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 promotting Indian culture through classical, folk and contemporary chorcography. 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-Danusch, which means "rainbow," Nadanta performers will dance through India's seasonal calendar, recreating festivals and bringing the

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 trag-ic time of 9-11, we thought we needed a lighter mood,



Madanta 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 autum and water — and their festivals seemed an obvious way to combine color and celebra-tion. 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

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 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 classi-cal music will enjoy it and peo-ple who enjoy folk music can understand it."

ple 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 blant natyan, India's southern-style classical dance.

"It's completely different, said dancer, arm Mechta of Sterling Heights. "It's like going from ballet to tap in a month, Bharat natyam is mostly pies, with the legs spread. Bharat natyam is mostly policy. Kathak, the northern tradition, is mostly foot work, straight leg and soft gestures."



Hegh-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 natyam calls for pants-style outfits, kathak's spinning movements look best with long, flowing skirts. Both styles are "gorgeous and elaborate,"

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"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 an

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 MADANTA, BS

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

RY LINDSEY MERGENER 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 Scibert 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

The production doesn't begin with Shakespeare's intended The production doesn't begin with Shakespeare's intended prologue ("Two households, both alike in dignity..."), but with boys feneing 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 Montance..."

direction.

After the Montague and Capulet servants tussle, every actor freezes on slage and they proceed to unfereze one by one to perform the prologue, taking the lines and sometimes speaking the lines and sometimes speaking 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 con-clusion of the prologue and the stage explodes into fighting

stage explodes into fighting once more.

Technically, the show is impecable with props and costumes perfectly suited to the text. Surely, this is the way Shakespeare is meant to be performed — outside in a courty and on a thrust stage with a balcomy, with traditional dothing and a few well-chosen props and set pieces. Luckly for the audience, Hock and Selbert avoid technical coverindulgence, opting instead to complement the text without overpowering spectacular overpowering spectacular effects. The words themselves are still the clear focus; thank-fully, the classic tale is not

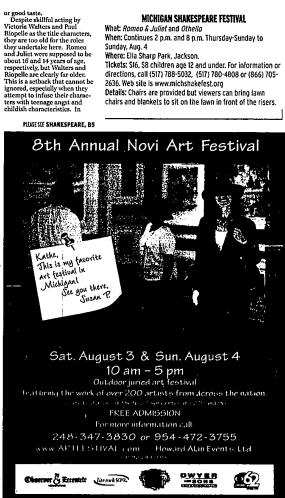
MICHIGAN SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

What: Romeo & Juliet and Othello When: Continues 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Thursday-Sunday to Sunday, Aug. 4

Where: Ella Sharp Park, Jackson. Tickets: S16, S8 children age 12 and under. For information or directions, call (517) 788-5032, (517) 780-4808 or (866) 705-2636. Web site is www.michshakefest.org

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







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