

GITANJALI by The Necessary Stage

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“Gitanjali: A Moving and Poetic Meditation“

Reviewer: Isaac Tan

Performance: 27 September 2014, 3pm

Early on in the show, we are told that Tagore composed *Gitanjali* at a difficult time of his life and these offerings of songs are thus imbued with a sense of the spiritual and the meditative. This production, in many ways, is a beautiful parallel.

The storyline seems simple: Priya (Raka Maitra) leaves her elderly dance teacher, Savitri (Padma Sagaram), to forge a new style. Shankara (Ebi Shankara), Savitri's son, is made to marry Nandini (Sharda Harrison) who has a questionable past. While the couple falls in love, they have problems conceiving a child.

Yet, the ostensible plot of intergenerational conflicts provokes subtle questions about the function of art, Indian politics, loyalty, and tensions between tradition and modernity.

Complementing these disparate themes are the Tagore's poems, Olé Khamchania's excellent choreography, Bani Haykal's fusion soundtrack, Namita Mehta's soothing Hindustani vocals, and Brian Gothong Tan's surreal multimedia design.

Hareesh Sharma certainly paid homage to Tagore by treading lightly with his script. His text sets the stage by providing just enough background and themes which allowed the fullness of Tagore's poems to bring the emotional punch to the show. Recognising the show's fragmented nature, he also left tender moments and quick jibes for the audience to relish.

Compliments must be paid to all the actors who had an undeniable rapport on stage which really fleshed out the love-hate familial relationships. While Sagaram as Savitri started off on an unsure footing, she quickly grew into her role which made this reviewer acquire a slight disdain and sympathy for the character at the same time.

In its 27th year, *Gitanjali* is The Necessary Stage's meditation on their own practice as they explore what different art forms can bring to theatre. It is a wholesome production and I was taken on several journeys at once—from contemplating the cosmos to the common difficulties that everyone faces. While it veers into being over-ambitious, it definitely points the way forward.

“What comes with perfection?” The daring to try.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

GITANJALI by The Necessary Stage

26, 27 September 2014, 8pm

27, 28 September 2014, 3pm

School Of The Arts Drama Theatre

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Isaac Tan is a current contributor to The Kent Ridge Common, an NUS publication, and an aspiring poet whose poems have appeared in Symbal, Eunoia Review, Eastlit, and Malaise Journal.