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## Shakuntala: Indian Dance School to bring the epic love story to life

By BTDISHA Roy

*"Shakuntala" was a legendary love story of the exquisitely beautiful Shakuntala and the mighty king Dushyanta written by Kalidasa, sometime in 5th century.*

**P**fter staging five most successful Indian Ballet programs in the past such as Queen of Jhansi (2005), Fire - the fiery tale (2007) and East Meets West (2008) among others, Indian Dance School is now all set to bring their latest creation, "Shakuntala" on Friday, March 19, 2010 at 7.30 p.m. at Prairie Center for the Arts, 201 Schaumburg Court, Schaumburg, IL 60193. The dance drama will feature more than 100 dancers and presented in combination of Indian Classical Dance Kathak, Bhararnatyam, Bollywood and Jazz styles.

"Shakuntala" was a legendary love story of



TOP: Shakuntala's story of clandestine love, rejection, and eventual triumph is a masterpiece of world theatre. RIGHT: More than 100 dancers bring one of the most passionate stories from Mahabharata to life

happened at Nagpur, India. That is where I met my guru Mr. Madan Pande. He is follower of Jaipur Charana of Kathak and taught me basic techniques of Kathak and folk dancing. After learning Kathak for about 10 years I passed my "Visharad" from Candharva Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai in 1988. This is equivalent to a graduate degree. Along with dance I used to perform in a theatre and staged various dance dramas. I choreographed my first dance when I was 15 for the children's theatre. Since then I never looked back." But Cauri soon realized that to become successful dancer, choreographer and director she needed basic knowledge of other instruments and music. So she learned tabla, harmonium and singing as well.

After migrating to the United States in 1998, Cauri Jog has been running a dance school since 1999 in Chicago area and her group has performed on numerous occasions at various social, political and sports events.





Schaumburg, IL 60193. The dance drama will feature more than 100 dancers and presented in combination of Indian Classical Dance Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Bollywood and Jazz styles.

"Shakuntala" was a legendary love story of the exquisitely beautiful Shakuntala and the mighty King Dushyanta written by Kalidasa sometime in 5th century. Shakuntala, the daughter of celestial apsara Menaka and sage Vishwamitra was abandoned by her parents right after she was born. The baby is found by sage Kanva who gives her refuge in his ashram and raises her like his own daughter. Shakuntala grows up to be a breath-taking beauty. In a chance encounter she meets the love of her life, King Dushyanta and they get married with Mother Nature as the witness.

King Dushyanta returns to the capital with a promise to send his envoy to escort her up to him and gifts her signet ring as a token of remembrance. One day when sage Durvasa stops at Shakuntala's hut and calls for hospitality, Shakuntala fails to hear his call as she is lost in her thoughts about King Dushyanta. The infuriated sage curses her saying: "He whose thoughts have engrossed you would not remember you anymore." On the plea of her playmates, the angry sage relents but adds a condition to his statement saying: "He can only recall you upon producing some significant souvenir."

Days pass by, but no one from the palace comes to take Shakuntala to her beloved husband. Sage Kanva sends her to the royal court to meet the king, as she is pregnant

with Dushyanta's heir. On her way to the court, Shakuntala's signet ring accidentally drops into a river and a big fish swallows it. When Shakuntala presents herself at the court, Dushyanta fails to acknowledge her as his wife, as he is under the spell of the curse. A heart-broken Shakuntala pleads before him to remember her. But he fails to remember her even after repeated pleas and asks for some proof. The loss of the signet ring earlier means that Shakuntala has no proof at all of her meeting and marriage with Dushyanta. Disappointed, she leaves the court and goes to a far away land. There, she gives birth to a son and starts her life as a hermit.

In the mean time, a fisherman has accidentally caught the fish that had swallowed the signet ring. On cutting the fish, he gets the ring and takes it for selling to a jeweler who recognizes the royal signet ring and produces it before the king. On seeing it, Dushyanta comes out of the spell and remembers all about Shakuntala. Overcome with guilt for his failure to recognize his wife, Dushyanta makes a Herculean but unsuccessful effort to find her. While on a hunting expedition some years later, he comes across this little kid in the jungle, who is fearlessly playing with lion cubs and other animals. Dushyanta suddenly feels a fatherly

feeling towards the child; on searching for the child's parents he realizes that it is his and Shakuntala's son, later known as King Bharat. Shakuntala also forgives him and they return to the palace.



feeling towards the child; on searching for the child's parents he realizes that it is his and Shakuntala's son, later known as King Bharat. Shakuntala also forgives him and they return to the palace.

"Shakuntala" is one of the most passionate love stories ever written and we are so excited to bring this story to life", told Gauri Jog, a dancer, choreographer and teacher of Indian Dance School. "Dance is my passion. I was so determined to learn dance I literally dragged my dad to an Indian Classical dance school when I was seven. The year was 1977 and it

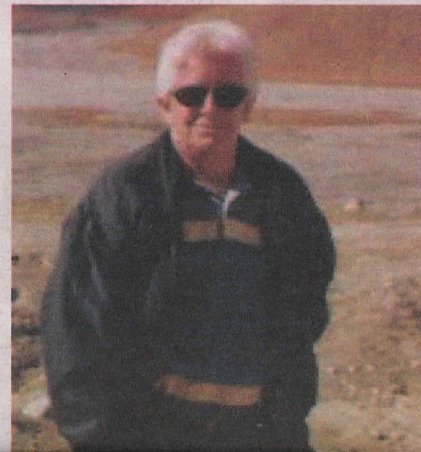
Dedicated to promoting Indian Classical Dance, she is very instrumental in performing at fund-raising activities by various charitable organizations in North America. Indian Dance School has performed at more than 100 shows since its inception. Her shows are characterized by professionalism, creative content, storyline and fusion with numerous other styles such as Jazz, Ballet, Mexican, Flamenco and Bharatnatyam. Last year her dance at Olympics rally was admired by various media all over North America.

## Seeing people and places in India through Bill Helmuth's eyes

*"Bill had a unique access to an insider's perspective of World Cultures giving you Lasting Impressions of the most memorable Countries on Earth."*

BY BIDISHA ROY

World Traveler Bill Helmuth is back again with another riveting adventure. This time Bill presents an eyewitness account of modern-day India. The event



with its magnificent mosques and forts. He also visited great cities including Calcutta, New Delhi, and Mumbai, whose history incorporates the British Empire.

A Chicago native, Helmuth began his journeys after earning his bachelor's and master's degrees in music from Northwestern University. But instead of making a career as an opera singer, as he thought he might, he took a job with World Book Encyclopedia and eventually became the company's international sales manager. Later he became the director of sales for Time-Life books (Asia). During that time, Bill has traveled to over 100 countries, flown 4,000,000 miles, and lived on 4 continents. Bill's whole presentation is based on his real life

around the world on both sides of the equator to explore the monumental architectural treasures, intimate shrines, and religious rites and festivals that represent the heritages of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism.

Bill is a world traveler and story teller. Bill gives Travel Presentations to libraries, civic groups, senior groups, and special cultural program for school age children. Bill's Around the World Series is a favorite for local Chicago and Libraries. In just 60 minutes, he manages to take his audience through over 25 Countries and 6 Continents.

Bill also gives presentations on individual Countries he has visited. Helmuth has taken tens of thousands of photos, many of which