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# Preeti Shah's Tapasya Raises Funds For EVF

BY MAHADEV DESAI

Atlanta: The Atlanta Chapter of Ekal Vidya Foundation (EVF) and The Narasimha Academy of Arts presented a spell binding new age dance presentation titled "Tapasya"- Pray for a Soul; at the Pace Academy Fine Arts Center in Buckhead, Atlanta September 12th. EVF is a non-profit Charitable Trust that runs a unique peoples movement, which initiates, supports and runs non-formal one-teacher schools all over the country. These schools provide five years of free basic education, healthcare, vocational training and social and community empowerment.

The riveting thematic show, with a distinct new age flair to the age old Bharatnatyam style was conceived, imaginatively choreographed and artistically presented by multi-talented and accomplished Preeti Vinayak Shah of Atlanta, who helms the highly popular 'The Narasimha Academy of Arts,' with her well groomed senior students. In the mesmerizing show, Preeti experimented with Bharathanatyam but stayed close to the boundaries of the art form in the fast paced two hour thematic dance production which also featured uplifting traditional Hindu shlokas set to contemporary genre of music that was an amalgamation of Carnatic, Hindustani and Western musical elements.

After Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, (EVF) Southeast Region's long serving and dedicated President, Manhar Valand welcomed all, EVF's Committee Member Malla Reddy and Sapna Patel paid a homage with floral tribute to India's world-renowned, iconic spiritual and cultural ambassador Swami Vivekananda, whose rousing challenge, "If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him" has been the driving motivating force for EVF ever since.

Archith Seshadri, singer and journalist, and EVF's Youth Coordinator, Vandana Aggarwal, did an outstanding job narrating each episode and also exhorting the audience to help support the EVF.

As Preeti commented, "I wanted the audience to be entertained while following the thematic production. I did not want the show to become a cerebral one, so instead of emcees reading sheets of explanatory

notes, I had Archith and Vandana narrating the theme of "Tapasya" while I tried to convey a story about a man and woman, and for the need of harmony of emotions for stability of mankind, through an avant-garde medium of dance."

Shiva is known as the Lord of Tandavam (vigorous form) and Shakti as one who has command over Lasyam (graceful rhythmic form). As a result of clash as to superiority between Shiva and Shakti there was turmoil in the world. With prayer, penance and austerities, they finally reconcile and peace and tranquility are restored. Preeti and her students enthralled the audience as they unfolded the story through more than a dozen episodes. Their energetic and gripping journey, through the minds of the two powers, began with AUM and concluded with AUM for one Tapasya, one Prayer, and One Soul.

Scintillating dances by versatile Preeti and her Academy's students attired in gorgeous costumes, embellished with sparkling jewelry, hair and facial adornments, and ghonghroo- clad feet, followed in quick succession as the story unfolded. The esoteric dance -Lasyanga by Preeti was enchanting with an

unified cause of supporting EVF by showing children sitting on the floor and learning the alphabet in a rural setting. The dance which ended with an uplifting, patriotic display of the Indian Tricolor received a huge applause.

In the Yudh piece showing the fight between Shiva (Supriya Shridharan) and Shakti (Preeti), the entire verbal incantations (bols) were composed and recited by Preeti Shah. The audience could not help but feel the anger and rage of Shakti and the tranquility of Shiva.

Preeti Shah, who performed in almost all the dances, gave ample proof of her wide ranging repertoire and virtuosity in all aspects of dancing and choreography. Art critic Kati Schardl described Preeti aptly when she said, "Preeti is poetry in motion and is guided by the Gods in her performance."

Gifted and talented choreographer, dancer and singer, Preeti has founded The Narasimha Academy of Arts in Atlanta. For more information, please visit [www.natyam.com](http://www.natyam.com)

All the 'Tapasya' Cast comprising of Supriya Shridharan; Aditi Acharya; Meena Balasubramaniam;

Jayashree Bandi; Nisha Bhat; Nivedita Krishna Kumar; Meghna Mahadevan; Tanmayi Pai; Mayuri Patel; Shruti Ramachandran; Lavanya Ramakrishnan; Kritika Subramanian and supporting cast Aishwarya Duggirala; Shreya Desai; Shreya Nainwal; Divya Natarajan; Prisha Rajasekaran; and Nethravalli Shah showcased their dancing prowess on stage. Preeti Shah and the entire cast received a thunderous standing ovation.

One of the Academy's students, Jessica Garro, did an excellent job as back stage manager, while Lakshmi Shridharan enhanced the enjoyment of the dances with props like Shiva Lingam, pooja items, Vajra (lightening rod), blackboard etc.

Prashant Kollipara, ByteGraph Creations, gave photography services. Preeti's husband Yogesh deserves a pat on the back for lighting and sound direction.

EVF's Cultural Coordinator Rachna Gupta gave an update on EVF and exhorted all to sponsor a school.

"All those who were fortunate and privileged enough to receive education in India need to give back to the community. A meager dollar-a-day donation amounting to \$365 a year will help start a school, so please help we reach our goal," she appealed.

Atlanta's well known and respected community and social activist and philanthropist and President of Atlanta Chapter of EVF, Shiv Aggarwal, expressed a vote of thanks. Raffle winners were presented with their prizes which were kindly donated by Rajkamal Foundation. He concluded by thanking Preeti Shah and all the participants from her Academy, for presenting a wonderful entertaining show which helped sponsorship of 20 schools as well as funds.

Preeti will be recognized as an outstanding volunteer of Ekal at the National Ekal Convention later in September.

Shiv Aggarwal invited all the EVF Officials on stage and thanked all the sponsors, Mumbai Masala for delicious cuisine, all the volunteers and members of the audience for making it a memorable evening.



exquisite blend of precise and graceful moves,

Preeti's signature piece, Pandattam, showed how the dancer played with a ball with her friends. Preeti's intricate footwork and facial expressions conveyed a gamut of emotions.

The famous Bhaje Sargam by Louis Banks, composed to promote unity in India, was an unexpected and inspirational treat! The eight major dance styles were showcased to show that no matter how different the movements, rhythm binds us all together. The Narasimha Academy of Arts extrapolated this to the