

10-year-old Bharatnatyam Star Wows at SF Dance Fest

By LISA TSERING

India-West Staff Reporter

SAN FRANCISCO — Athira Pratap is just 10, but this pint-sized dancer already has star quality in abundance. Pratap dazzled in a solo performance of “Ohm Kaara” June 7 on the opening weekend of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, becoming the youngest dancer ever to star in a solo piece in the festival’s 31-year history.

As an unexpected techno-tabla beat filled the Palace of Fine Arts theater, the lights came up to reveal Pratap in a brilliantly hued red and gold silk costume and glittering gold jewelry. The accompanying song, “Amma Anananda Dayini,” a classical varnam, was adapted by Padma Vibhushan Dr. Balamuralikrishna into an energetic amalgam of Eastern and Western sounds — though, as Pratap told **India-West** after the show, the dance itself was pure Bharatnatyam.

Her arms made bold, wide-sweeping movements, her hands fluttering like little birds, as her cherubic face and bright eyes expressed a wide range of emotions in her depiction of Saraswati Devi, the goddess of knowledge, and Mahishasura Mardhini, Shakti, the goddess of power.

Athira Pratap performed traditional Bharatnatyam set to a bold, techno-tinged soundtrack, at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival June 7. (R.J. Muna photo)



“It was good,” Pratap said of the experience. “The music had a good rhythm. If you dance to it, it’s very energetic.”

The assured young artist, who has been trained and choreographed by her mother, Bindu Pratap, has been performing since the age of 4. She took the first prize in AsiaNet TV’s North American classical talent search at the age of 7, and has won prizes on India Waves TV and the Tri-City’s 2007 young artist showcase (becoming its youngest soloist winner).

The San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival will continue every weekend throughout the month of June, showcasing 37 of the region’s best dance companies representing styles from around the world.

Among the Indian dance acts

still to come are:

- PAMPA Dance Academy of Santa Clara, which will present an invocation to Lord Ganesh in “Sankashta Ganapati” (June 13-14);
- Savitha Sastry, a Bharatnatyam soloist from San Jose, who will present “Anjali” (June 20-21);
- Sanhiti, a group making its festival debut with folk dances from Tamil Nadu (June 20-21); and
- Shreelata Suresh, premiering a dynamic Bharatnatyam piece that includes an offering to Mother Earth and an invocation to the Gods of the eight directions (June 27-28).

Tickets to the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival are available by calling City Box Office at (415) 392-4400 or by visiting www.cityboxoffice.com.

Indian American Extras Needed For Disney Film

By a Staff Reporter

The Walt Disney movie “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” starring Nicholas Cage and Monica Bellucci, is seeking extras in New York City from July 1.

“We’re looking for extras for a scene that is supposed to take place in Kolkata in the 1920s,” reads a casting notice. “We’re looking for Indian men, women and children of all ages to play priests, worshippers, street vendors, hustlers, police, dwellers,

etc. The pay is \$80 for 10 hours if you are non-SAG (actors union). Meals, breaks and overtime are also included.”

To be eligible for this project, applicants must be able to attend a half-hour wardrobe fitting between June 17-23. Applicants will have to present documentation that proves eligibility to work in the U.S., such as a U.S. passport, green card, work visa, or driver’s license and Social Security card.

For more information, e-mail sandhya.jain@gmail.com.