



bbitf 2023

Bhullung-Bhuthur International
Theatre Festival

ভুল্লুং-বুথুৰ আন্তঃৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় নাট-মহোৎসৱ
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REPORT



Organised by
AANK_A Creative Line



শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱ কলাক্ষেত্ৰ

In collaboration with
Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society
Govt. of Assam

GUWAHATI | ASSAM | INDIA

4 –10 October 2023

Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2023 (BBITF) - A Celebration of Art and Harmony

The Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2023, organized by AANK- A Creative Line in collaboration with the *Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society*, was a week-long cultural extravaganza that took place from October 4th to October 10th in Guwahati, Assam, India. Guided by the dynamic leadership of Festival Director Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami, the festival, themed "Theatre for Harmony," joyously celebrated the intricate bond between rivers and human civilization, with a particular emphasis on the Brahmaputra, the lifeblood of Assam.

The festival unfolded in three distinct phases, each offering a unique experience. The first phase featured mesmerizing theatrical performances over two evenings. The second phase included an Advanced Physical Theatre Workshop led by M.G.M. Safeer, a renowned theatre practitioner from Sri Lanka, and a thought-provoking Theatre Forum that explored the nuances of theatre in different countries and the challenges it faces. The third phase involved an Environmental Sensitization Programme designed to raise awareness about environmental issues, with a focus on the Brahmaputra River.



Performances

The festival kicked off on October 4th with a captivating Satriya Dance performance by Dr. Pratibha Sharma, followed by a soul-stirring Sarod Recital by Mr. Tarun Chandra Kalita. Renowned theatre and film artist Kulada Kumar Bhattacharya delivered a keynote address, commending the festival's organization by AANK- A Creative Line.

The opening night featured an emotionally charged performance of "Untouched" by Sujeewa Pathinisekara from Sri Lanka, deeply impacting the audience. "Untouched" delves into a contemporary narrative, portraying the intricate dynamics between a woman, her distant medical doctor husband, and a lover who initially fills the void in her life. As the story unfolds, the woman's quest for connection leads to complex emotional entanglements, ultimately leaving her trapped in a metaphorical abyss between her husband and lover.

On the second day, the audience was captivated by two powerful plays: "Erendira's Metamorphosis" by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami from India and "Love and Lockdown" by M. Safeer from Sri Lanka.

"Erendira's Metamorphosis" is inspired by Gabriel García Márquez's novella, "The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother." The play explores the complex themes of life, myth, and their intertwined nature. It challenges perceptions, emphasizing life's enigmatic nature and the ever-shifting currents that shape our understanding.



In "Love and Lockdown," M. Safeer offers a poignant reflection on love and solitude. While not explicitly about the pandemic, the play delves into the inseparable connection between a woman's experience of love and solitude. The production ingeniously communicates these emotions through expressive minimalism, incorporating movement, dance, singing, and acting to depict the profound impact of global solitude during these challenging times.

Audiences, including both theatre enthusiasts and the general public, praised the excellence of all three mono-act performances, describing them as captivating and unquestionably worth experiencing.



Advance Physical Theatre Workshop

The Advanced Physical Theatre Workshop delved into the theme "How to use the body and rhythm of the body as an actor for Acting." Led by M.G.M. Safer, the workshop took place from October 6th to October 10th at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society premises.

The workshop's highlights included warm-up and ice-breaking sessions to foster connections among participants, deep breathing techniques to enhance breath control, visual sessions providing insights into various cultures, and focus and connection exercises promoting trust and belief. Participants engaged in improvisation exercises to enhance adaptability and creativity. An informal presentation of "Arya," a Sinhala Creative version of Western Classical Opera, added an artistic dimension to the workshop.

A total of 23 participants hailing from various regions of Assam expressed their contentment with the meticulously organized workshop. The session not only enriched their grasp of physical theatre techniques but also facilitated the establishment of meaningful connections among participants. The workshop proved instrumental in offering valuable insights into the realm of theatre, fostering a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment among all attendees.





