

Werner Ehrhardt
l'arte del mondo

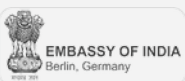
Indian Swan Lake



The Exotic Melodies of East India Weave Around Tchaikovsky's
Swan Lake // Classical Ballet Meets Millennia-old Odissi
Temple Dance // A Touching Journey in Scenes and Tableaux //
Swan Myth // The European Fairytale World Meets the
Great Indian Epic – the Mahabharata //

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Grace and Soul Meet // Two Great Dance Traditions Create Something Uniquely New

Tchaikovsky's masterpiece Swan Lake enters into dialog and merges with millennia-old Odissi Dance, surely the most beautiful form of Indian temple dance. Classical ballet, which dissolves gravity, meets the grounded movements of Odissi dance, which is both full of grace and captivating expression. Scenes and emotional worlds from Swan Lake and the Mahabharata, the largest and most famous epic of Indian sacred scriptures, flow into the dance evening like a tableau.

The world of emotions encounters our innermost being. The focus is on the swan, not only as a symbol of beauty, grace and elegance, but also as a central creature of Indian mythology. The swan is a symbol of the soul, the innermost self and the breath, which in the teachings of yoga creates a concept of balance.

Indian and European music, visuals and narratives spectacularly meet in a sensual and spectacular manner. While in Tchaikovsky's fairytale world people lose themselves completely in romantic feelings, in the Indian tradition, the swan stands for the balance of the soul and breath.

Swan Lake and Mahabharata - Fairy Tales and Transformation

The story of [Swan Lake](#) is based on the cross-ethnic fairytale motif of the swan maidens, who are divine figures in Germanic mythology. In many of the legends, men steal the swan maidens' garments with which they reveal their divine beauty. Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake tells the immortal story of the swan princess Odette, the female archetype of ethereal delicacy and vulnerability, her black counterpart Odile, the incarnation of sensuality and seduction, and the love of a man who is captivated by both worlds. Odette can only be redeemed from the curse of her swan form through true love. The longing for love and truthfulness is thematized, as are the temptations of desire and intoxication.

There are similar stories in the [Mahabharata](#), such as the tale of Nala and Damayanti: Prince Nala sees several golden swans of astonishing beauty in the palace lake. He wishes to capture a few of them when suddenly one of the swans tells him that he can make the beautiful Princess Damayanti swear eternal love to him if Nala releases the swan. Nala and Damayanti, who have since married, are separated again because Nala has lost everything due to a curse from the demon Kali and has disappeared. On one hand, the main theme of this story is the enduring power of love, as Damayanti never gives up her love for her husband. On the other hand, there is jealousy. The demon Kali is so jealous after the wedding that he destroys Nala's life.

The theme of transformation of good and evil can be found in both cultures, but also the fundamental feelings that dominate us, which according to Indian interpretation are nine in number, can be found in both cultures.

This Production of Swan Lake is supported by the [Indian Council for Cultural Relations \(ICCR\)](#), the [Tagore Centre](#), the [Embassy of India in Berlin](#) and the [Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia \(NRW\)](#), the [Art Foundation NRW](#), and also by [Bayer Culture](#).

India, a Country that is Moving to the Center of Our World

Werner Ehrhardt and l'arte del mondo are experts in the field of intercultural projects and have realized a wealth of highly acclaimed co-productions with varying cultures. These include “Matthäus-Passion-2727” with the Kamea Dance Company from Israel, the opera production “Le Cinesi” with the China National Peking Opera Company, and “Carneval Oriental” with the Pera Ensemble from Turkey.

It is therefore logical for Werner Ehrhardt to now turn his attention to India with “Indian Swan Lake.” This project is the culmination of l'arte del mondo's artistic work to date and will be the highlight of the 2025 season. All previous experiences in the field of intercultural projects culminate in this work of art, for which Werner Ehrhardt has taken tremendous efforts to prepare. The idea and impetus for this project came early on from Linda Ehrhardt, who founded the ensemble Concerto Köln with Werner Ehrhardt and later developed the concept of l'arte del mondo with him. Both have been traveling to India regularly for 35 years, and in doing so, they have gotten to know the world of ideas and myths of its great culture in many different ways. In the meantime, India has not only become the most populous country in the world, but also an important geostrategic partner.

The Dance

Classical ballet meets Odissi temple dance in a fascinating way. Two aesthetic worlds and cultures meet, mirror and permeate each other. Baroque gestures and dance elements, whose movements are reminiscent of many of the mudras and gestures of temple dance, bridge the gap between the two dance traditions. It is performed by extensively trained dancers that have studied both classical ballet and Baroque dance.

Unique visual and dance designs are created by the two choreographers, Aruna Mohanty and Deda Christina Colonna. In their productions, they are constantly developing something new by rethinking the old based on historical models and traditions.

The Music

Tchaikovsky's rousing music is interwoven with the magic of Indian music from the state of Orissa, a cultural center of India. The magnificent melodies from Swan Lake transcend the music of India, as does the richly ornamented melody of East India with its mystical and gripping temperament. Together, wonderful soundscapes are created.

In order to facilitate the balance and interweaving between European and Indian music, Tchaikovsky's music will be performed in an arrangement for chamber orchestra, as Indian music by its very nature can only unfold its beauty in a more intimate setting. The sounds of both orchestras will alternate and overlap each other, whereas new arrangements will create bridges between the two musical styles.

