



CITY OF CUPERTINO
EMERGING & DISTINGUISHED ARTIST AWARD
APPLICATION FORM

Artist Name Harish Agastya

Applying for (check one):

- ☐ Emerging Artist (19-30 years)
☒ Distinguished Artist (31 or older)

Address 20902 Hanford Dr, Cupertino CA 95014

Phone 408-666-2747 E-mail harish@naatak.org

Name of employer, college, or school NAATAK THEATER

Check one:

- ☐ Performing Arts ☒ Theatre
☐ Visual Arts ☐ Music
☐ Literary arts Other _____

Artist's Personal Statement:

Please include personal goals that address artistic promise, education, training, volunteerism, community involvement, achievements and awards.

Residency Criteria (check all that apply):

- ☒ Cupertino Resident
☐ Practicing Artist in Cupertino
☐ Attend an Education Institution in Cupertino or school within CUSD or FUHSD

Letter(s) of Endorsement and/or Support submitted by:

Name Pradeep Gupta Relationship to Artist Colleague
Name Rajiv Nema Relationship to Artist Colleague

List of Attachments _____

Application submitted by: (Artists may apply themselves or be nominated by others)

Name Harish Agastya Relationship to Artist Self
Address 20902 Hanford Dr. Cupertino CA 95014
Phone 408-666-2747 E-mail harish@naatak.org
Signature Harish Date July 15 2016

Personal Statement

I have dedicated most of my personal life and free time to theater. I was always fascinated by it since I took part in school plays as a child in India. Growing up, I have seen the transformative power of theater compared to the celluloid screen and even other performing art forms. True enough, it has been put to great use to change public perceptions and draw attention to social causes, sometimes even create rebellions. Yet, when I came to the Bay Area (more specifically Cupertino¹) in 1993 as a working professional for the first time, I noticed that theater was sorely lacking in the Indian American community here. Partly this is due to self-selection. The majority of people that have come to Silicon Valley from India are technology professionals steeped in the science and engineering disciplines. This arts imbalance always struck me as an unfortunate consequence of Silicon Valley's progress and so, when a friend told me he was looking to start the Bay Area's first Indian American theater company, I happily joined in. Theater-going is not a common activity amongst most of the Indian Americans in the Valley to their own detriment. I fundamentally believed (and I do even more so today) that this gap is reversible and if we introduce theater to the people, they will come and they will stay, and it will open their minds² (or a different side of their brain).

Naatak was born in December 1995. We set out to do our first play *Khaamosh*, a play in Hindi by Vijay Tendulkar, which was staged in Feb 1996. Putting it together was very much reminiscent of a tech startup hustling together to put out its first release. Every one of us needed to do a lot of heavy-lifting from being on the cast to building our makeshift sets to helping with publicity of the play. Looking back, it was not a very strong production but it was our first and it was good enough to spur us to do more plays and our audiences to return.

Our first Naatak play was watched by about 300 Indian Americans and was the first of its kind in the Bay Area. Naatak is now a 21-year old theater company that has nourished the theater interests of over 750 aspiring artistes in Silicon Valley. Over 50000 Indian Americans have watched Naatak's performances in the Bay Area over this period. A large number of them are repeat audiences, which leads me to believe that our mission to inculcate an appreciation of the arts, and a habit of theater-going in the community is bearing fruit.

Naatak has gradually grown into America's biggest Indian theater company in the last 21 years. Many other smaller theater companies around the US collaborate with us and perform our plays. In 2015 and 2016, Naatak was awarded Best Live Theater in Silicon Valley by the San Jose Mercury News. We were featured on KQED TV, BBC, San Jose Mercury News, SF Chronicle, TV Asia and NPR (Forum with Michael Krasny).

¹ I have worked most of my corporate career in Cupertino (Tandem Computers - 1993-2000, Trend Micro – 2005-2013) and my family has been living in our Hanford Drive home in Cupertino since 2003.

² At an individual level, I believe introducing performing arts into someone with a STEM-heavy lifestyle will improve the general well-being and emotional quotient for the people involved. Documented experiences of past Naatak participants proves that this is indeed happening, and theater has in fact led people to benefit in improved confidence levels and performance, resulting in career growth in the workplace. I am sure there are macro benefits to the community as well in terms of improved health and mental wellness, and reduced depression and suicide rates.

I have worn many hats with Naatak over the years. I have directed 11 plays³, written or adapted 3, produced⁴ 2, acted in 20, and worked in various backstage functions⁵ in over 25. In addition, I serve as Naatak's Operations Director (or COO) as well as on Naatak's 3-member Board of Directors. Bringing Naatak to where it is now has indeed been a labor of love for me. While everyone of the team has a day job that pays the bills (I work by day as VP of Enterprise Solutions at Bitdefender, a cyber-security startup in Santa Clara), I, like everyone else at Naatak, moonlight⁶ over nights and weekends at our theater workspace where we write scripts, rehearse scenes and build sets, props and costumes.⁷ But what we have achieved and the promise where I think we can go makes it all worthwhile.

