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Review

Precise, neat and professional

- Sushma Mohan

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Pics: Elko Weaver

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Rangoli Dance Company premiered their two productions 'Ganesha' and 'The Woodcutter and the River Goddess' both conceived and choreographed by Malathi Iyengar on July 14, 2013 at the Barnsdall Gallery Theatre in Hollywood, CA. Along with invited artistes Renjith Babu and Parshwanath Upadhye from India, the Rangoli team of dancers, musicians and technicians has come out with yet another successful production.

The first production Ganesha was the popular story of the birth of Ganesha. It began with the captivating "Bho Sambho" by Lakshmi, Parshwanath and Renjith and set the standard to what one could expect of a classy Rangoli production. Well enacted by Renjith as Ganesha and Parshwanath as Shiva, the production had simple but bright costumes and neat stage sets. Young Rangoli dancers Akshaya (as Parvathi), Sanam, Abhijnya and Nikita (Parvathi's friends) were promising and performed comfortably on stage. The hallmarks of Rangoli like the introduction of Ganesha, headless Ganesha getting his elephant head, a little boy (Dhruv Sumathi) restating the moral of the story that "Honesty is the best policy" by not taking a dollar bill that doesn't belong to him are worth a mention. The duet of Renjith and Parshwanath as Shiva and Ganesha had some outstanding moments of choreography. It did seem a little disorienting as to why the lyrics suddenly changed languages from Kannada to Telugu though.





The second production 'Woodcutter and the River Goddess' began with the witty muppets telling the story of an honest woodcutter who loses his axe in the river and gets it back from the goddess along with two other axes (of gold and silver) as a reward for his honesty. His friend (the bad woodcutter) tries to do the same trick with the goddess and instead loses his sole axe.

The dance drama opened with a fantastic village scene and it seemed as if one were looking at an animation movie, such was the effect. The young dancers as villagers going on with their daily chores and Guru Malathi herself in a small role on stage added to the rustic beauty. The dance movements were lucid and effective. Lakshmi as the River Goddess looked radiant with her elegant movements. Renjith as the woodcutter did complete justice to his role and so did Parshwanath. Though the pace slowed in the middle of the dance drama the climax tillana added the finishing touch.

Music by Rajkumar Bharathi was refreshing and stage sets by Suresh Iyengar was effective. Kudos to Malathi Iyengar for using such a small stage to effectively present her ideas. All in all, it was precise, neat and professional - what one could expect of a Rangoli production. The program was supported in part by the Los Angeles county board of supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

Sushma Mohan is a Bharatanatyam dancer and Carnatic vocalist. She resides in Los Angeles and imparts dance and music training to a handful of dance enthusiasts.

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