Environment Sensitization Programme

The Environment Sensitization Programme, organized in collaboration with Aaranyak and educational institutions, was dedicated to raising awareness about environmental issues, with a specific focus on the natural and cultural heritage of the Brahmaputra River.

The first day of the programme, held on October 7th at Mayang Anchalik College in Marigaon, featured a lecture by Dr. Partha Jyoti Das from Aaranyak. Attendees were treated to artistic expressions of the river's significance through poetry recitations and songs, creating awareness among the 43 participants.

On the second day, at Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University City Campus in Guwahati, Dr. Partha Jyoti Das delivered another lecture on the Brahmaputra River's heritage, accompanied by poetry and songs. An interactive quiz session encouraged active participation among the 36 participants.

The Environment Sensitization Programme successfully combined education, culture, and art to inspire environmental awareness and appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the Brahmaputra River.





Theatre Forum

The Theatre Forum, held at Guwahati College on October 8, 2023, was a stimulating event that brought together theatre professionals, academics, students, and cultural enthusiasts. The event aimed to delve into the world of theatre in different countries, focusing on the prospects and challenges faced by each.

MGM Safer, CEO of the Inter Act Art Theatre Institute in Colombo, Sri Lanka, provided valuable insights into Sri Lankan Theatre and South East Asian Theatre, along with their global perspectives. Dr. Ajay Joshi, an Indian Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Scholar and Theatre Researcher from Pune, India, discussed various theatre groups in India and abroad and their unique practices, offering a dynamic contrast to Safer's presentation. Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami and Anupam Saikia enriched the discussions with their insights and information.

The audience actively participated in the discussions, asking questions and sharing their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in global theatre. The event also provided a platform for networking and potential collaborations among participants from various backgrounds and regions.

The Theatre Forum successfully fostered cultural exchange, highlighted innovation in theatre, addressed common challenges, and promoted international collaborations, celebrating the diversity of theatre and its ability to unite people across borders.



Achievements and Outcomes

Cultural Exchange

The festival successfully attracted a diverse array of artists, performers, and enthusiasts from different backgrounds. This diverse mix of participants fostered a rich environment for cultural exchange, with ideas and experiences flowing freely between individuals from various regions.

Artistic Collaboration

Through the festival, artists had the opportunity to collaborate, share ideas, and create unique performances. The collaborative spirit promoted innovation in theatre and enabled artists to learn from one another, resulting in a dynamic creative atmosphere.

