

Shyama Iyer

Curriculum Vitae

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Member of the Dramatists Guild

EDUCATION

Yale University David Geffen School of Drama, Master of Fine Arts, Class of 2025

Comprehensive Exams: *Orientalism & The American Musical*, *Indian Theater in the Colonial Period*.

Mentors: Dr. Katherine Profeta, Dr. Catherine Sheehy, Dr. Kee-Yoon Nahm, Dr. Eric M. Glover, Dr. Shilarna Stokes, Jeanine Tesori, Scott Frankel, Joshua Rosenblum

Ohio State University Department of Theatre, Film, and Media Arts, Master of Arts, Class of 2022

Thesis: *The Utility of Bhava-Rasa Theory in Contemporary Musical Theatre*

Mentors: Dr. Stratos Constantinidis, Mandy Fox

Western Kentucky University Department of Theatre & Dance, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Class of 2020

Concentration: Musical Theatre; Minor: Dance

COMPOSITION/WRITING

***The Old Me* (Music/Co-Lyrics)**

Kay is about to graduate from college, but after a tragic accident, forced to reckon with the precarity of adulthood. In a desperate attempt to find stability, she disguises herself as a 70-year-old woman and joins her grandmother's nursing home—The Third Age. But how long can this senior spring really last before Kay has to confront her own future?

Productions: Scheduled for Spring 2026

***Songs of Light and Joy* (Music/Co-Lyrics)**

A new musical song cycle celebrating the spirit of Diwali through original songs and storytelling. This vibrant production features 13 pieces ranging from soaring ballads to Bollywood-pop bangers, heartfelt reflections to comedic character turns. It showcases South Asian artists and stories that blend tradition and modernity, highlighting identity, ritual, family, and the universal triumph of light over darkness.

Productions: Full production scheduled for Oct 2025 at NYU

***A Game of Dice* (Book/Music/Lyrics)**

This epic musical reimagines the Mahabharata's pivotal gambling match with a new, modern sensibility. When Yudhishtira's addiction leads him to wager everything—including his wife Draupadi in a fateful game against his cousins, both families must confront the cost of political obsessions.

Reading/Workshop at Yale University (Oct 2023)

Selected songs presented at: Shen Concert (May 2023), Yale Cabaret (Dec 2023)

The Lonely Artists Cabaret at 54Below (Jan 2024)

The Sound of An Anklet (Music/Lyrics)

The Sound of An Anklet is loosely based off of the *Sillapatikaram*, an ancient Tamil Epic Poem written in the fifth century CE. In this adaptation, New York based newlyweds Kruthi and Karthik's love is tested by a dazzling cabaret performer named Madison and Kruthi's ever expanding fantasies.

Reading/Workshop scheduled for March 2026

Selected songs presented at: Shen Concert (May 2024), Recital curated by Jeanine Tesori (May 2024)

Peachy: A Sorta Chekhovian Traumedy (Music)

A play-with-music unfolding in two periods. In 2022, the owner of a Los Angeles-based, family-run, Indi-Mex restaurant has the opportunity to franchise while 1962, a Mexican woman and a Punjabi peach farmer enter into a complicated, yet fruitful "Mexidu" marriage.

Productions: Yale College Arts

Confessions of An Airhead Santa Claus (Music/co-Lyrics)

A comic holiday mini-musical about two six year olds who discover that Santa Claus isn't real.

Productions: Yale Cabaret (Dec 2024)

The Rasa Jar (Book/Music/Lyrics)

This song cycle combines research into ancient Indian aesthetics (Bhava-Rasa Theory) and musical modes (Carnatic Ragas) with American musical theater, creating a fun interactive evening in which audience members must confront what they hear, and what they feel.

Productions: the Ohio State University New Work Lab (May 2022), Yale Cabaret (Oct 2023)

Selected songs presented at: Shen Concert (May 2023), Gandharva at Lyric Theater Lexington (June 2025)

CHOREOGRAPHY***Metamorphoses, Lead Choreographer, Yale School of Drama, 2024***

(Style: Contemporary)

Mary Zimmerman's play retelling Greek Mythology, directed by Alexis Woodard. Assisted with character movement work, fight choreography, and worked independently to create chunks of extended movement sequences in the play. Cast size: 9

The Fortune Teller, Lead Choreographer/Performer, Yale School of Drama, 2024

(Style: Bharathanatyam)

A 40 minute dance-theater production that reimagines the Tamil dance-theater form "Kuravanji" as a fortune teller warning a modern woman of the pitfalls love, womanhood, and gendered mischaracterization. Cast size: solo

Arlington, Lead Choreographer, The Yale Cabaret, 2024

(Style: Contemporary)

Choreographed and performed as the role of an unnamed woman who "dances the last 20 minutes of her life." Cast size: solo

