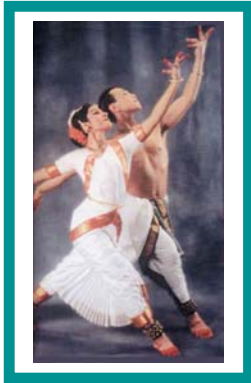


## TAGORE'S CHILDREN



The Ragamala Music and Dance Theatre is collaborating with **THE PERFORMANCE LAB** and partner organizations in America and Bangladesh to produce a two-month series of innovative educational exchanges using interactive technologies to erase geographic distance and to find new ways of celebrating cultural uniqueness. In two interactive performing arts residencies, one in dance, one in drama, **TAGORE'S CHILDREN** employs a proven model developed over the last decade by **THE PERFORMANCE LAB**. Using interactive technologies in bold and imaginative ways, the project creates a “live” hook-up between young dancers and actors at the Jago Art Center in Dhaka, Bangladesh and Ragamala interactive dance studios in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Interactive exchanges are extended through on-site workshops, collaborative coaching, bilingual web conferences on the Internet and two traditional stage performances. An integral evaluation component tracks project implementation throughout the project.

*Beyond cultural exchange and cross-cultural performance, the aim of this project is to create a replicable model that can be refined and further implemented by participating countries and by others with an interest in dynamic, high-impact cultural exchange through interactive technologies.*

CDs, DVDs, web archives and videocassette recordings of the performances created by the young people in this project will be available long after these model exchanges have given way to new exchanges.

There is the word: *healing*. What in the world experience needs to be “healed”? The roiling headlines of today’s world press provide an answer, of course. But there are less public shows of conflict that trouble all of us. They are shadows of the greater conflicts, a cloud of ash that prevents ordinary people from embracing *The Other*, those different than we. It is these shadows, fragments of a shattered cultural identity, that we wish to dispel by bringing young people, East and West, together on a world stage.



### *In the Key of Hope* (Harrison Education Center ↔ Atlantic City High School)

Thanks to a Beaumont Foundation grant of over \$70,000 worth of computer and other digital equipment, these two schools are collaborating on a multi-disciplinary interactive exchange that will result in an album of moving poems taken from real life. With song and dance and drama, the young people will create performance art pieces that cross disciplines and target literacy skills while building confidence and self-esteem.

There are at least five aspects of “In the Key of Hope” that may prove startling and need some thought as we begin.



- The high school classes are 2,000 miles apart from one another.
- **THE PERFORMANCE LAB** coaching method is resolutely iconoclastic, breaking the rules of standard TV watching, so that our partners experience the arts as immediate, involving and focused. Two classrooms become one classroom.
- The high school students involved in the exchange in both states have had difficulty staying in school. They are “disabled”, plagued by emotional and behavioral problems [EB/D] that have barred them from ordinary schools in their communities.
- All of the students have demonstrated an aptitude for expressing strong emotions through words, song and movement.
- The exchanges will culminate with an interactive performance that will be featured on the WEB and on CD or cassette.

# THE PERFORMANCE LAB

## THE TPL MODEL FOR COACHING PERFORMING ARTS

THE PERFORMANCE LAB has identified interactive technology as an important collaborative tool for coaching performing artists and has developed techniques that 1) increase focus and therefore retention of basic concepts; 2) objectify movement in performance; and 3) combine aural and kinesthetic channels of learning in a multidisciplinary approach. TPL residencies depend upon interactive technology and borrow from established models, yet are not traditional distance learning, videoconferencing or broadcast TV. Artists and coaches who collaborate interactively are not limited to passive TV-watching. Instead, *they design and direct the actions of collaborators in a far away studio that is an extension of their own.* "Drawing" on the screen with a sweep of their hands, they sculpt movement over many 1000s of miles.



Style, emotion and real human contact are integral to each exchange. Ideas of artistic community and partnership are expansively redefined. Using a stable population of pre-professional dancers, TPL and partners have documented the cumulative positive effect of multiple interactive sessions over time.

### TPL WORLD BRIDGE *The Mirror & the Lamp*

This title was inspired by the *Arab Human Development Report 2003*: "... a powerful intrinsic relationship remains between the creative imagination and reality. A work of imagination is both mirror and lamp. It reflects reality and illuminates it at the same time." (page 76)

TPL World Bridge *The Mirror & the Lamp* brings children and young people from Arab cultures into artistic collaboration with children from Western cultures. Together, they create drama, dances, music, songs and poetry. Collaborating partners in America, The Middle East and Europe use existing interactive technology (Internet2, ISDN lines) to link the young people. Through the optic of the performing arts, and occasionally with the help of known performers, the project uses innovative coaching models to address stereotypes and prejudice that work against globalism. *The technology disappears; only the healing experience of art remains.*