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Classic Indian Dance Performance

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – An event featuring classic Indian dances will be at Illinois Wesleyan University at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 23, at Presser Hall (1210 N. Park St., Bloomington). The event is free and open to the public.

The origins of most classical dance forms in India can be traced back to the temples, said Adjunct Professor Uma Kallakuri, who is teaching a May Term course titled Indian Classical Dance and Dramatic Performance. May Term is a time when students can take intensive classes within a four-week period, as opposed to the usual 16-week semester.

The class, which explores how ancient Indian traditions led to classic Indian dance, culminates in a student production. Kallakuri said students have been rehearsing with members of the Nrityamala Dance Academy (link: <http://nrityamala.org/index.html>), of which she is the director. Members of the academy will also perform at the event.

“Learning of different cultures acts as a bridge for people to connect,” said Kallakuri. “They are open to a global perspective, and can discover the unity that can be found in diversity.”

According to Kallakuri, who is an active speaker and teacher of choreography and the teaching methodology of Indian dance, students in the May Term course learn the basic gestures of classic Indian dance through workshops and research. They turn their studies into art with a musical at the end of the class. This year’s musical number will be the story of Shiva, the Hindu deity. “The instruments used for the dance are also used often in Indian music, so it is a greater learning experience,” said Kallakuri.