

# BORN TO DANCE...

For Mythili Prakash, Bharatanatyam is more than just a profession. Neeti Jaychander in conversation with the versatile young dancer

She's young, erudite and artistic! It's hard to relate the young woman in front of me with an American twang, tank top and jeans, to the Bharatanatyam dancer I see in the photos. But as 27-year-old Mythili Prakash tells us, she's been dancing ever since she was four, and has worked her way up to being one of the fastest rising young exponents of Bharatanatyam in the country. That's not hard to imagine though, considering dancing is in her blood. "My mother, Viji Prakash, is a dancer and dance teacher in the US," she explains, "So I've grown up watching her dance; in fact, I think I picked up quite a bit just looking at her, imitating her, and imagining myself dancing just as beautifully!"

She began training in the Thanjavur tradition of Bharatanatyam under the tutelage of her mother, a virtuoso of this dance form and a disciple of grandmasters Guru Kalyanasundaram and Guru Mahalingam Pillai, both Directors of the Sri Raja Rajeshwari Bharata Natya Kala Mandir in Bombay, India.

Mythili was just eight when her Arangetram took place. "I didn't even know what was going on, or realise that it was such a big deal. For me, it was just another occasion to dance!" She was exposed to the music season in India at a very young age. "My brother and I were brought here almost every year for the music season in December. So I was always in touch with dance, as people saw it here. Out there, it was an exotic thing when I was growing up! It's only now that there is some amount awareness about this particular dance form."

Although born and brought up in the US, Mythili realised that working

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