

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For Immediate Release

### First Ever Indian Arts Festival Takes off In La Réunion with Colour, Creativity and Diversity

- *The 3-day festival features ‘movers and shakers’ from the Indian arts community in India, South Africa, USA and La Réunion*
- *From dance performances and concerts to discovery workshops and culinary benefits - this is a festival to feed the senses*

**Saint Paul, La Réunion, 21 October 2014** – In its premier edition, La Réunion’s Indian Arts Festival officially kicks off today with a colourful start at Teat de Plein Air in Saint Gilles with a programme line-up that celebrates the diverse facets of Indian culture; mainly through music, dance and cuisine. Held from 21 - 23 October, the Festival is organised by Kala Bhaaskara, a local classical Indian dance and music association, with the support of key governing bodies (Region Réunion, Commune of Saint Paul and the Territory of the West Coast). Through a series of enthralling performances, the festival takes audiences on a journey of discovery with an authentic encounter of India’s rich cultural heritage.

The Festival boasts 20 performances, 10 events and more than 70 artists from India, South Africa, USA and La Réunion. Pushing the creative boundaries of traditional Indian performance, the Festival showcases local and international acts and collaborations that expose audiences to new concepts and genres.

#### Programming

Festival Director, Logambal Souprayen-Cavery from Kala Bhaaskara, heading up her first Festival, says this year’s programme features some of the most leading-edge contemporary and classical performances from across the globe.

*“With programming that includes classical and contemporary dance, drama, music and not to mention, food, this Festival has something for everyone to relish as we aim to provide broader access to Indian arts and culture in La Réunion.”*

*“Some key Festival highlights include a performance by Bombay Jayashree from India, an Oscar nominee in 2013 for the movie soundtrack of “Life of Pi” and a fusion of Indian classical music and jazz performance by American musician, Shankar Tucker, who has garnered over 15 million views in two years on his “ShrutiBox” online YouTube channel. We are also pleased to have Deena Naidoo, winner of Master Chef South Africa in 2012, as the official chef during the three-day festival period.”*

#### 2012 Partnership Agreement

In 2012, a partnership agreement was signed between P.Unnikrishnan, noted national award winning Carnatic vocalist from India, and Kala Bhaaskara in La Réunion, to further develop the Indian arts scene in Reunion and to acquaint the Indian arts communities between the two countries, thereby promoting the island as a destination to India and other parts of the world. This was further facilitated by Kala Bhaaskara’s association with the prestigious dance school Bharata Kalanjali, in

Chennai, headed by the legendary dancing couple of India, V.P Dhananjayan and Shanta Dhananjayan.

P.Unnikrishnan says: *"I am heartened to see this Festival come together following our agreement two years ago, it is a testament of the cultural relations that is strengthening between India and Reunion. Through a series of collaborations, and this being one of many, we hope to help put the island and its burgeoning artistic potential on the world map."*

Mr Daniel Miniépoulé, President of the Tamil Federation of Reunion says: *"La Réunion's Indian Arts Festival is helping to shape an image of Indian arts and culture that is not only rich and diverse but also one that is inclusive and relevant to the local community. The Festival has enriched the experience of audiences by providing a more diverse range of Indian artistic expressions. Moreover, the agreement with both P.Unnikrishnan and Bharata Kalanjali is key in creating access to productions to La Réunion that would have otherwise been impossible to witness. We feel fortunate to have the opportunity to see these marvellous works of art without having to leave home."*

### **International community**

Meanwhile, feedback from the participating international community, has been equally fused with enthusiasm and positivity:

Mdm Verushka Pather, artistic director of Natya Ananda Temple of Dance from South Africa says, *"We are so glad to be here, it's my first visit to Reunion. Logambal and I have been working together through Bharata Kalanjali, and we have shared our first epic dance drama production together in South Africa called 'Shakti', a phenomenal experience of live music and brilliant Bharatanatyam. We are just very excited to share this with the community in Reunion, with some amazing musicians and dancers who are here for the Festival. This is truly a great honour for us, thanks to the wonderful platform that Kala Bhaskaara has created."*

Mdm Kalyani Shankar, a classic Carnatic violinist from Chennai, India, says, *"I am really thrilled to be part of this festival, the spirits are running high as we look forward to its grand success. This is truly about bringing different cultures together and I've been so fortunate in being able to exchange ideas with so many leading artists from different parts of the world."*

Mr Deena Naidoo, winner of Master Chef South Africa in 2012 says, *"I am greatly honoured and privileged to be part of this phenomenal cultural Festival in this beautiful island of Reunion, this being my first visit here. I am so happy to be here to share my cultural culinary heritage as a South African. Already I can see how both Reunion and South Africa share so many similarities in terms of culture, heritage and cuisine, the local communities being equally multi-cultural and embracing of one another's cultural identities."*

### **Ticketing details**

Festival passes are available at the entrance and are priced between 10 to 15 euros (depending on one-day, two-day or three-day passes).

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For further information visit:

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