I owe many thanks to my supervisor Dr Rajinder Bhandari for his unstinting support, endless patience and focused guidance during the years that I worked under him. He has been the perfect guide, generously sharing his experiences and providing me with invaluable information regarding methodology, structure and how to collate material in a manner that was logical, cogent and clear. His sharp and incisive comments of my earlier drafts, taught me about research and writing in the process. I would also like to thank him for the endless cups of tea that he provided during my visits to his Department, buoying my spirit when I felt inadequate to face the task ahead of me. I am also grateful to everyone in the Administration of the Fine Arts Department, and The Department of Indian Theatre for their cooperation.

I wish to thank the Chairperson of The Department of Indian Theatre, Dr Mahendra Kumar, who has been extremely supportive and has helped me with his expertise and knowledge. I would also like to add that he has been extremely understanding in adjusting my teaching time in the Department, to suit the exigencies of late night schedules that invariably run parallel to writing a thesis.

There are several other people in this field that I wish to thank. First and foremost, I wish to thank my teacher Mr. Ebrahim Alkazi, who made me understand the values of this profession. Mr. BV Karanth who collaborated with me on my creative journey as a director and composed music for all the work that I did. His death in 2002 left a permanent void in my professional and personal world.

I would also like to thank the Director of the National School of Drama who helped in providing rare photographs and reading material on a constant basis. The help provided by the staff of the School in photocopying material and making it readily available to beat deadlines is something I will always be grateful for. The Sangeet Natak Akademi, which generously allowed me access to some important material for this thesis.
My family support has been very precious. I must offer my deepest gratitude to my son Angad Chowdhry, who gave me writing advice as I embarked on the endeavour to capture three decades of theatre in this document. I am very grateful to him for the insights that he gave me into cultural theory and its literary traditions. I am equally grateful to my daughter-in-law Tara Chowdhry, who helped me in preparing the bibliography and copiously earmarked information to be used as references. Both of them I thank for their sustained energy and patience in helping me with this thesis and uncomplainingly reading the document many times over, despite their own very hectic professional schedule.

To my son Kabir, who had to be invariably woken up in the middle of the night to help me with a dysfunctional computer. His expertise in computer technology helped me in retrieving lost material and also helped me in understanding formatting. My thanks to him for the endless cups of coffee he made for me during my nocturnal anxieties, as well as helping me to locate misplaced books, files, pens, papers in my chaotic work space. But his most significant contribution has been in arranging the photographs, formatting them, creating the layout and tabulating the relevant material. For this I thank him profusely.

I would like to thank my friend Madhu Bhullar for her thoughtful and precise reading of the manuscript when the deadline for submission was approaching. She patiently sieved out grammatical glitches and typo errors. Her contribution has indeed been valuable.

I would also like to thank research scholar Navreet Sahi for helping in the formatting of the thesis, and for being an incredible support in the crucial stages of printing and submission. She has been supremely patient as I worked my way towards this project.

I must also thank the naqqals for sharing their stories and ideas about their art with me, and for allowing me to enter their backstage world during their performances in the villages of Punjab.
I also wish to convey my deepest gratitude to my husband Pushi Chowdhry, who has spent endless hours trying to sort through my stacks of theatre photographs and negatives in an effort to locate the correct picture to support the written material.

Finally, my sincerest thanks to my father Dr Man Singh Nirankari and all my family members, who surrendered long time ago to the idea of this thesis taking up all my time and indulgently allowing me to skip family dinners and week-end outings. I dedicate this thesis to my family and my theatre company.

Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry.

7th August 2009.