

## Nadanta dancers explore India's six seasons

You might hear showers as Jaya Budhwar performs a classical Indian rain dance next weekend at Meadow Brook Theater at Oakland University in Rochester — but keep the umbrellas closed.

The dance moves, the lighting effects and the music will suggest monsoon rain, but won't trigger any real cloud bursts.

"The way the strings play and because of the instruments used, it sounds like rain coming and thunder," Budhwar described the dance, adding with a laugh, "the audience might think it's raining."

Budhwar, 15, a junior at Detroit Country Day, Beverly Hills, is one of 55 dancers who train and perform with Nadanta, a Farmington Hills organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Indian culture through classical, folk and contemporary choreography. Chaula Thacker of Farmington Hills, trains Nadanta members, leads a 20-member ensemble of advanced dancers and choreographs the annual show at Meadow Brook.

In this year's production, called *Megh-Dhanush*, which means "rainbow," Nadanta performers will dance through India's seasonal calendar, recreating festivals and bringing the seasons to life as talking, moving characters.

"Last year we did a heavy topic — the teachings of Buddha. This year, in the tragic time of 9-11, we thought we needed a lighter mood,"



Nadanta dancers dress in elaborate, exquisite costumes for *Megh-Dhanush*, a dance production about India's six seasons.

Thacker said.

"The seasons — late winter, spring, summer, monsoon, autumn and winter — and their festivals seemed an obvious way to combine color and celebration. Thacker created a plot, weaving the dance into a story about the rainbow. Raja

Jaikumar of Novi portrays the spectrum of colors as an outwardly brilliant, but emotionally blank man. He gains an emotion and human quality when he encounters each new season. "By act three he is a complete man. He has given each season a color and each season gave

### MEGH-DHANUSH

**What:** Dance interpretation of the six seasons of India  
**When:** 3 and 7:30 p.m.  
**Saturday, Aug. 3**  
**Where:** Meadow Brook Theatre on the Oakland University campus, located on Walton between Squirrel and Adams roads, Rochester Hills  
**Admission:** \$15, \$25 and \$45.  
For advance tickets call (248) 252-8249

him an emotion," Thacker explained. "The plot is simple for anyone to understand. People who understand classical music will enjoy it and people who enjoy folk music can understand it."

Thacker ordered new costumes and included one northern-style classical dance in the show. It's a major departure for Nadanta dancers, who are trained in elegant Bharat nartam, India's southern-style classical dance.

"It's completely different," said dancer Ami Mehta of Sterling Heights. "It's like going from ballet to tap in a month. Bharat nartam is mostly plies, with the legs spread. Bharat nartam uses the whole body. Kathak, the northern tradition, is mostly foot work, straight leg and soft gestures."



*Megh-Dhanush* tells the story of the rainbow, personified as an emotionally blank man who encounters each of India's six seasons.

The costumes differ, too. Bharat nartam calls for pants-style outfits; kathak's spinning movements look best with long, flowing skirts. Both styles are "gorgeous and elaborate," Mehta said.

"We've been expressing interest in it (kathak) for a while. Little did we know we'd be performing it. It's one dance of 14 or 15 in the show, but was quite

a challenge."

The 23-year-old works for EDS as a business service analyst, but hopes to teach dance professionally in the future. "I've danced since I was five and have been with Nadanta since I was seven," she said. "I was born and raised here. This is one of my ways of keeping in

PLEASE SEE NADANTA, B5

## Shakespeare fest's *Romeo and Juliet* offers competent acting, sparkling moments

BY LINSEY MERGNER  
CORRESPONDENT

The Michigan Shakespeare Festival has come full-circle. In this, its eighth season, it boasts a production of the very play performed in the festival's inaugural season, the most famous love story of all time: *Romeo and Juliet*.

Directors Terry Heck and John Seibert have clearly attempted to produce a traditional, uncontroversial performance. The result is a competent attempt by energetic and, for the most part, exceptionally talented actors. But the three-hour play fails to stir the pulse or weaken the knees. The audience leaves the performance content, but not infatuated.

The production doesn't begin with Shakespeare's intended prologue ("Two households, both alike in dignity..."), but with boys fencing with sticks as women of Verona beat their rugs and empty their chamberpots from the balcony.

This energetic but busy-looking scene sets the tone for the entire production — both scene and show contain raw, beautiful moments lacking a unified direction.

