look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with you. With your continued support of music and the arts, I look forward to all that we will accomplish together!

Stephen W. Plate, DMA
Director, KSU School of Music

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