

## Tanjore temple tale finds a global stage

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Chennai: From New Jersey to Chennai, where people of myriad traditions coexist, is a distance of more than 13,500km. Culturally, the two cities have a lot setting them apart, yet some things bind them. Non-resident Indian (NRI) classical artists are one of these, who try their best to find the elusive connect between cultures through their art.

Bala Devi Chandrashekar [✉](#), an award winning NRI Bharatanatyam exponent from New Jersey, could perhaps lay claim to that group. For more than a decade, she has flown in from the US to the city during [Margazhi](#) [✉](#), which has always offered her a rich audience of dance connoisseurs. "There is no unbridgeable distance in classical performing arts. We speak in gestures, communicate in movements. Bharatanatyam has broken barriers," says Bala whose solo 'Brihadeeswara — Form to Formless', which was premiered in [Thanjavur](#) [✉](#), will be staged at Bhavan in Kilpauk on December 25.

The production across the four acts celebrates a Devaradiyaal, who dedicated herself to the eternal service of the god. In four acts, Bala will depict in mudras and movements the beauty of the Devaradiyaal and the architectural wonders of the temple. "I will present her day-to-day life, connecting the spectacular form of the temple and the awareness of the god's formlessness as the cosmic dancer. It is an association of the physical, metaphysical, lyrical and spiritual significance of the magnificent structure," Bala says. She plans to take the production to Mumbai and Dubai in the coming months.

A perfectionist, Bala for the past two years has been researching the history of the Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur built by Raja Raja Chola. "I believe the production will strike a chord with the audience. For me, nothing matches the thrill of seeing pleasant faces after a performance," says the veteran dancer whose honours includes recognition from the Central ministry of cultural affairs for her international performances.

The Chennai-born artist has more than 25 years of experience in management consulting and believes her life in the corporate world has helped hone her dancing skills. "I used to teach leadership qualities in the US. I find that those experiences have always stood me in good stead during my stage performances," says Bala, who owns an academy of performing arts in the US. "I plan to open an academy in Chennai soon. I have been getting a lot of calls from enthusiastic parents to teach their children, but it needs a lot of planning," says Bala.