Kali Dances
a drama in twenty-three scenes

by Pat Montley

SYNOPSIS

When a music teacher is found at the church organ with her throat slit, her lesbian lover, the pastor, and his young daughter confront one another with their grief and anger. The investigating detective interrogates each of them as a suspect.   The terrifying Indian Goddess Kali, challenges them all to come to terms with her. Although at its most superficial level, the play is a detective story, at its heart it is a mystery play—exploring the intersection of Hindu and Christian beliefs regarding death.

CAST OF CHARACTERS (7 actors, 1 dancer)

Kali-Ma, Black Goddess of India, Creator-Destroyer of the Universe, played by a dancer who
        does not speak

Maya Prasad, 15, American, of Indian heritage, bright, impressionable, a singer

Father Prasad, early 40's, American, of Indian heritage, a priest, serious, disciplined but
        passionate; Maya's father

Detective, middle-aged African-American man, intuitive, determined but not insensitive

Joseph Snyder, 70's, church sexton, respectful, affable

Sheila Dunn, 30's, a lively and likeable music teacher. Actor should have some dance skills.

Artemis Callas, 30's, Sheila's lover, a museum curator, articulate, intense, but with a
        sense of humor. Actor should have some dance skills.

Medical Examiner, any age, any race, either sex, curious, clever, helpful. Actor may be
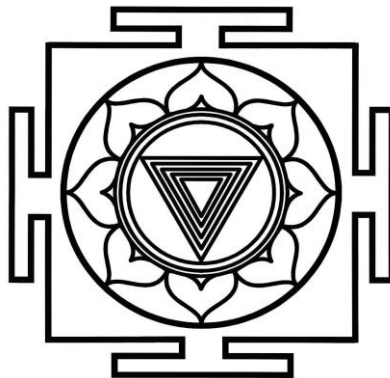   wheelchair-bound.

SETTING
U.S.A. The present.
Simple unit-set: triangular, slightly raked platform; screen backdrop

PRODUCTION NOTES
Slides called for are available from author. See appendix for list of images.

Kali Yantra

KALI DANCES

SETTING:

The set suggests the Kali yantra. At CS, a low (possibly raked) equilaterally triangular platform with base US and apex pointing DC. One or two steps lead up to it on all three sides. Small backless benches are on the R and L edge of the platform. The points of the triangle are joined by a line that forms the circumference of a circle painted on the floor. This circle forms the center of a lotus whose eight petals emanate from it. Enclosing the lotus is a square. The action is played on the triangular platform as well as in the areas on either side. Just US of the platform is a tall rectangular arch with decorative lintel and column-supports. Within this arch hangs a screen on which the audience views slides.

Scene 1

AT RISE:

In the dark, we hear the loudly amplified sound of exaggerated, deep, slow breathing. Then unrealistic lighting fades up slowly on KALI-MA, the black Goddess of India. Her very long hair is luxuriant and disheveled. With her whole body she breathes. As she inhales, the lights dim; as she exhales the lights brighten. Slowly, Indian music fades in as breathing sound fades out. She begins to dance. She is at once comforting and menacing. She gives birth, then devours her offspring. She battles demons and slays them. She makes love to her consort, then devours his entrails. During this dance, we become aware of MAYA lying on the floor, asleep. KALI dances around and over her. The dance comes to a climactic close as the music ends abruptly with a loud dissonant organ chord. KALI freezes. MAYA springs up to a sitting position, screaming.

MAYA: Ma! Ma! *(Louder.)* Maaaaa!

> *(Lighting changes. KALI backs off as FATHER enters and crosses to MAYA. He wears a black sweater and clerical collar.)*

FATHER: Maya! What is it?

MAYA: *(Still screaming.)* Ma!

FATHER: *(Shaking her.)* Maya, wake up! You're dreaming—you're having another nightmare.

MAYA: No, Father! She was here. She danced me. I could feel her.

FATHER: Who?

MAYA: Kali.

FATHER: Kali?

MAYA: The Goddess. She dances me!

FATHER: What do you mean?

MAYA: She's inside me. She…

FATHER: She what?

MAYA: She…urges me...to *feel*.

FATHER: To feel what?

MAYA: Things I shouldn't.

FATHER: What things?

MAYA: No!

FATHER: You can tell me Maya. I'm your father.

> *(She catches her breath, then again, and again until she is hyperventilating. FATHER pulls her to him and rocks her. Over his shoulder she screams.)*

MAYA: Maaaaa!

> *(Crossfade.)*