



SPECIAL EVENT
Thursday May 28, 2026
1:30 – 2:00 p.m.
Place T.B.A.


Body and Mantra
performing somatic research





creation & performance: Lucy May Constantini
film & photography: Giulia Tonello

The 4th International *Yoga Darśana Yoga Sādhana* Conference:
Authenticity, Authority, Adaptation
27–29 May 2026
Campus Condorcet
8, cours des Humanités
Paris, France

OMnibus
of MANTRAMS

with thanks to CVN Kalari Gurukulam, East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram



We are delighted to welcome Lucy May Constantini, who will share a demonstration based on her innovative somatic research methods into mantras. Scroll down to learn more about her presentation.

Body and Mantra: Performance of Somatic Research

What is it to research through the body? *Body and Mantra* is a performance-invitation into a process of somatic research which underpins and informs more conventional academic enquiry. Working with elements of mantra from *kaḷarippayar̥*, a martial art from South India, Lucy May Constantini transposes the Malayalam syllabary onto a spatial grid designed by postmodern choreographer Trisha Brown. She harnesses the complications of the meeting of this choreographic structure with the Malayalam script and the mantras it inscribes to ask whether it is possible to embody through movement some of the intricacy of traditional mantra pedagogy. *Body and Mantra* explores notions of hidden knowledge and the somatic experience of sound translated into a moving body.

The crux of Lucy May Constantini's research methodology to date has been that embodied practices produce knowledge, thus meriting study on their own terms, and that studies on these terms enrich and decolonize hegemonic academic culture. Her practice of research began as a dance artist, and she carried the tools honed as mover-researcher into her emergence as researcher-as-scholar. One way this manifested was as consistent, timetabled periods in studio to embody and explore concepts and issues she encountered in the ethnography, philology, analysis and writing of her PhD. As she carries this forward into the ERC MANTRAMS Project, she continues to situate this process of embodied enquiry in the South Indian martial art *kaḷarippayar̥*, whose mantras connect in various ways to its physical practice.

The sound accompanying this performance is curated from Lucy May Constantini's most recent fieldwork in Kerala, and can be heard at the sound installation, *Sounding the Goddess: associated rituals of kaḷarippayar̥*.

A brief opportunity for feedback and questions will follow the performance. How such creative embodied enquiry contributes to an academic research process will also form part of the round table discussion on Expanding Epistemologies in Yoga Studies, session #35, Friday May 29th, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in Auditorium 150 of the Centre des Colloques.

photo credit:

composite of notebook workings and studio research at CVN Kalari Gurukulam by Lucy May Constantini