

Anita Menon

Houston, TX

SUMMARY

- ◆ **Founder & Former Artistic Director - Anjali School of Dance, PDX, OR.**
 - Founded with the singular vision of increasing awareness of Indian classical dance as a refined storytelling medium to audiences around the world.
 - Produced, managed & directed full scale productions w/ over 100 participants - accountability for finances, administration, choreography, marketing & sales.
 - Significant experience in total event management for over 2000+ performances for fundraisers, community building and educational events.
 - Demonstrated Track Record of Collaborating with diverse Minority Communities - over 30 years of working with children of immigrants, parents & families through art and culture.
 - Designed and implemented arts-related curriculum and lessons tailored for Teaching Residencies in public and private schools, actively engaging learners while educating on proper artistic methodologies.
- ◆ **Award winning Artist with over 24 years of Programming Excellence.**
 - First Asian American and first Woman of Color in the State of Oregon to be the Recipient of the prestigious Regional Arts and Culture Council's Performing Arts Fellowship Award in 2014.
 - Recipient of several other awards - Artist Fellow, Portland Area Musical Theatre Awards, Drammy, Oregon Folklife Network.
- ◆ **Cultural Consultant to engage New and Diverse Audiences**
 - Northwest Children's Theater & School, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Trike Theater (Arkansas-Walmart), Houston Grand Opera
- ◆ **Extensive service on Arts Councils for over 15 years**
 - Cultural Coalition of Washington County, Hillsboro Arts and Culture Council, Regional Arts and Culture Council of Oregon and Arts Council of Placer County.
 - Served on Grants Committee & Chair of the Leadership Development Committee (Regional Arts & Culture Council).
 - Grants Panelist - California Arts Council, Arts Connect Houston, TYA/USA, Cultural Coalition of Washington County, Hillsboro Arts and Culture Council, Regional Arts and Culture Council of Oregon and Arts Council of Placer County
- ◆ **Non-Profit Boards service** - Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA/USA), Northwest Children's Theater & School
- ◆ **Experienced Presenter, Keynote Speaker and Evangelist** for Cross cultural collaborations at conferences nationwide.
- ◆ **Strong History of giving back to the Community** through
 - Volunteer work, free workshops and non-profit board participation.
- ◆ **Freelance Choreographer - collaborations w/ Houston Dance Academies –**
 - Rathna Kumar, Padmini Chari, Indrani Parthasarathy, Lavanya Rajagopalan and Lavanya Prabhu

1995 - 2017, Founder & Artistic Director of Anjali School of Dance

- Built a dance academy from the ground up by offering innovative choreography and unique productions that adapted an ancient dance form to make it relevant to today's youth.
 - Created unique program that focused on engendering a strong love for dance through culture, stories of strong female role models & innovative choreography never before attempted in Classical Indian dance.
 - Choreographies - 10 major productions and 2000+ solo and group dances including fundraisers and community building events
 - [Sample video available here.](#)
 - Created / developed original music & concept - 50+ solo/group dances.
 - Responsible for becoming the premier Indian Dance studio in the area with highest retention rates.
 - Produced and directed full-scale stage productions for a cast size of 50+.
 - Supervised teams of staff, artists, musicians, designers, volunteers, stage hands, auditorium technicians and Box office agents.
 - Prepared and maintained budgets.
 - Developed marketing, promotional and fundraising campaigns.
 - Recruited, trained, supervised and directed 15 dance instructors and student teachers at three locations.
- Connected with artists, community leaders and business owners in the following minority communities:
 - Native American, Mexican, Brazilian, Irish, Ghanaian, Indian, Polish, Cambodian, Japanese, Muslim Educational Trust
- Designed and implemented arts-related curriculum and lessons tailored for Teaching Residencies in public and private schools, actively engaging learners while educating on proper artistic methodologies.
- Organized & curated a free Dance Festivals featuring over 50+ performers.

BRIDGING ARTISTIC COMMUNITIES:

- History of developing, choreographing and co-directing world premier productions in collaboration with Mainstream Arts Organizations with the goal of creating multi-disciplinary arts experiences that eliminate stereotypes while giving voice to cultural communities about the nuance of identity and intercultural collaboration.
- Invited by the Houston Grand Opera (2022) to direct "Monkey and Francine in the City of Tigers" - Children's Opera fusing stories from India, China & Africa.
- Developed Three World Premier Productions with 30+ shows over 4-6 week run
 - Sold out shows and the best ticket sales in the Theater's history.
 - Audience reach of 15,000+ for the run of each production.
 - Watch the Promo Videos, read the Reviews and Audience feedback for
 - [The Jungle Book \(2014\)](#)
 - [Chitra: The Girl Prince](#)
 - [Tenali: The Royal Trickster](#)
 - [The Jungle Book \(2020\)](#)

- Cross cultural collaborative work - brought together teams of artists in India and US to work together.
- Supported and uplifted local Indian American community businesses by advertising and including their services to mainstream theater audiences.
- Other productions that bridge cultures with over 50 cast members include:
 - [A Midsummer Night's Dream](#) - 2012 - Shakespeare's play through dance - a collaboration with 6 local dance schools featuring 10+ dance styles (including Indian Classical, Folk, Hip-hop, Ballet, Jazz and Tap)
 - [Murder on the Ganges](#) - 2014 - a unique adaptation of Agatha Christie's murder mystery "Death on the Nile" featuring the rich, diverse and cultural heritage of cities along the Ganges River.

