

Rasika Kumar Delivers A Fine Performance

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Dharma Yuddh - Stories from the Great War of the Mahabharata was the theme of the Bharatanatyam recital by Rasika Kumar which was held at the National Heritage Museum in Lexington, MA. on April 24 2009. The event was sponsored by the Meru Foundation.

Rasika Kumar is the daughter and student of Mythili Kumar, who is the founder of the Abhinaya Dance Company. She has also trained under Prof C.V.Chandrasekar and Smt. Kalanidhi Narayanan. An alum of MIT, she served as President of MIT Natya when she was student. Currently she works at Google.

Rasika towering personality, beauty and her fine training cast a spell on the audience from the get go. She opened with Muthuswamy Dikshitar's Panchaashat Peetha in Karnataka Devgandhari. Rasika paid obiscience to Goddess Rajarajeswari.

She then moved into the thematic presentation of the evening opening with the classic Panchali Shabadam - or Panchali's Oath. written by Mahakavi Subramania Bharathi. Rasika did a fine job depicting the game of dice, Draupadi Vastraharan, Krishna Miraculous rescue of Draupadi and the final pledge taken by Bheema, Arjuna and Draupadi.

The next scene was Geetopadesam. Of note in this scene was the Viswaroopa Darshanam. The use of hand gestures and jathis were brilliant and succeeded in the creating the illusion of the all-encompassing Lord. The meeting of Karna with Kunti is perhaps one of the touching moments in the Mahabharata as the son bonds with his biological mother. Veda Vyasa brilliance shines through in this scene and Rasika did great justice to the character of both Kunti and Karna.

The last scene in the thematic presentation was the lament of Gandhari. The scene where the blind Gandhari feels her dead sons limbs was touching. Rasika ended with Lalgudi Jayaraman's Tillana and presented Bhaja Govindam as a Mangalam.

It is always a pleasure to watch second generation Indian American dancers show such dedication to the arts. She is an inspiration for young dancers in New England. Her technique was impeccable.

The presentation of a Tillana dedicated to Lord Muruga was a little out of place and certainly the use of the verses "Iha Samasare Bahu Dustare" from Bhaja Govindam did not give the feeling of auspiciousness for a Mangalam. She perhaps chose it because it had the words "Bhaja Govindam " in there.

Overall it was a wonderful program and we must thank Dr. Vanita Shastri and the Meru Foundation for bringing this dancer to the Boston Area.