

Ties That Bind

Samarpana 2015 – The Asian Festival of Classical Dance is an international arts platform where sensibilities, senses and the sublime come together

This is a very special year for Singapore. As the modern city-state celebrates 50 years of nationhood, a simultaneous toast, albeit on a quieter scale, is raised to 50 years of Singapore- India ties.

While official events abound, one entity has gone a step further and incorporated their tribute into the arts. Upasana - A Homage is a production commissioned by Samarpana - the Asian Festival of Classical Dance that brings together artistes from Singapore and India to perform in both countries.

Upasana premieres in the Indian chapter of Samarpana festival in Bangalore, India,



in June 2015, and is showcased in the Singapore festival on August 23, 2015 at the Esplanade.

With the inimitable Lalitha Vaidyanathan at its helm, Singapore based troupe LalitAnjali is made up of 13 talented musicians who are working hard to ensure that this concert presents Singapore at its musical best. And with talented Bharatanatyam dancer duo, Shijith Nambiar and Parvathy Menon from India making up the other half of the collaborative effort, Upasana is sure to be a visual and aural treat.

A stickler for perfection, troupe director and conductor, Vaidyanathan is especially thrilled that the troupe is performing in Bangalore under the aegis of the Ananya Samarpana festival in June 2015. "We've performed in Madras before as an orchestra and choir, but this is the first time we are in a collaboration with Indian dancers and in a new Indian city. As representatives of Singapore, we are conscious of the honour. That we are paired with Shijith and Parvathy whose reputation precedes them is a double honour, and we have created a repertoire of very high standards just for this production."

Shijith Nambiar and his partner on stage and in real life, Parvathy Menon, are alumni of the Kalakshetra school in Madras, renowned world-wide for the quality of the Bharatanatyam dancers they create. Independent performing artistes now, Shijith and Parvathy instil in their performances a soulful passion, a spiritual quest that translates into mesmerising brilliance on stage.

Bringing Indian artistes into Singapore to perform is fairly conventional- but presenting Singapore artistes in India is a novelty. And this laudable effort has the support of the Singapore International Foundation and the National Arts Council of Singapore, as well as of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

And to encourage collaborative efforts so both sets of artistes push their own boundaries, finding a common ground yet retaining their individuality, is truly about building bridges that transcend diplomacy and trade and commerce and go straight to the hearts of people.

This is not the first time they've commissioned a cross-border collaboration, say the organisers of Samarpana- the Asian Festival of Classical Dance. "This is the first time however that our performers are headliners in their own country and a collaboration for artistes of such calibre is both straightforward and a stretch. We can't wait!"

And neither can the team at India Se!

Upasana – A Homage will be performed at Singapore on Sunday Aug 23 at 8pm at the Esplanade Theatre Studio. Tickets (\$30) are available from SISTIC. For more information, log on to www.samarpanafestival.net. is



Lalitha Vaidyanathan