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Journey of Indian dance by Gauri Jog

Vandana Choudhury Mar 29, 2012, 11:48AM IST

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Gauri Jog, renowned Indian dancer and teacher staged their annual show "Journey of Indian Dance (Kathak Yatra) at Prairie Center for the Arts at Schaumburg, IL.

The show was another example of professionalism and creativity of Gauri Jog who has been running her not for profit dance school, Indian Dance School in Chicago, since for the past

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Indian Dance School in Chicago area for the past 12 years.

(Journey of Indian Dance (Kathak Yatra) by Gauri Jog)

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The concept of this program was to depict the transformation of this beautiful dance form from its ancient form of art depicting Indian mythology and scriptures to its present state of dance with contemporary themes. Audience got the opportunity to see Kathak dance in its pure classical form to Kathak as used in **Bollywood** films today. Every dance presented in this program depicted distinct aspects of Kathak in varying proportions like Amad is a dramatic entry of the dancer on the stage, Thaata (a slow and graceful section), Todas, Tukra and Paran (in which dancer continuously improvises on given composition), Parhant (rhythmic light steps) and Tatkar which is strong footwork. In general dancers will have to build good skills in Nritya which is pure dance and Natya which is miming or acting, said Kaitlyn Millner, who attended the program.

The program started with full house with traditional Ganesh Vandana, a prayer to Lord Ganesha to seek his blessings. Then there were series of dances to depict the stories from great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. In the first dance they showed naughty pranks Lord Krishna as a child & a teaser of Gopis in Vrindavan. In the second dance they showed the story of Dashavatar (ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu). In yet another dance the story of Lord Rama as a young boy was depicted using popular song "Thumak Chalat". The audience gave a big applause for small girls dancing Thumak Chalat with extra ordinary energy. Indian dance school currently has students learning from as early

as four years old.

In yet another classical series, four dances were presented using Thumri, Sargam, Tarana and Chatrang. Chatrang which represented four aspects of Kathak namely Paran, Expression, Sargam and Palte was performed by senior students of Indian Dance School with grace and energy.

Gauri Jog lived up to her expectation of presenting something new in her every new Kathak ballet. This time they presented their new dance Kathak using basketball. This was widely appreciated by the audience. In the past students of Indian Dance School have done fusion with many dance styles including Bharatnatyam, Odissi, Flamenco and American Ballet. Gauri Jog has evolved a unique style to combine classical, Bollywood, folk and yoga to satisfy all those looking to learn multiple dance styles and benefit from them. I always challenge myself and my students to do something different and that is how such programs are born, said Gauri.

The centerpiece of the program was Trivat dance performed by Gauri Jog and Isha Jog invoked big applause which showed absolute coordination between the dancers while performing on Bols, Sargam and Kavit. There are many mother daughter combinations learning dance together at Indian Dance School and it is perhaps best time spent with my daughter to build ever lasting relationship, one woman said. The program also featured "Mujra" to represent how Kathak was transformed during Mughal empire in India as a form of entertainment. The program ended with a Gypsy dance performed by young and aspiring students of Gauri jog. This dance composition was inspired by Rajasthani folk music.

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This program certainly entertained and educated many who were attending Indian Dance program for the first time. It also showed creative potential of Gauri Jog who has been

practicing Kathak for the past 35 years. She emphasized on the fact that many parents expect their kids to go and perform on stage after enrolling in dance school for few months. This is not correct. Dance is **journey** and you can only become good dancer by following meditation, hard work and passion, she said. I am so happy to see many of our students who follow this art form with passion and spend time learning new techniques instead of spending time on Facebook and computers, she said.

Gauri Jog also teaches Kathak online to large number of students even from India. Her website <http://www.gaurijog.com> has invaluable information about this dance style and includes all the research she has done for the last 30 years. She has produced finest ballets such as Shakuntala, Fire - the Fiery Take, East Meets West and Jhansi Ki Rani, Olympics, Ramayana to name few. They have so far performed more than 2000 dances in **North America** and have certainly built a reputation for professionalism, creativity and hard work. This is perhaps the reason her shows are sold out as soon as they are announced.

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