Gopa-Gopi, Lead Choreographer, The Geeva Arts Festival, 2024(Style: Bharatanatyam)

An hour long dance drama that tells the story of the gopas and gopis adventures with Krishna. Created for the company dancers of Guru Vandana Arts Academy. Cast size: 11

How to Play a Trick, Lead Choreographer, WKU Evening of Dance 2024(Style: Indian Contemporary)

A six minute piece that explores the heartaches and camaraderie that comes from ‘playing a trick.’ Created for the Western Kentucky University company dancers. Cast size: 10

The Rasa Jar, Lead Choreographer, The Yale Cabaret, 2023

(Style: Indian Contemporary) A song cycle that combines research into ancient Indian aesthetics with contemporary musical theatre. Premiered at the Yale Cabaret. Cast size: 4

Journeys, Lead Choreographer/Performer, The Yale Cabaret/The Kentucky Center For the Arts, 2022, 2023

(Style: Bharatanatyam) A dance play about migration, friendship, and finding community, based on Iyer’s mother’s diary entries from 1997. Premiered at the Yale Cabaret and second run at Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts. Cast size: solo

Violet, Assistant Director/Choreographer, The Ohio State University, 2022

(Style: Musical Theater) A disfigured woman takes a life-changing bus journey to see a televangelist, finding love and self-acceptance along the way. At the Ohio State University theater department. Cast size: 12

Re-Bloom, Lead Choreographer, Dance Film, 2022(Style: Bharathanatyam) Cast size: solo***Ornamentation, Lead Choreographer, Dance Film, 2022***(Style: Indian Contemporary) Cast size: solo***Raasa Dhirana, Lead Choreographer, The Geeva Arts Festival, 2021***

(Style: Bharatanatyam) Krishna and the Gopis have an adventure in the forest, their interactions blossoming into five vibrant Thillanas. Created for the eleven company dancers of Guru Vandana Arts Academy

Dhol! A Dance Extravaganza, Lead Choreographer, 2019

(Style: Bollywood) A high energy bollywood and Indian folk piece created for the Western Kentucky University dancers.

DRAMATURGY***Peachy: A Sort of Chekovian Traumedy, April 2025, Yale University***

Director: Dr. Shilarna Stokes; Lead Undergraduate dramaturgy team

Tempt Me (Langston Hughes New Play Festival), October 2024, Yale University

Director: Andreas Andreou; Assisted emerging playwright Andrew Rincon

Pearl’s Beauty Salon (Carlotta New Play Festival), May 2024, Yale University

Director: Mina Morita; Assisted emerging playwright Stephanie Kuo

A Midsummer Nights Dream, April 2024, Yale University

Director: Kemar Jewell; Co-adaptor of script

For the Honey Just Say When, April 2023, Yale University

Director: Christopher Bayes; Devised Commedia Del'Arte

TEACHING (all teaching experiences are paid, professional experiences)**Teaching Fellow for *Peachy & The American Restaurant Play* at Yale University, Spring 2025**

Teaching Fellow to Dr. Shilarna Stokes. Experience included facilitating discussions, giving lectures, and leading dramaturgical analysis; Class size: 20

Teaching Fellow for Drama in the South Asian Diaspora at Yale University, Fall 2023

Teaching Fellow to Dr. Shilarna Stokes. Experience included facilitating discussions, giving lectures, and grading student work; Class size: 22

Independent Lecturer at Louisville Academy of Music, Summer 2024

Lead interactive Lectures and Demonstrations in Music, Music Theory, and World music; Class size: 10

Teaching Associate for Intro to Theatre at the Ohio State University, Fall 2021 - Spring 2022

Lead a bi-weekly class for four undergraduate sections. Designed engaging lectures with active participation and moderated thoughtful discussions with students; Class size: 35 students per section;

Guest Lecturer for Drama in the South Asian Diaspora at Yale University, November 2021

Lecture on Bhava-Rasa Theory and Indian classical theatrical traditions in contemporary Western contexts; Class size: 15

Guest Lecturer for Dance-In-Culture at Western Kentucky University, 2017 to 2024

Lecture and demonstration on Indian classical dance-theatre. Class size: 25

Vocal Instructor, 2016 - present

Beginner to intermediate vocal lessons offered online and in-person through the Guru Vandana Arts Academy; Class size: individual lessons (consists of 20-25 yearly enrolled students)

Dance Instructor, 2014 to present

Beginner to intermediate dance lessons offered online and in-person through the Guru Vandana Arts Academy; Class size: individual lessons (consists of 45 - 50 yearly enrolled students)

Artist-in-Residence at South Central Regional Library in Louisville, KY, August 2019

Lectures, workshops, and information sessions on Indian dance, theatre, and music. Class size: 5 (per session)