Advanced Physical Theatre Workshop

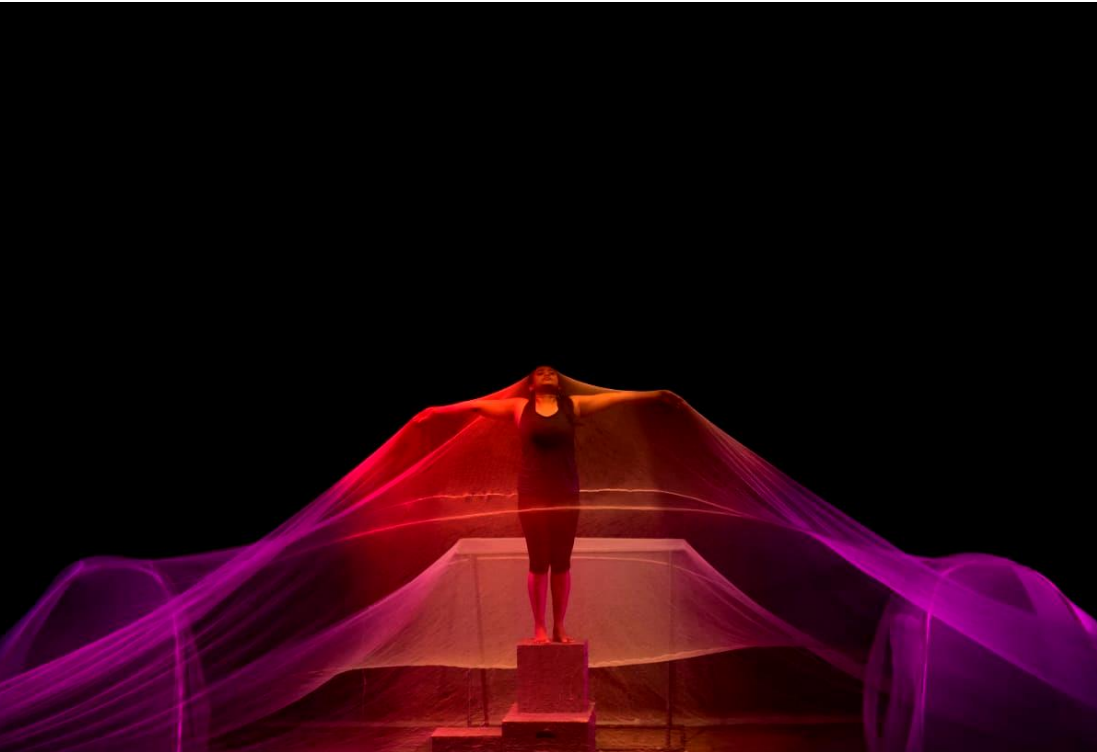
The Advanced Physical Theatre Workshop, led by M.G.M. Safer, provided participants with an in-depth understanding of physical theatre techniques. Attendees gained valuable insights into using their bodies and rhythm as actors, expanding their skill sets and artistic horizons.

Environmental Awareness

The Environment Sensitization Programme successfully raised awareness about environmental issues, specifically focusing on the Brahmaputra River's natural and cultural heritage. Participants left with a greater understanding of the importance of preserving the environment.

Enhanced Collaboration through Aligned Schedules

In the pursuit of strengthening the collaborative ties between the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival (BBITF) and the Colombo International Theatre Festival (CITF), a revised schedule for the next year's event is being introduced. This adjustment aims to synchronize the timelines of both festivals, offering an unprecedented opportunity for increased participation and talent exchange between the two. This alignment will foster a deeper connection between the theatre communities of Sri Lanka and Assam and is poised to bring the two festivals even closer together.



Showcase of Emerging Talent

Participants of the Advanced Physical Theatre Workshop will have an exclusive opportunity to engage in the play competition segment of the renowned Colombo International Theatre Festival, meticulously organized by Inter Act Art in Sri Lanka. This exciting avenue provides a platform for budding talents to showcase their skills and gain international recognition. Inter Act Art, known for its commitment to fostering young talent in Sri Lanka, traditionally hosts a 10-15-minute play competition during the Colombo International Theatre Festival. Starting next year, three trainees from the workshop will be selected to participate in this esteemed competition as part of the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival's Advanced Physical Theatre Workshop. Similarly, three performances from Sri Lanka will be featured in the 2nd BBITF scheduled for September 2024.

New Collaborative Performance

Scheduled for April 2024, a collaborative performance project is on the horizon, bringing together artists from Sri Lanka and Assam. This undertaking involves cross-border collaboration, with rehearsals spanning both Sri Lanka and Assam. Promising a distinctive and culturally enriching artistic endeavour, this initiative underscores the festival's dedication to nurturing international artistic partnerships and honouring the richness of cultural diversity.



Conclusion

The Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2023 was a resounding success, celebrating the performing arts, cultural exchange, and environmental awareness. The festival exemplified the power of the arts to bridge cultural gaps and promote cross-cultural understanding.

The festival's success was made possible through the dedication of Aank_a Creative Line, partners, and the enthusiastic engagement of attendees. It reaffirmed the significance of international theatre festivals in fostering artistic growth, collaboration, and cultural appreciation. The Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2023 was a testament to the arts' ability to inspire change, celebrate diversity, and unite people through creativity and understanding.





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