Harish Agastya

Head of Operations and Board Member, 1995-present

Naatak (www.naatak.org)

³ See attached resume

⁴ A producer manages all backstage functions in a play.

⁵ These include set design, scenery building, props, lighting design, special effects, marketing/publicity, etc.

⁶ All Naatak members volunteer their time pro-bono.

⁷ An average production takes about 4 months to put together and consumes over 300 hours of the director's time. Another 50 team members across cast and crew, each volunteer anywhere from 50-150 hours towards the production.

July 13, 2016
City of Cupertino Distinguished Artist Award
Cupertino

Dear Sir,

Let me introduce myself. I am Pradeep Gupta, currently serving as the Vice Mayor of the City of South San Francisco. I strongly recommend that Mr. Harish Agastya be awarded the coveted City of Cupertino Distinguished Award for 2016 for his contribution as an actor, director and play wright. Harish, a longtime Cupertino resident, has served Santa Clara County since late 1990s as one of the founding leaders of a non-profit theatre group called Naatak. My association with Harish started in 2005. Between 2008 and 2012, I had the privilege to work with Harish as a Producer of Naatak's five productions.

I strongly believe that Harish deserves this award, based on the following reasons:

A. Harish is extremely talented artist in all types of theatrical arts. He has consistently directed, acted, scripted and produced highly ranked productions of Naatak.

B. His artistic reach has crossed the boundaries of language and culture. While he directed and performed in plays like Anthony Shaeffer's Sleuth, Michael Frayn's Noises off, Mowgli and I, his own re-imagination of Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book; he also brought to the local community many international theatre hits such as Final Solutions, a play dealing with communal riots, and Tughlaq, a play recounting the historically tumultuous times of Mogul invasion of India.

C. He is a mentor and motivator par excellence. As one of the pillars of Naatak, he has been instrumental in developing a culture of nurturing and growing a whole team of budding theatre amateurs. Naatak's volunteer team has kept on expanding and is now able to mount up to six fully developed plays per year. The newcomers learn from Naatak's veterans and pass on their skills to the next generation. This nurturing culture largely reflects Harish's own attitude.

I would be very happy to provide additional information if needed. Please call me on 650-794-1417.

Sincerely yours,
Pradeep Gupta, Ph.D.
Vice Mayor, City of South San Francisco

Harish Agastya
Head of Operations and Member of the Board of Directors
Naatak (www.naatak.org)

Productions Directed

Noises Off by Michael Frayn, June 2016
Rabbit Hole by David Lindsay-Abaire, June 2015
A Wife of Buddha by Lisa Kang, Apr 2015
Hayavadana by Girish Karnad, Feb 2015
Disconnect by Anupama Chandrashekhar, June 2014
Mowgli and I by Harish Agastya, Oct 2012
Aath Ghante by Sujit Saraf, June 2011
Final Solutions by Mahesh Dattani (adapted by Harish Agastya), Oct 2008
Sleuth by Anthony Shaffer (adapted by Harish Agastya), Oct 2007
Where There's A Will by Mahesh Dattani, June 2003

Lead and Supporting Roles

Avi (Lead), Rabbit Hole, June 2015,
Anil (Lead), God of Carnage, Oct 2013
Pande (Lead), Aath Ghante, June 2011
Tughlaq (Lead), Tughlaq, June 2010
Mr. Iyer (supporting), 8000 miles away, Nov 2009
Patol Babu (Lead) and other ensemble roles, Patol Babu Filmstar, Oct 2009
Pratyush (supporting), Surya Ki Antim Kiran Se, June 2009
Priest/King of Kashi/Sage Vishwamitra (all supporting), Madhavi, Feb 2009
Ramnik (ensemble), Final Solutions, Oct 2008
Andrew (lead), Sleuth, Oct 2007
Harish (supporting), A Large Soda No Ice Please, May 2005
Various (ensemble), Muavazey, June 2004
Arjun (lead), Tatha Kuru, Feb 2004
Manik Mulla (lead), Feb 2003
Sudhir (lead), Viraasat, Feb 2000
Relative (supporting), Aashaadh ka ek din, Apr 1998
Juggan Dhobi (supporting), Ek Tha Gadhaa, Sep 1997
Various (supporting), Muavazey, Aug 1996
Karnik (supporting), Khaamosh, Feb 1996

Productions Produced

Everyone Loves a Good Tsunami, directed by Sujit Saraf, Dec 2005
Kasturi Mrig, Directed by Aniruddha Bhosekar, Dec 2003
Talaash Vajudon Ki, Directed by Anshu Johri, Feb 2002

