



Sruti Laya in Golden Mallard



NUS Dance Ensemble in Simurgh

Local contemporary dancer, choreographer trained also in ballet and jazz, Zaini Mohammad Tahir has had training in classical Indonesian dance and shares his love for Asian dance movement. The young dancers from NUS Dance Ensemble, presented Simurgh inspired by Farid Attar's mysterious Sufi poem 'Conference of the Birds' journeying through various facets from birth till death, which showed their talent in group work under Zaini's competent choreography.

Jonathan Guillarme, a choreographer from Paris, now settled in Singapore working with L'Academie du Danse choreographed in a brief ballet Jonathan Livingston Seagull with some seven young ballet dancers from tiny tots to elder ones showcasing their classical ballet training. Gayatri Sriram's aim is to collaborate, connect and grow with performances that range from classical Bharatanatyam to folk, contemporary and ballet. The attempt to bring these diverse dance troupes together is a praiseworthy goal, as it expands the area of performance and does not limit to Bharatanatyam only.



L'Academie du Danse



Panel discussion

Back to back, like previous day's talk by V Sriram, was a panel discussion on the theme of 'Dilution of the classical arts' covering state of classical art forms and how some adapt, some adopt and some transplant successfully on their journey across borders. Moderated by Dr. Prasenjit Duara, the Raffles Professor of Humanities and Director of Asia Research Institute at National University of Singapore, the participants were V Sriram, musicologist and historian, Minal Prabhu, Bharatanatyam guru and choreographer, Zaini Tahir, young Resident Choreographer of NUS Dance Ensemble, J P Nathan, Director of Programming, Esplanade Theatres on the Bay, Singapore and dance historian, author and critic Dr. Sunil Kothari.

From the discussion by the experts, it was agreed upon that classical arts need not be diluted, and if so, they do not remain classical and are out of the present discourse. Yes, adapting, adopting has helped the classical arts to grow with changing times, but the core value of its classicism does not admit of dilution. Some forms of classical singing in Carnatic music have no takers and would disappear. Minal Prabhu observed that by adapting and adopting proper changes, Bharatanatyam under the vision of Rukmini Devi, has raised the bar of the form in terms of classical dance. J P Nathan placed his point of view as a program director about his problem of being not loyal to any form, be it classical or otherwise. With innovations, experimentation, explorations how does one look at this issue? From among audience, Gayatri Sriram questioned about the hallmark of a classical form vis-a-vis changes which if they cross the limits, place classical arts in a tight corner. Question of audience training, role of media, the niche audience for classical arts were