ARTIST RECOGNITION / AWARDS:

- 2020 - **Drammy Award** - Outstanding Choreographer for The Jungle Book
- 2018 - **Special Portland Area Musical Theater Award** for Outstanding collaborative effort with Northwest Children's Theater
- 2018 - **Three Drammy nominations** (including Outstanding Choreographer) for the production "Chitra: The Girl Prince".
- 2016 - **Recipient of the Oregon Folklife Network** "Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program" Award and the title "Master Artist".
- 2016 - **Recipient of Oregon Arts Commission Professional Development Grant**.
- 2015 - **Four Portland Area Musical Theater Awards nominations** for the production "The Jungle Book".
- 2014 - **Honored by Washington County Commissioners** at City Hall for being first RACC Fellow from the County.
- 2014 - **[Regional Arts and Culture Council's Performing Artist Fellowship Award](#)** - First Woman of Color, First Asian American and First artist from entire County to receive this honor. Watch the ceremony and acceptance speech video [here](#).
- 2012 - 2014 - **3-time RACC grant awardee** (2 Project Grants and 1 Professional Development grant).
- August 2009 - **India Cultural Association's** award in recognition for dedicated service and total commitment to promoting and teaching of Indian arts and culture

EXPERTISE IN DEVELOPING NEW AUDIENCES THROUGH CROSS CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS:

- Jul 2021 - Jun 2022 - TYA Consultant/ Cultural, Business and New Audience Development Liaison - Trike Theater (Bentonville, Arkansas)
 - Served as a Theater for Young Audiences Consultant and Cultural, Business and New Audience Development Liaison for Trike Theater to develop a

- collaboration between Trike and the Indian American community in Bentonville, Arkansas.
- Facilitated listening sessions between Trike and members of an Indian American cultural organization, the Director of a Dance Academy, members from the immigrant community as well as members of the 1st generation Indian American community.
 - Developed a process for community engagement.
 - Created a step-by-step process and time line to facilitate a collaboration through a production which included a script reading.
 - May 2017 - **One Theater World - Berkeley, California** - Led a breakout session titled “Utopia: Integrating Racial Diversity into your programs”.
 - October 2016 - **StateraCon - Boulder, Colorado** - Led a breakout session titled “Developing new audiences through cross cultural relationships” at the Women in Theater Conference.
 - October 2016 - **Seismic Shifts - Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, OR** Presented at Consortium of Asian American Theater Artists (CAATA) Conference and Festival.
 - 2016 & 2017 - **Art of Leadership Program (RACC)** - Presentation to Non-Profit Board members in training about the artistic collaboration with Northwest Children’s Theater which led to systemic change in NWCT’s outlook on Equity.
 - August 2015 - **“In the Garden of Artistic Delight”** - Fundraiser event by RACC.
 - March 2015 - **Keynote Speaker - Cultural Coalition of Washington County** Grants Celebration.
 - February 2015 - **State of the Arts - City Council** - Presented to Portland City Commissioners - the deep impact of dollars spent on arts and artists.

BOARD EXPERIENCE:

May 2019 - Current, Board Member - Theater for Young Audiences

- Representative of the Indian American Theater and Dance genres to the national theater landscape
- Review applications and recommend artists for grants funding.
- Advocate for cross cultural relationships on the Board.

September 2018 - March 2019, Board member Arts Council of Placer County

- Chair of the Grants Program whose charter it is to support the region’s vital arts and culture community through grants.
- Review applications and recommend organizations and artists for grants funding.
- Creating and leading free grants workshops to help organizations write strong grant applications.
- Advocate for small artistic organizations and individual artists on the Board and grant applications received.

2015 - Current, Board member Northwest Children's Theater

- Collaborating with Artistic Director to bring about systemic changes in the creative process, programming and hiring of minority actors of color.
- Strategized with the Marketing team in reaching minority communities through different channels.
- Worked on the systemic changes needed in the audition process to make it more inclusive of diverse children with varied backgrounds.
- Introduced NWCT artists to artists from various immigrant communities.
- Member of the Equity Committee, Developed the Organization Equity Statement.

2016 - 2018, Board member Regional Arts & Culture Council

- Chair of the Leadership Development Committee, in charge of finding future board members.
- Member of the Grants Committee, working with other members to read grant applications to fund individuals and organizations at various funding levels.
- Researched the cross-cultural partnerships done by other organizations to understand, study and learn from their experiences.
- Advocated for and passed resolution to fund small artistic organizations.

Other Board/Arts council Experience

- January 2013 - December 2015 - Board member of the Hillsboro Arts and Culture Council (HACC).
- January 2010 - December 2015 - Board member of the Cultural Coalition of Washington County (CCWC).

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:

- Community Leader and respected member of the Indian American Community.
- Cultural Ambassador for Indian Dance, music and culture.
- Deep connections to dancers & artists worldwide.
- Developed connections to artists in Oregon, California, Arkansas and Texas through artistic collaborations.
- Volunteer at local arts councils and arts events.
- Teaching residencies/ lecture demonstrations at local schools.

EDUCATION

1998 - MBA - Portland State University.

1993 - BA English - University of Madras, India.