



ARTS MELBOURNE STAGE

Bharatanatyam meets ballet



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Art of Vinyasa marks World Dance Day

From performers who are new to the stage, to the ones who have practiced dance for years, both talent and skill was abundant at the recently held Dance Mela 2016.

Bharatanatyam met ballet in a World Dance Day celebration as Art of Vinyasa hosted a multi-genre dance event at the Renaissance Theatre in Kew East.



The global dance fiesta brought together established and aspiring dancers from different backgrounds and training, giving them an opportunity to unite through their love of dance.

Art of Vinyasa Yoga and Bharatanatyam Centre were launched eight years ago, as part of Vasundhara Performing Arts Centre, to impart Bharatanatyam classical dance and Ashtanga yoga education in Melbourne.

According to director Meghala Hirasave, the vision of the Centre is to increase cultural awareness

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among the new generation and impart positive traits to aid physical and personal development.

Students from the Centre presented some beautifully choreographed and well-executed performances on the night. The audience took delight in the succession of stories portrayed through dance.

Sparsha Shenoy, a gifted disciple of Dr. Vasundhara Doraswamy, presented items such as 'Tillana' from the Bharatanatyam repertoire. Long-limbed and graceful, Sparsha was adept at both technique and expressions.



Recognisable music and fluid movement combined to create a charming spectacle as the sylph-like ballerinas from BDC Dance Studios took to the stage. The next few minutes were a flurry of wide leaps, jumps and formations as the dancers embodied joy through delicate movements of their limbs.

"In order to foster a broader dance community it's good to take the pulse of dances outside of our own culture and locality," said one member of the audience, Sumi Rao. "I found the ballet performances refreshingly different to watch, and the mix of different dance styles kept me interested throughout."

The diversity of genre continued to include Kathak as the next offering. Students from Manmohini Indian Dance School in Melbourne presented some exciting footwork, gestures, rhythm and grace all in tandem. The choreography gave the dancers scope for improvisation whilst remaining within the artistic framework of their classical dance.

As chief guest Tim Smith, Member for Kew, remarked, "Dance and culture is important and integral to the community's identity and brings colour, movement and vibrancy into the great city of Melbourne, which is home to the largest Indian community in the country."



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According to Mr Smith, Indians make wonderful Australians because they have a common adherence to principles of freedom, justice, decency, tolerance and democracy. "As a result of this, Australia and India are forging new partnerships and relationships to drive forward these basic common values," he said.

Following a brief break, the audience was treated to a mesmerising depiction of *Kshaatra Draupadi*, the tale of the warrior princess by Dr Vasundhara Doraswamy from India. Vasundhara performs and teaches the Pandanallur style of Bharatanatyam that emphasises linear geometry in *adavu* technique and is known for its intensity and understatement in *abhinaya*.

True to her pure dance form, she focussed on the subject rather than the glitter. Without any overt drama, she portrayed the role of Draupadi and other characters in her solo production. Dynamic and beautiful on stage in equal measures, Vasundhara captured the majesty of the warrior princess steering the audience through Draupadi's mythical journey.

The long drawn out evening was efficiently pieced together by emcees Payash Wijesinghe and Sathish Rajan. Towards the end, there were restless children and impatient parents, nevertheless, the positive energy on stage prevailed and left the audience cheering and clapping with enthusiasm.

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