

Visually challenged dancers present a visual feast

I can generally classify performing arts programming into three categories: mundane, good and extraordinary. After witnessing the dancing dexterity and synchronicity of five visually challenged artistes of Bangalore's Articulate Troupe at a cultural programme at the Foothill College in California's Los Altos Hills, I think I need another category to convey my reaction of awe and delight.

The Roshni-Natyotsav, for which I fall short of words, was organised Sep 15 by the Sankara Eye Foundation as part of its fund-raising initiatives for its various eye hospitals in India. The show by the blind artistes appropriately blended with the cause of vision 20/20 by the year 2020 set by the foundation.

Mysore Nagaraj, the troupe director, beautifully choreographed and led his troupe of 12 dancers in the two-part programme highlighting multiple dance forms of India.

He blended the life stories of the five visually challenged artistes within the dances and articulated their life struggles due to the handicap to their eventual development as self-sufficient individuals and accomplished dancers.

'The performing art forms have not only helped them direct their energies but have also helped them in seeking purpose and leading a life of self-sufficiency and respect,' Nagaraj opined.

The first part of the programme commenced with Ganesh stuti and Shiva stuti (invocation to Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva) by the five artistes. They mesmerised the audience with their spellbinding and beautifully synchronized performance.

The second part of the show was titled Panchavaktram (Five faces of Lord Shiva) based on the belief that to create the universe Lord Shiva in association with his female power Shakti created the five elements - earth, water, fire, air and space. He then lets the sound from his drums fuse these elements to form the universe.

Classical dance forms, including Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, and the theatre dance style Yakshagana, Perini and the art of Bahuroopiyas were blended to present the five different forms of Shiva in his myriad moods and energies. The portrayal of the Shiva-Shakti manifestations in a singular form by Nagaraj himself was another high of the show.

The holistic impact of the recital was enchanting and entertaining and, like any united effort, it was the dancing adroitness and synchronicity of the entire group including the recorded melodies that produced the deserved standing ovation from the audience.

Yet, above all, the endeavours of the visually challenged were the highlight of the show and had to be seen to be believed. The artistes truly danced the wise words - a human mind can overcome any and every handicap with determination and hard work.

In between the two portions of the show, Sankara Eye Foundation president Murali Krishnamurthi applauded the performance and spoke about the cause of the non-profit organisation in eradication of curable blindness in India.

He said that the Sankara Eye Hospital in [Bangalore](#) would be inaugurated Dec 9 and the second phase of the facility in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, would be completed by the year-end. Hospitals in Anand and Shimoga would be set up by mid-2008.

(Shalini Narang can be contacted at snarang@yahoo.com)

Shalini Kathuria Narang (© IANS / India eNews)