CONFERENCES / PRESENTATIONS**Association for Theatre Higher Education (ATHE), August 2021, Austin TX**

Topic: The Utility of Bhava-Rasa Theory in Contemporary Musical Theatre

Interdisciplinary Arts Colloquium, March 2021, the Ohio State University

Topic: The Utility of Bhava-Rasa Theory in Contemporary Musical Theatre

Southeastern Theatre Conference, February 2020, Louisville KY

Topic: Storytelling in Indian Classical Dance-Theatre

Research Experiences and Creative Heights Conference, March 2018, Western Kentucky University

Topic: Storytelling in Indian music-theatre vs. American music-theatre

AWARDS / GRANTS / FELLOWSHIPS

Yale Women's Faculty Fund SEED grant, December 2024, Yale University

Grant award to support the development of *The Fortune Teller*.

Graduate Fellowship, August 2020 - August 2021, the Ohio State University

Full sponsorship of one year of graduate education at the Ohio State University

IndianRaga Fellowship, July 2019, San Diego, CA

Bharatanatyam dance Fellow; Collaborated with artists from all over the world to create state of the art videos

Life-time Experience Grant, July 2019, Western Kentucky University

Awarded funds from Western Kentucky University to travel to California to take part in Bharatanatyam workshops

Outstanding New Student Award, May 2017, Western Kentucky University

For academic achievement and involvement in the Department of Theatre & Dance

Faculty Undergraduate Student Engagement Grant, March 2017, Western Kentucky University

Awarded funds from Western Kentucky University to travel to Bangalore, India for five weeks and study Sanskrit, Indian Rhythm, Indian Classical Voice, and Indian Classical Dance.

Cornelius A. Martin Award, August 2016, Western Kentucky University

For achievement demonstrated through previous academic history

PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

Selected Theatre / Musical Theater Experience

<i>Arlington</i>	Woman	Yale Cabaret, New Haven CT
<i>Lonely Artists Cabaret @ 54 Below</i>	Soloist	54 Below, New York City
<i>The Rasa Jar</i>	Soloist	Yale Cabaret, New Haven CT
<i>The Bhava Cycle</i>	Soloist	New Play Lab, Columbus OH
<i>The Drowsy Chaperone</i>	Janet	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>Bowling for Beginners</i>	Ellen	August 2019
<i>The Liars' Bench (Workshop)</i>	Olive	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>Hair</i>	Ronnie	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>9 to 5: The Musical</i>	Ensemble	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>Legally Blonde</i>	Vivienne	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>The Magic Tower</i>	Linda	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i>	Katrin	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>Hello From Bertha</i>	Lena	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY
<i>One For the Road</i>	Nicky	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY

<i>West Side Story</i>	Teresita	CenterStage, Louisville KY
<i>Once on This Island</i>	Storyteller	CenterStage, Louisville KY
<i>The Jungle Book</i>	Mowgli	Western Kentucky, Bowling Green KY

Selected Indian Classical Dance Experience

<i>Kairavi Kumudha Kantha</i>	January 2025	Madipaakam Sabha, Chennai, India
<i>The Fortune Teller</i>	December 2024	Yale Cabaret, New Haven CT
<i>Solo Concert</i>	October 2024	Hindu Temple of KY, Louisville, KY
<i>Kumbakonam</i>	January 2023	Nirantaram Festival, Bangalore, India
<i>Journeys</i>	December 2022	Yale Cabaret, New Haven, CT
<i>Nannu Brovu Lalitha Solo</i>	January 2022	Nirantaram Festival, Bangalore, India
<i>Rama Returns: A Diwali Margam</i>	November 2021	Mansfield Indian Association, Mansfield, OH
<i>Solo Concert</i>	August 2021	Krishna Geetham Performing Arts, Bay Area, CA
<i>Raasa Dhirana</i>	July 2021	Geeva Arts Festival, Louisville, KY
<i>Nannu Brovu Lalitha</i>	June 2020	Geeva Arts Festival, Louisville, KY
<i>Kabali</i>	July 2019	Geeva Arts Festival, Louisville, KY
<i>Vaigai Express: A Trip to Madurai</i>	April 2019	St. Louis Indian Dance Festival, St. Louis, MO
<i>Anveshana Finding Guru</i>	July 2018	Geeva Arts Festival, Louisville, KY
<i>KrishnaLeela</i>	December 2017	Sangeetha Sambhrama, Bangalore, India
<i>Solo Performance</i>	September 2017	International Festival, Bowling Green, KY
<i>Kanakanjali</i>	August 2017	Hindu Temple of KY, Louisville, KY
<i>Dharpan: Mirror Mirror</i>	July 2017	Geeva Arts Festival, Louisville, KY
<i>Kubja: Hunchback of Mathura</i>	July 2017	Guru Vandana Arts Academy, Louisville, KY