

the vision of
vaśavādatā

Presented by the University Theatre
in cooperation with the Department of Music

March 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 at 8:00 pm & 24 at 2:00 pm
Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

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| Director | SHANTA GANDHI |
| Composer and Music Director | M.Y. KAMASHASTRI |
| Movement Coach | JUDY VAN ZILE |
| Vocal Coach | ELIZABETH COLE |
| Scene Designer | RICHARD MASON |
| Costumer | SANDRA FINNEY |
| Technical Director & Lighting Designer | MARK BOYD |
| Assistant Director | GHULAM SARWAR |



For many years the Department of Drama and Theatre has been committed to the study of Asian theatre. In recent years University Theatre audiences have been able to see Chinese opera, Indonesian shadow drama, Thai dance drama, Malaysian Ma'yong, Philippine Zarzuela, and Japanese Kabuki staged in English in authentic style at Kennedy Theatre. The Sanskrit drama of India, which began several centuries before Christ, is probably Asia's oldest dramatic art. These classic plays are highly regarded as literature, but because of staging difficulties, they are almost never performed in the West. Miss Gandhi's production of *The Vision of Vasavadatta* is, therefore, a rare and welcome theatre event at the University of Hawaii. Miss Gandhi brings to her production a lifetime experience as a dancer, director, and expert in both Indian and Western drama.

JAMES R. BRANDON

How might the audience at Bhasa's time have seen this play performed? That is the question which has led me to this production at the University of Hawaii. In the eleventh century classical Sanskrit drama ceased being performed in India, so there is no clear answer to our question. I have gone back to *The Art of Drama (Natya Sashtra)* for a description of the stage, its two entrances at the rear, and the zonal system of moving on stage. From various regional theatre forms have come concrete examples of how dance and music can integrate with text. The classical plays are based on *rasa* (the aesthetic theory of sentiments) and Bhasa's play must be analyzed around the various *rasas*—love, humor, sadness, heroism. Though the supporting arts are important, Bhasa's play revolves around the word. I am a director working within an intercultural learning situation in which the ethos of the cast and the ethos of the play must be merged, a process which at the same time is exasperating and exciting.

SHANTA GANDHI

Dancers

MEHRUNISA RAMANI, MEHTABUNISA ALI, KARUNA RAMASHANKAR, NOPAMAS VEOHONGSE

Musicians

Veena: M.Y. KAMASHASTRI, *Flute:* MARY LANDOLT, *Bass Flute:* CHAITANYA KABIR, *Sitar:* GAJENDRA MOHAN MISHRA, *Shanai:* LISA ARCHULETA, *Tambura:* VANDY CHASKA-ARNEST, *Mridangam, Santur:* FRANK BERBERICH



THE COMPANY

SUTRADHARA TERENCE KNAPIK
PITCHER BEARER CHIP ARNOLD
FLAG BEARER MELVIN GIONSON
GUARDS TOLA BENNINGTON, GREG HOOD
YAUGANDHARAYANA, Chief Minister of Udayana

DANDO KLUEVER

VASAVADATTA, Queen of Udayana

*BARI MOSS **DIAN KOBAYASHI LOPEZ

CHAMBERLAIN OF MAGADHA .. TERENCE KNAPIK

PADMAVATI, Princess of Magadha

*LINDA SUN **ELIZABETH WICHMANN

COMPANION TO PADMAVATI

*DIAN KOBAYASHI LOPEZ **BARI MOSS

MADHUKARIKA, Lady-in-waiting

BEVERLY CHANG

PADMINIKA, Lady-in-waiting

*ELIZABETH WICHMANN **LINDA SUN

FEMALE ASCETIC PAMELA VIERA

STUDENT KHAMTOUN CHOUMANY

NURSE TO PADMAVATI PAMELA VIERA

VASANTAKA, Jester to Udayana

JEMM KER

UDAYANA, King of Kaushambi

RICK GREEN

VIJAYA, female bodyguard PAMELA VIERA

CHAMBERLAIN OF UJJAIN

*CHIP ARNOLD **TOLA BENNINGTON

NURSE TO VASAVADATTA

*DIAN KOBAYASHI LOPEZ **BARI MOSS

*March 15, 16, 17 **March 21, 22, 23, 24

THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA is set in the Kingdom of Magadha in ancient India over 2,000 years ago.

