



SURENDRA NATH JENA
Akademi Award : Odissi Dance

Shri Surendra Nath Jena was born in 1924 in Utchapur, Orissa, and began his career as a performer at the age of nine. Encouraged by his mother, he joined the itinerant Jatra and Rasa parties and was trained at the Banmali Das Theatre under Anand Nayak. He eventually became the Director of Sharada Kala Kunj of Nagaspur, one of the most popular Jatra troupes of the time. Fascinated by the dramatic power of Kathakali, he trained under Balakrishna Menon in Calcutta for six months. He then moved to Cuttack to train in Odissi dance at the Kala Vikash Kendra, where he studied under Kelucharan Mohapatra and Mayadhar Raut for five years.

Shri Jena moved to Delhi in the mid-1960s and taught at the Triveni Kala Sangam till recently. Over the last forty years, he has extended the vocabulary of movements of the reconstructed Odissi tradition and evolved a distinct style in Odissi dance. This style is permeated with the experience of Orissan sculptures, especially of Konark and the Chaunsath Yogini temples, and texts such as Abhinaya Chandrika and Shilpa Prakash. His compositions Konark Kanti (1967), Chaya Jhatak (1971), Shilpa Chandrika (1977), his abhinaya on the Geeta Govinda and poems by well-known Oriya poets are all a part of his extensive repertoire. Imbued with Vaishnava, Shaiva, and Shakta or tantric content within the context of bhakti, his abhinaya does not shy away from Bibhatsa and Raudra rasas, relating them with his early experience of Jatra.

Shri Jena has trained many dance scholars like Dr Kapila Vatsyayan and Dr Frederique Marglin. His students in dance include his daughters Pratibha, Rekha, and Rama. He has conducted workshops and lecture-demonstrations in India and abroad, and his work has been documented by several organizations.

He has received several awards including the Nritya Bhushan from Kala Vikash Kendra, for the teaching of Odissi dance.

Shri Surendra Nath Jena receives the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to Odissi dance.