

Her Story - A Finely Crafted Presentation

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Srinishi Raghavan and Sahasra Samabmoorti, two graduates from Columbia made a deep impact on the audience through their finely crafted bharatanatyam presentation. The performance was held on April 11, 2009 at Cohen Auditorium, Tufts University, Medford, MA

Titled 'Her Story', it portrays the lives of four women in Indian mythology - Kaikeyi, Devaki, Kannagi, and Andal. Recounting pivotal moments in the lives of these women, the dancers explored how these characters transformed the worlds they lived in through their ability to love unconditionally. History has judged these protagonists -- condemning, glorifying, questioning, and revering these women for their actions; however, in 'Her Story', the dancers reinterpret these conventional perceptions and portray these epic personalities as women willing to challenge the world for those they love.

The presentation opened with a invocation in the Ragam Sriranjani followed by a Pushpanjali in the Ragam Hamsadhvani. This was followed by a Adi Sankaracharya composition where the dancers portray Goddess Devi and Lord Shiva interchangeably showcasing the various rasas.

In the second act Srinidhi and Sahasra portray the lives of four women presenting a few unconventional views on each of the characters. Kaikeyi was depicted as a heroine who was ready to take on the world for the sake of her birth son.

The story of Andal, the famous Vaishnavite saint was presented as one who defied the world and never swerved from her belief that the Lord Rangatha was her only love and would never let anyone convince her that such relationships are possible only in dreams.

Devaki, Krishna's mother was presented as a character whose life story reflects the struggle and emotional ramifications of a mother who has to part with her child at

birth.

This portion ended with the presentation of the character of Kannagi. Again the dancers redefined Kannagi's Karpu (Chastity) as an intense love for her husband which prompts her to burn the city of Madurai as a revenge for his wrongful death.

The final portion of the dance had the two javalis, Netrandi Nerathile in Ragam Husseni and Smara Sundaraanguni in Ragam Paras.

The presentations showcased their excellent Abhinaya and Nritya ability. The duet was done very tastefully with an interesting arrangement of positions on stage, creative movements and also the assignment of characters. Lighting was used effectively to create many wonderful effects. The interesting movement to show the burning of Madurai along with the perfect lighting was a memorable moment in the show.

It gave one great pleasure to see second generation Indian Americans take this art form and execute it so perfectly. Sahasra Sambamoorthi learned Bharatanatyam under Kalaimamani Smt. Ramya Ramnarayan and after her graduation from Columbia has decided to make dance her full time career.

Srinidhi Raghavan a student of Usha Raghavan, and Malathy Thothadri is currently employed at Goldman Sachs and is starting her MBA at Wharton in the fall.

Their commitment to the art was total. Their fine training and hard work was visible. It was nice to see them having put an effort to present a new perspective on ancient tales. Their perspective reflected their western upbringing. While one can debate on whether their presentations rang true to the original tales that were placed in cultural and temporal context far removed from Srinidhi and Sahasra's own upbringing one cannot debate the talent of these young women and the passion they have for dance.

Lokvani wishes them well and suggests that we keep an eye out for future Navatman productions.

For more information
checkout <http://navatman.org>



Photography : Ganesh Davuluri

