



tapati chowdurie

STRIKING A BALANCE

TRADITIONALLY *Ardhanarishwar* in dance is depicted by a solo dancer, portraying both the roles of a female and a male. Natanova's depiction of *Ardhanarishwar*, or the dualities of the world and the existence of extreme opposites to create harmony, was creatively executed. This concept was performed through Mohini Attam, Kathakali and Kalaripayattu as well as improvised movements. The production aimed to show the dynamics between the energies of Shiva and Shakti.

It also attempted to explore the *Purusba-Prakriti* philosophy of Tagore to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary.

The performance commenced by invoking the blessings of Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, followed by establishment and paying obeisance to the *Ashtadikpalakas* or protectors of the stage in the eight corners. Through the exploration of *Tandava* and *Lasya* movements the nature of Shiva and Shakti was depicted through the famous *Ardhanarishwar Stotram* of Adi Shankaracharya, in both traditional as well as contemporary styles with sophistication.

The piece *Logic and Intuition* as conceived by the wise-left brain is Shiva and right brain is Shakti was the most difficult concept to show through dance. *Logic* is based on structure with set forms and rhythmic cycles but it is the

intuitive feelings and expressions that give birth to *Rasa* or aesthetic beauty. It was shown how dance amalgamates and balances these two to form a complete balance.

In Kalaripayattu, the ancient martial art form of Kerala, the sword represents Shakti and the shield represents Shiva. This very challenging form to be performed on stage was executed by Kajal Hazra and his students.

Dance is a harmony of moments of stillness and control along with flow and movement. The Static, representing Shiva and the Dynamic representing Shakti was through improvised movements. In the Rig Veda the earth and the sky was considered as the *Prakriti* and *Purusba*, respectively. This concept of the Veda was explored through poems and songs of Rabindranath Tagore.

The principle of equilibrium and balance or *Ardhanarishwar* was the grand finale. Poulomi Bose who scripted this creative piece was also the narrator. Priyadarshini Ghosh and Mohana Iyer jointly choreographed *Ardhanarishwar*, with the help of Kajal Hazra the Kalaripayattu artiste. Reema Menon, Paulomi Mukherjee, Chandreyee Sengupta, Pinky Mondal, Rinky Mondal, Ranu Saha, and Heena Mondal were the supporting dancers. The group of dancers bedecked and bejeweled in Mohiniattam costume was picturesque. K Gayatri and Siddharth Mangat gave vocal support while Kalamandalam Gopakumar played the *Eddakkya* and *Chenda*.

Kalamandalam Fiyal and his disciple, Akash-Mullick, were on the *Mizhavu*, typical of Kerala. Violin was by AS Vishal. Subrata Mukherjee was on the key board.

After a long time a good lot of Mohiniattam dancers were seen on stage with their aesthetic presentation.