There will be one, 10-minute intermission.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Miss Gandhi's participation as the director of this production has been made possible by a grant from the Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center.

Mr. Kamashastry was brought to Hawaii to direct the music for *The Vision of Vasavadatta* by the College of Continuing Education and Community Service and the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, aided by a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts.

The new translation, written especially for this production by Paul Cravath, was commissioned by the Asian Studies Center, South Asia Program.

Mrs. Shroff's assistance was supported in part by the Rama Watumull Fund.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

The date of Bhasa is uncertain, but he certainly lived and wrote before the time of Christ. He seems to have been a source of inspiration to the ancient Indian playwrights who followed him. Kalidasa pays him a warm tribute in his first play. Bhasa has written one act plays as well as full length plays. His thirteen extant plays include heroic comedies, spectacles, lyrical plays, as well as the only tragic play known in Sanskrit literature. His style has the elegant simplicity of a master who can create full blooded characters with a few short strokes. He chooses his material from the Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, as well as from ancient Indian legends. His deep humanism can be felt in his reinterpretation of the epic characters. *THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA* based on a legend, is considered his best play.

SHANTA GANDHI

A Classical Sanskrit Drama attributed to BHASA and adapted for the University Theatre by PAUL CRAVATH

the vision of vasavadatta

THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA: Historical Background

After the battle of Kurukshetra between the Pandawa clan and the Kaurawa clan, described in the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, descendants of the Pandawas ruled in the city of Hastinapura until the River Ganges changed its course and floodwaters denuded the countryside and destroyed the city. The ruling prince and his people, following the course of the changing river, arrived in Kaushambi, near modern Allahbad. Udayana, the 'hero' of THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA, was the seventh ruler of this new kingdom, and has become a legendary hero in India.

Udayana was by temperament an aesthete. He could play the *Veena* (lute) so well that elephants left the forest and came to him, just as cows came to the tune of Krishna's flute. His courage was also legendary. In ancient warfare, the possession of elephants was vital, as they served as tanks. For Udayana, who by merely playing his veena attracted hoards of them, there was no dearth of elephants.

In ancient India there were four centers of power: Ujjain, Kaushambi, Magadha and Benares. Kaushambi, as it was a Pandawa kingdom, had the greatest social status. Other kingdoms were therefore anxious to have marriage and other alliances with Kaushambi so as to boost their own social standing. By the time of Udayana's reign, the king of Ujjain, Mahasena, had collected an enormous military force. Yet, despite his military power, he was of lower social standing than Udayana. He hoped, therefore, to bring Udayana under his influence, thereby turning Kaushambi into a satellite kingdom under his rule. Udayana was known for his preoccupation with music rather than with statecraft. Mahasena, the king of Ujjain, hoped to bring Kaushambi under his sway by arranging a marriage between his daughter Vasavadatta and Udayana. When direct methods failed, Mahasena sent an agent into Kaushambi to spread a rumor about a magnificent blue elephant that was seen wandering on the borders between Kaushambi and Ujjain. Udayana, armed only with his lute, went off in search of this elephant, confident that his instrument would suffice to lure the elephant to him. Fearing he might arouse the suspicions of the neighboring kingdom, he did not take his armies with him. Near the border Udayana was arrested by Mahasena and taken prisoner. While under house arrest in Ujjain, Udayana continued to play his lute, and attracted the attention of Vasavadatta, the daughter of Mahasena. She expressed the desire to learn to play the instrument. Soon, romance blossomed between Udayana and Vasavadatta.