Plays Authored/Adapted

Mowgli and I (original play) – staged Oct 2012

Final Solutions (an adaptation of a play by Mahesh Dattani) – staged Oct 2008
Sleuth (an adaptation of a play by Anthony Shaffer) – staged Oct 2007

Operational Leadership

Mela by various, Nov 2015 (team mentor for 9 new directors)
Vrindavan by Sujit Saraf, Sep 2015 (Procured \$15K grant from the Knight Foundation)
Amavasya by Sujit Saraf, Sep 2015 (Procured \$10K grant from the Knight Foundation)

Backstage Roles

August: Osage County by Tracy Letts, Feb 2016 (Marketing and event management)
Taming of the Shrew by Shakespeare, Mar 2015 (Marketing and event management)
Andhera Hone Tak by Frederick Knott, Nov 2014 (Marketing and event management)
Party by Mahesh Elkunchwar, Jan 2014 (Marketing)
Vande Mataram by Sujit Saraf, June 2013 (Marketing and event management)
Night of January 16th by Ayn Rand, Feb 2013 (Marketing)
Death in San Francisco by Sujit Saraf, June 2012 (Marketing and event management)
Kamla by Vijay Tendulkar, Feb 2012 (Marketing, backstage assistance)
Aathvaa Sarg by Surendra Verma, Nov 2011 (Marketing, backstage assistance)
Jis Lahore by Asghar Wajahat, Mar 2011 (Marketing, backstage assistance)
Sakharam Binder by Vijay Tendulkar, Oct 2010 (Lighting design)
K.K. by Sujit Saraf, Feb 2010 (Marketing and event management)
8000 miles away by Project Pulse, Nov 2009 (Lighting designer)
Sultana Daku by Roopram, Mar 2008 (Light and sound design)
Sleuth by Anthony Shaffer (adapted by Harish Agastya), Oct 2007 (Special effects)
Jaanch Partaal by Sanjay Sahay, July 2006 (Sets team)
Everyone Loves a Good Tsunami by Sujit Saraf, Dec 2005 (Sets and props)
Arey Shareef Log by Jaywant Dalvi, June 2005 (Backstage assistance)
Rahasiya Snehideye by Mani Ram, Sep 2004 (Lighting design)
Kasturi Mrig by Vasant Kanetkar, Dec 2003 (Sets and props)
Where There's A Will by Mahesh Dattani, June 2003 (Special effects)
Kaasu Mela Kaasu by Mani Ram, Aug 2002 (Lighting design)
Talaash Vajudon ki by Anshu Johri, Feb 2002 (Sets, special effects)
Aath Ghante by Sujit Saraf, Feb 1997 (backstage assistance)
Muavazey by Bhisham Sahni, Aug 1996 (backstage assistance)
Khaamosh by Vijay Tendulkar, Feb 1996 (backstage assistance)



To whomsoever it may concern,

I am proud to endorse my colleague and friend Harish Sunderam Agastya for Cupertino City's distinguished artist award. He is a theater aficionado to the hilt. I have worked with Harish as long as I have known him and that is for exactly 20 years and 3 months. I met him in April 1996 at an audition of a new theater company in Bay Area called *Naatak* (www.Naatak.org). Fast forward to today and *Naatak* has 53 productions under its belt with Harish having performed in more than 20 and directed more than 10 of them. When not acting or directing, Harish in a true spirit of a theatre person, gets involved in any capacity ranging from building sets to mopping the floors before a performance. Thanks to Harish's immense contribution, he has been appointed as one of the 3 board members of Naatak. Since 1996, Naatak has staged these 53 plays in front of 50,000+ audience with 750+ performers. Our performers (and audience) are professionals and residents of Silicon Valley and represent its true spirit. I would be remiss if I did not mention that San Jose Mercury News has declared *Naatak* to be the 'Best Live Theater Company in Silicon Valley' in 2015 and 2016.

In addition to the talent and passion, what I find equally valuable in an artist is humility and collaborative nature and both are in abundance in Harish. I truly believe that, Harish deserves this award and will be a great spokesperson and poster-child for the advancement of arts in the Cupertino community.

Sincerely,

Rajiv Nema
rajiv@naatak.org, 650-622-2376 (cell)
Director of Marketing & Board Member, NAATAK
Director of Portfolio & Strategy, SAP Digital SAP

Address: 1273 Oak Knoll Dr, San Jose, CA

6995 Calabazas Creek Circle, San Jose, CA 95129
A 501(c)(3) Corporation
FEIN: 20-2541450 CA Corp: 2752743
Email: info@naatak.org
Web: www.naatak.org

Please copy and paste the link shown below into your Web Browser to view the applicant's portfolio:

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/29768425/HARISH%20AGASTYA%20Exhibits.docx>

Due to the size of the file, it may take a few minutes to load on your computer