



# News

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**Asia Society and Sanskriti Center present  
Orchids of Manipur: Traditional Music and Dance of Manipur, India  
Ratan Thiyam's Chorus Repertory Theatre**

**Monday, March 7, 2011 • 7:30 pm**  
at Asia Society and Museum  
725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), NYC



Photo Courtesy of the Artists

Chorus Repertory Theater

One of India's most celebrated theater companies led by Ratan Thiyam, hailed as a "genius" by *The New York Times*, performs an evening of classical and folk traditions of Manipur involving music, dance and martial arts. Bordered by Bhutan, Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar, Manipur is rich in centuries-old artistic traditions.

Thiyam's works for Chorus Repertory Theatre are mesmerizing tapestries of rhythm, music, poetry, light, speech and color that draw on epic themes, historical figures and mythology. The Chorus Repertory Theatre of Imphal was established in April 1976 in one of the world's most isolated areas, the valley of the hill state of Manipur in northeastern India.

This New York event is a rare opportunity to see one of India's most distinguished companies, which occupies a unique place in the world of international, contemporary theater.

Co-presented by Sanskriti Center. Part of The Kennedy Center's *Maximum India* festival.

Ticket prices for the performance are \$20 for members/students/seniors and \$25 nonmembers. For tickets and information, call (212) 517-ASIA or visit [www.AsiaSociety.org](http://www.AsiaSociety.org). Members of the press interested in the performance should contact Asia Society's public relations department at 212.327.9271 or [pr@asiasoc.org](mailto:pr@asiasoc.org).

### **Asia Society**

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Asia Society is a nonprofit nonpartisan educational institution. Through exhibitions and public programs, Asia Society provides a forum for the issues and viewpoints reflected in both traditional and contemporary Asian art, and in Asia today. Asia Society is located at 725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street), New York City. [www.AsiaSociety.org](http://www.AsiaSociety.org)

### **Sanskriti Center**

Sanskriti is an institute for Indian culture in New York City, dedicated to the children of the greater New York area. Sanskriti's instruction will instill in its students a deep appreciation of India's heritage. The institute strives to integrate the ethos of Indian dance, music, history, literature, art and philosophy into the lives of all students. A few will embrace one or more facets of their instruction as a professional career, but above all, individuals will have the knowledge and understanding to appreciate the depth of India's cultural legacy. [www.sanskriticenter.org](http://www.sanskriticenter.org)

### **The Chorus Repertory Theatre**

The Chorus Repertory Theatre of Imphal was established in April 1976 in one of the world's most isolated areas, the valley of the hill state of Manipur in northeastern India. Here travel by non-nationals is restricted by special permit, informal curfews close the streets after dark, and violence is a tangible, daily threat. The Chorus Repertory Theatre has persevered with limited financial resources, six times surviving monsoons to build and re-build structures to live and work in from locally found materials. In spite of the difficult conditions of its existence, Chorus Repertory Theatre's team of actors, designers, musicians, and technicians, all working under the direction of Ratan Thiyam, occupy a unique place in the world of international, contemporary theater. The company has gained fame far beyond India, and international theater directors including Peter Brook and Tadashi Suzuki have visited Imphal to work with the company. The company has traveled throughout India, and appeared at festivals including Edinburgh (First Fringe Award 1987), Glasgow, Dublin, Avignon, Perth, Adelaide, Rome, Cervantino, Mitsui, and Toga. Chorus Repertory Theatre has also performed in London and Paris, and toured countries including Greece, the former USSR, Holland, Cuba, South America, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand.

### **Ratan Thiyam**

Artistic Director, Chorus Repertory Theatre

Writer, director, designer, musician, painter and actor, Ratan Thiyam is one of the most important and influential theater makers at work in the international performance scene. Renowned for its disciplined performance practice, spectacular aural and visual esthetic, and

potent thematic explorations, Thiyam's work has placed him in the company of such figures as Suzuki, Brook, and Grotowski.

The son of dancers, Thiyam spent his childhood surrounded by both the creativity and the hardship associated with the arts. Though he was brought up learning dance and music, he began his professional studies in painting. He moved from there to journalism and poetry, which led him to the world of theater. In the late 1960s, Thiyam joined the experimental theater movement that challenged longstanding cultural and social norms by striving to deal with social issues more directly. He then graduated from the National School of Drama in Delhi, where he later returned to direct productions.

Ratan Thiyam has developed a concept of "total theatre", in which combined forms of visual, oral, rhythmic and choreographic components helps surmount any language barriers. Aesthetically, he draws from ancient storytelling traditions, but he doesn't necessarily mount traditional performances. Thematically, he interprets historical or mythical figures.

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