

GANDHARI - A Solo Performance By Aishverya Nidhi



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On 29 July 2005, NIDA Theatre in the heart of Sydney sprung into life with a high-profile solo performance play, *Gandhari* presented by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Australia. The much appreciated solo performance was by Sydney-based actor Ms Aishverya Nidhi and directed by one of Delhi's most popular and controversial theatre directors Mr Arvind Gaur.

The play which received rave reviews from the audience including leading journalists, is the story of Gandhari, one of the tragic characters of Mahabharata and highly relevant to the contemporary socio-political context. The play highlights the anti-war theme and the role of women, especially the mother in educating the society to renounce violence.

Although Gandhari was born a princess, she was forced to marry a blind man, Dhritrashtra. Before marrying, she tied a strip of cloth on her eyes and vowed to lead a blindfolded life. "Although it is popularly believed she did so to experience the blind world of Dhritrashtra, Gandhari's resolve to remain blindfolded was a silent protest against the power games and the forced marriage," said Mr. Gaur, who flew over from Delhi to specially direct this play. In the past 12 years, Gaur has directed 48 major plays, including Girish Karnad's *Tuglaq* and *Rakt Kalyan*, Dharamveer Bharti's *Andha Yug*, Swadesh deepak's *Court Martial*, GP Deshpande's *Antim Divas*, Albert Camus's *Caligula*, Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* and *Tara*, and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*.



Aishverya Nidhi, Gambhir Watts and the director Arvind Gaur

Among the things that were most appreciated by audience about *Gandhari* was the stage. "It was an extremely symbolic set up, where knots were used all around the stage to symbolise the limitations of a woman like Gandhari," said Aish. The play was also a first-ever attempt at having English sub-titles. "Something like this has never been done in the past. I have directed hundreds of plays all over the world, but this was the first time we had sub-titles," said Mr. Gaur. This creative idea provided an opportunity for English speakers to engage with a traditional Indian story within a contemporary context. "That's the only way to popularise the wise teachings of Indian mythological epics like Mahabharata among Western audiences," added Aishverya. The play was concluded with a vote of thanks by President Bhavan Australia, Gambhir Watts.

Aishverya has been invited to perform 'Gandhari' at International One Man Show Festival organized by the International Theatre Institute, UNESCO in December 2005 at UAE.

Surmayi Shaam



Debi Banerjee & Avijit Sarkar

On 30 July 2005 at Ryde Civic Centre, Bhavan Australia presented *Surmayi Shaam* - A journey through the evolution of Indian film music with Nostalgic Melodies & Rhythmic Compositions of the various Bollywood music directors from 1950s to current. The leading performer for the day was Debi Banerjee, a talented and well known Sydney singer. Avijit Sarkar, Director Bhavan Australia also displayed his multiple talents by



playing a variety of musical instruments and singing some popular numbers as well. The other artists in the extraordinary team included Dilip Bhawe, Zubin Billimoria, Jay Patel, Grishma Patel (singers) and Dr Rajesh Dinakar, Sam Samson, Ketan Parmar, Murtaza, Bobby (musicians) and together made the show a great success and memorable.

The songs varied from beautiful melodies of the 1960's to the more contemporary rhythmic beats of 2000's. There were also dance performances accompanying a few songs - a more contemporary idea and very well received by the audience. The event was very well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by the audiences.

Bhavan Australia congratulates Debi Banerjee for putting up such a great piece of artistic feat under Bhavan's banner and acknowledges gratitude towards her.