After the Montague and Capulet servants tussle, every actor freezes on stage and they proceed to unfreeze one by one to perform the prologue, taking turns speaking the lines and some in unison. This is a baffling choice, and the audience is left as hesitant and uncomfortable as the actors appear to be. The moment passes with the conclusion of the prologue and the stage explodes into fighting once more.

Technically, the show is impeccable with props and costumes perfectly suited to the text. Surely, this is the way Shakespeare is meant to be performed — outside in a courtyard on a thrust stage with a balcony, with traditional clothing and a few well-chosen props and set pieces. Luckily for the audience, Heck and Seibert avoid technical overindulgence, opting instead to complement the text without overpowering spectacular effects. The words themselves are still the clear focus; thankfully, the classic tale is not dressed up beyond recognition

or good taste.

Despite skillful acting by Victoria Walters and Paul Riepelle as the title characters, they are too old for the roles they undertake here. Romeo and Juliet were supposed to be about 16 and 14 years of age, respectively, but Walters and Riepelle are clearly far older. This is a setback that cannot be ignored, especially when they attempt to infuse their characters with teenage angst and childish characteristics. In

### MICHIGAN SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

**What:** *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*

**When:** Continues 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Thursday-Sunday to Sunday, Aug. 4

**Where:** Ella Sharp Park, Jackson.

**Tickets:** \$16, \$8 children age 12 and under. For information or directions, call (517) 788-5032, (517) 780-4808 or (866) 705-2636. Web site is [www.michshakespeare.org](http://www.michshakespeare.org)

**Details:** Chairs are provided but viewers can bring lawn chairs and blankets to sit on the lawn in front of the risers.

PLEASE SEE SHAKESPEARE, B5

### 8th Annual Novi Art Festival



Sat. August 3 & Sun. August 4  
10 am - 5 pm

Outdoor juried art festival

featuring the work of over 200 artists from across the nation.

located at the Novi Civic Center at 21700 Novi Rd.

FREE ADMISSION

For more information call

248-347-3830 or 954-472-3755

[www.ARTFESTIVAL.com](http://www.ARTFESTIVAL.com) Howard Alan Events, Ltd.

Observer & Eccentric

Interact 939

POWER

SOB

62

2002/2003 UMS Season

A FOREST presents  
HEALTH SERVICE

one hundred twenty-fourth annual series

## CHORAL UNION

**Cleveland Orchestra**  
Franz Welser-Möst conductor  
Wed 10/9 1 pm  
Orchestra Hall • Detroit  
Sponsored by BGSU

**Eos Orchestra**  
The Cellist's Capella  
Capella's Music for Movies  
(performed as a group of 10)  
Jonathan Sheffer conductor  
Sun 2/16 4 pm  
Michigan Theater • Ann Arbor  
Sponsored by Eos Group

**Orquestra de São Paulo**  
John Neschling conductor  
Sergio and Oscar Assad guitar  
Wed 10/30 8 pm  
Michigan Theater • Ann Arbor

**Vienna Philharmonic**  
Klaus Mollenhauer conductor  
Thu 2/27 8 pm  
Detroit Opera House • Detroit  
This performance is presented with the University of Michigan

**Orchestra Philharmonique de Radio France**  
Myung-whun Chung conductor  
Roger Muraro piano  
Valerie Hartmann-Closter organ soloist  
Tue 11/19 8 pm  
Orchestra Hall • Detroit

**Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra**  
Dennis Russell Davis conductor  
Catherine Malfitano soprano  
Alexander Kozlov and  
Wolfram von Bockelmann voices  
Thu 3/6 8 pm  
Michigan Theater • Ann Arbor  
Sponsored by DANIEL CHRYSLER  
This performance is presented with the University of Michigan

**Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra**  
Special Holiday Concert  
Keith Lockhart conductor  
Sun 12/8 8 pm  
Cristler Arena • Ann Arbor  
Sponsored by Pops

**Gabrieli Consort and Players**  
Bashir Al-Jabir Pasha  
Paul McCreeh music director  
Sat 4/19 8 pm  
Michigan Theater • Ann Arbor

Choral Union Series  
Web & Sponsor  
WTEH-TV

UMTS  
Subscribe! [www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org) 734.764.2838  
outside the 734 area code, call 800.221.1229  
only \$4.99 per call in the 734 area code, plus \$1.99 per call  
plus \$1.99 per call in the 734 area code, plus \$1.99 per call