Kavita Srinivasan's Play: Kumari and the Beast

Playwright & Director: Kavita Srinivasan
Group: Sushila Arts Academy, Nepal
Language: English
Duration: 1hr 10mins

The Play
Satya Yuga (era of truth) was an era when gods, demons and humans cohabited the earth. Set in this time is the story of goddess Kumari who came to rule the kingdom of Kathmandu. The legend describes a young goddess Kumari, born to the gods Svet-Kali and Svet-Bhairav in the neighbourhood of Nardevi in ancient Kathmandu. To their alarm, she falls in love with an asura (demon), Chanda. Their tumultuous love story ends tragically, as Kumari ultimately sacrifices her love to in order to fulfil her duty. Her parents in return, make her the ruler of Kathmandu.
Kumari and the Beast is an interpretation of the story told by Maheswor Juju Rajopadhyay in his book of short stories Nepali Adhyaatma Jagat ko Itihas (History of Nepal's Spiritual World). The story is presented through a fusion of Nepal's classical Charya dance and contemporary dance-movement, with live music and vintage photography.

Director's Note
Three things attracted me to this story: First, the story provides a fascinating role model of how a female child can hold one of the highest positions of social and political power, and can remain unmarried of her own will. In a world where power has been known for eons to be held by the senior-most male, the relevance of such a figure is immense.
Second, the story's central theme of 'forbidden love' remains as relevant today as it was ages ago. Society's condemnation of certain kinds of love based on caste, creed, gender, race

etc. continues to trample on the fundamental right to choose. Last, the sacrifice of the beast is symbolic of the price that society extracts from each of us.

The Director & Playwright

Kavita Srinivasan has focused on stories of culturally iconic figures like Gautama Buddha and Goddess Kumari, reinterpreting and telling their stories in a way that fuses the classic and the contemporary, focusing on the human element, through movement, dance, music, theatre and visual art. She also created Nepal's first online sitcom P.S. Zindagi (Post Seismic Zindagi) which won local and international recognition. Kavita has done two Masters – in Architecture, and in City Planning – from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, USA).

The Group

Sushila Arts Academy (SAA) is a theatre dance music and arts institution in Kathmandu, Nepal founded in 2012 with the aim to promote the Arts in Nepal. Since its establishment, it has been providing hundreds of scholarship seats to talented but financially limited or underprivileged Nepali students. The Academy has delivered numerous musical and theatre-dance productions, art exhibitions, shows and various art programs, all aimed at promotion of the arts in Nepal, as well as giving a platform to young, talented Nepali artists to flourish further.

Cast & Credits

Kumari Kripa Bajracharya

Chanda Kiran Shrestha

Svet-Bhairav Sudan Munikar

Svet-Kali

Vijaya Karki

Representation of Kumari's feelings Arpana Lama, Glory Thapa, Sunita Darnal

Representation of Chanda’s feelings Srijan Bhattarai, Jerox Chaudhari, Nikesh Raj Chaudhary

Charya Dance Choreographer Sudan Munikar, Kripa Bajracharya

Musicians

Chandra Man Shrestha (Drums, Percussion and effects), Prabesh Maharjan (Percussion and effects), Saroj Shahi (Guitar and effects), Rupesh Shakya (Flute, horn and effects)

Original Music and Sound Effects Dimitris Giannopoulos

Recorded Music Various Sources

Narration

Kavita Srinivasan

Costume Designer Sammriddhi Mittal, Samita Kapali

Beast Make-up Sunita Darnal, materials from Aesthete Studio

Lights

Dinesh Tuladhar

Sound

Tuphan Thapa

Smoke/Projection Kanchan Pandey

Black and White Photographs Kiran Chitrakar (Poster), Dominic Sansoni, GTZ, A. Proksh, AFP, Ian Trower and others

Publicity Stills

Avishesh Raj Maskey, Shilu Jain

Behind the Scenes Photographs Suman Nagarkoti

Production Stills Bijay Tamrakar

Truss / Thermacol / Set Binod Pokharel (Stage Mind)

Producer

Sushila Arts Academy
Assistant Director/ Stage Manager Vijaya Karki

Special Thanks – Jagannath Dhaugoda (Djimbe), Brikchya Band (Khen, Dhimey, Taa, Ghungro), Shree Guru Nitya Baja Khala (Dhime, Taa, Bapucha, Bhusya), Vajra Kala Kunja (Charya music and costume support), Swarnim Maharjan (Flute Melody concept tips), Pawan R. Joshi (Projections)

Story
Maheshwor Juju Rajopadhyay
Playwright & Director Kavita Srinivasan

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