Deda Cristina Colonna // Director, Choreographer //



The versatile Italian director **Deda Cristina Colonna**, who was recently awarded the Jan Kiepura Prize for Best Director for her production of “Castor et Pollux” at the Warsaw Chamber Opera, is also a choreographer whose style is strongly influenced by her own stage experience as a dancer and actress.

Although she covers all eras in her work, she focuses on Baroque dance, rhetorical gestures and historically informed acting, which she teaches at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, as well as in master classes and courses in Italy and abroad for over 25 years. Based on historically informed stage practice, her directing also seeks contact with today’s audience.

She completed her ballet studies at the Sorbonne (Paris) and graduated from the Drama School of the Teatro Stabile di Genoa, and has collaborated with the Kompanie der Klänge (Düsseldorf), and with the New York Dance Company, where she was a soloist and guest choreographer.

Guru Dr. Aruna Mohanty // Director of the Orissa Dance Academy, Choreographer



Photo: Soulful Odisha

Guru Dr. Aruna Mohanty has been awarded the highest decorations of the Indian state and is a multiple recipient of multiple international awards.

Initiated into dance at a young age, Dr. Mohanty's dedication, perseverance and commitment have made her one of the most acclaimed Odissi dancers in the country. Influenced by the sculptural manifestations of this dance form, her training has resulted in especially graceful movements, beautiful postures and dazzling style, all creating a visual phenomenon.

Under her guidance and encouragement, the Orissa Dance Academy has received rave reviews and the ODA repertory group has performed successfully all over the world. Its instructors have taught all over India as well as abroad, e.g. in the United States of America.

Apart from overseeing a large number of ODA's successful productions, she has also created spectacular productions for special occasions of the Indian government and other major events.

Massimiliano Toni, Agnimitra Behera, Dhaneswar Swain // Arrangements //

The internationally sought-after harpsichordist, organist and conductor **Massimiliano Toni** has been supporting Werner Ehrhardt as a musical assistant for many years in the conceptual development and realization of l'arte del mondo projects. With great success, he creates compositions and arrangements that relate the most differing genres to each other and is able to respond to the diverse aspects and styles with utmost ingenuity.

Agnimitra Behera, India: is a passionate musician and violinist. His core expertise lies in Indian classical music as well as Odissi music, which has enabled him to create many popular works for famous Odissi dancers.

Dhaneswar Swain, India: multi-award winning, is a great master of the mardala, the traditional percussion instrument of Odissi music. He is known for his rhythmic compositions for Odissi dance and has accompanied Odissi dancers on their tours worldwide since 1980.

Orchestra l'arte del mondo //



The orchestra **l'arte del mondo**, founded in 2004 by its artistic director Werner Ehrhardt, sees itself in the tradition of so-called historically informed performance practice on authentic instruments, but also devotes itself to programs on modern instruments and repertoire through to contemporary music.

A trademark of l'arte del mondo is its innovative programming, e.g. musical-intercultural projects with the Turkish Pera Ensemble or artists from the Peking Opera. With violinist Daniel Hope and The Four Seasons Recomposed - Max Richter's sensational new interpretation of Vivaldi's Four Seasons - l'arte del mondo has performed all over the world. Another highlight was the sensation-ally danced St. Matthew Passion 2727 with the Kamea Dance Company from Israel, which was performed in both Germany and Israel in 2017. In addition, the ensemble has worked with soloists such as Edita Gruberova, Menahem Pressler, Daniel Müller-Schott, Dorothee Oberlinger, Nils Mönkemeyer and Xavier de Maistre. l'arte del mondo is the Permanent Orchestra in Residence at Bayer Kultur and is supported by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Werner Ehrhardt // Conductor, Violinist, Artistic Director //



The conductor and violinist **Werner Ehrhardt** is one of the great pioneers of the German historically authentic soundscape scene. He represents an independent and instantly recognizable historically informed interpretation of orchestral and vocal works.

However, his interest has always extended far beyond the boundaries of Western European music. His open-mindedness towards innovation, artistic curiosity, and infectious enthusiasm for his work with orchestras consistently captivates his musicians, audiences and the press. He founded Concerto Köln in 1985 and established the l'arte del mondo project in 2004.

Participants and Cast //

Peter Tschaikowski, Massimiliano Toni [concept and musical score],

Agnimitra Behera, Dhaneswar Swain music //

Micaela von Marcard dramaturgy //

Werner Ehrhardt musical direction //

Deda Cristina Colonna, Guru Dr. Aruna Mohanty choreography //

Hannah Gelesz stage design, costumes //

Camilla Piccioni lighting design //

Linda Ehrhardt and Werner Ehrhardt idea and concept //

Werner Ehrhardt / l'arte del mondo production and
overall artistic direction //

Performers

Orissa Dance Academy and l'arte del mondo with
an ensemble of 35 dancers and musicians
from india and europe //

Patron

Swami Shankarananda Giri

// Booking option for organisers
»IndianSwanLake«
// Europe Tour 2027 //

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Contact

Werner Ehrhardt / l'arte del mondo
St. Ingberter Str. 19
Leverkusen, Germany
51375

Phone: +49 214 2068412

Mail: info@lartedelmondo.de

Project Page

www.lartedelmondo.de/en/projekte/indian-swan-lake