

Manaobi MM's Play: Nupigee Thamoï (Shumang Leela)

Playwright: Manaobi MM

Director: Yumnam Rajendra

Group: Peace Maker Artistes' Association, Manipur

Language: Manipuri

Duration: 1 hr 30 mins

The Form

Shumang Leela, literally translated as Courtyard Theatre has been the mainstay of the Meiteis, the Tibeto-Burman people who have inhabited the Imphal valley since time immemorial. Originally a form of nautanki, Shumang Leela metamorphosed into full-fledged theatre over the years. A unique feature of this art form is that the audience surrounds the stage from all sides. Male artistes not only enact the roles of female characters to perfection, but also sing just like women do. The content of the leela can be comedy, folk-lore, legends or social commentaries.

The Performance

Prince Naothingkhong was the third son of emperor Urakonthouba of Manipur (568-663 AD). A stubborn young man, he ran away to the hills where he found Petanga, a beautiful girl who was the only child of Shelloi village chief. Naothingkhong married Petanga secretly and promised her that she would be the queen of Manipur when he sat on the throne. The villagers revolted and wished to kill Naothingkhong because his father was a bitter enemy of the clan. So he escaped from the house of Petanga and sought asylum under the patronage of Khuman King. Petanga was punished by her own people and had to escape. Naothingkhong ascended the Khuman throne and married the Khuman princess. No sooner did Petanga get the news, she invoked the goddess Yumjao Lairembi and vanished with her last words of lament, "man has no power to realise true love".

Director's Note

The story of the play is based on legendary events of Manipur that possibly took place during 665-785 AD. The actors have worked hard to represent the age-old society and to convey the emotions of the characters during a month-long Manipuri Shumang Leela workshop. This experimental production is still in its initial stage, rather incomplete and unfinished I would say, and has a long way to go.

The Director

Yumnam Rajendra is a renowned theatre director, playwright and actor. He was trained in Manipuri theatre under the noted director Heisnam Kanhailal from 1973 to 1982. He worked as a director of Panthoibi Natya Mandir, Imphal and participated in many national and international festivals of India and abroad. He was awarded the Vayoshrestha Samman Award in 2017, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2007, award for sculpture in tribal wood carving art of Manipur and Junior and Senior fellowships by the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. At present he is a visiting guru of the Department of Theatre, Manipur University of Culture.

The Playwright

Manaobi M.M. is a renowned writer of radio-plays, Shumang Leela, Manipuri film-screenplays and lyrics. He has written more than 50 plays and published above 20 plays. He is presently working as the President of Cine Writers and Playwrights Forum of Manipur.

The Group

Peace Maker Artistes' Association, Manipur was established on 5th of August 2002 in Imphal. This association is an autonomous body and one of the leading Shumang Leela groups of Manipur. It has participated in various state, national and international festivals like 20th Bharat Rang Mahotsav 2019, 2nd Delhi International Art Festival 2008 at FICCI Auditorium organized by NSD, 8TH Delhi International Art Festival 2014 supported by Sangeet Natak Akademi at Meghdoot Theatre Complex

etc. The group has produced more than 40 plays.

Cast and Credits

Naothingkhong	Yumnam
Arunkumar Singh	
Petanga	
Yumnam Milan	
Keirunghangbi	Senjam
Deepson	
Leima Naman Chaobi	Bishesh
Huirem	
Khuman Ningthou	Laishram
Ibotombi Singh	
Amukangoiba	
Sorokhaibamibohanbi Singh	
Luwang Ningthou, Pakchao Singh	Athokpam Santosh
Moirang Ningthou	Naorem
Tamphasana Meetei	
Goddess	
Maibam Roshan	
Soldier	
Gurumayum Rajesh Sharma	
Soldier	
Thoudam Premjit Singh	
Soldier	
Thoudam Premananda Singh	
Deity	
Leiphrakpam Survchand	
Deity	
Sougrakpam Chinglennganba	
Musician / Female-Vocal	Linkmabam
Biky	
Musician / Singer	
Naorem Jeetenkumar Meetei	
Musician / Actor	

Seramromajit
Musician / Actor
Laimujam Binoy Singh
Music Director
Moirangthem Robert Meetei

Playwright
Manaobi M M
Director
Yumnam Rajendra

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