Meanwhile, Udayana's prime minister, Yaugandharayana, was planning to go to battle with Ujjain to rescue Udayana. Udayana, however, sent word that no such thing should be done, and that he would take revenge on Ujjain in his own fashion. Udayana, understanding the scheme of Mahasena, was determined not to be a subsidiary to Ujjain. He therefore persuaded Vasavadatta to elope with him against the wishes of her father, and contrary to custom. The lovers eloped

on Vasavadatta's elephant. Udayana's love for Vasavadatta grew so intense and so deep that these companions of the soul lost interest in everything save each other. Udayana soon began to neglect his affairs of state, and his territory was gradually being nibbled away by neighboring princely states. The citizens of Kaushambi soon became the subjects of alien rulers. Udayana was left in control of only a few villages including Lavanaka, to which he retired.

The situation worried Yaugandharayana, Udayana's prime minister, who now sought new alliances to restore Udayana's power and bring Kaushambi back into its former glory and prestige. As an ally, Ujjain was out of the question. Next in importance was Magadha, and this latter state could be an ally if Udayana was made to marry the sister of Darshaka, the king of Magadha. The royal astrologers had already predicted that Magadha's princess Padmavati would become Udayana's wife. Udayana, however, was too deeply in love with Vasavadatta to think of anything else, and would not agree to marry Padmavati or anyone else for that matter. Yaugandharayana took Vasavadatta into confidence and told her that Kaushambi could only be preserved if she was for some time separated from her husband, so that Udayana would devote his attention to matters of state. For the sake of the country, and for the personal honor of both Udayana and herself, she must, therefore, suffer a temporary separation from Udayana. She agreed to the plot, which Yaugandharayana worked out in secret with the consent of the cabinet, including the minister, Rumnavana. While Udayana was out hunting one day, therefore, a palace at Lavanaka where Udayana and Vasavadatta lived was burnt down and the rumor was spread that Vasavadatta had been burnt to death in the palace, and that Yaugandharayana, while trying to save her, was burnt alive. Vasavadatta's jewels, which had been thrown into the fire, were collected and remained with Udayana as his only memento of his queen. As the king languished in sorrow for Vasavadatta, Yaugandharayana contrived to take Vasavadatta *incognito* to Magadha, and to leave her in the care of Princess Padmavati. Rumnavana was left in charge of local affairs at Lavanaka. Udayana, after the pain of his loss had somewhat subsided, was persuaded to go to Magadha to pay a friendly state visit to King Darshaka and seek military assistance and alliance with Magadha.

While at Magadha, Darshaka persuaded Udayana to marry Princess Padmavati. Yaugandharayana's scheme, therefore, succeeded fully, and Udayana regained not only his lost territories and former glory, but also his beloved queen, Vasavadatta.

The total story of Udayana's adventures appears in a duology of Bhasa. THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA is the second play and opens at the time when Yaugandharayana and Vasavadatta arrive in disguise at Magadha and meet princess Padmavati.

THE CLASSICAL INDIAN THEATRE

The origins of Sanskrit theatre lie buried in the mists of antiquity. Excavations in the Indus Valley have revealed dancing figures. By the first century of the Christian era, however, Indian theatre had developed a sophisticated tradition, rich in variety, and including the elements of

response was important. *Rasa* could not come without it. Theatre was not merely a means of communicating, but also of communion. A certain sanctity is given to the performances by *Poojavarang* or preliminaries. The function of this part of a performance was both to entertain

music, dance, and the spoken word. It was indeed a "total theatre" experience. The high level of attainment of Sanskrit theatre and drama can be judged from the works that have survived. Performances were given in permanent as well as temporary theatres as can be judged from the comprehensive work on Indian dramaturgy, the *Natyasastra*, which is attributed to the sage Bharata Muni. Sanskrit theatre, by its classical period, had developed ten major dramatic forms, *Rupakas*, and more than eighteen minor forms, *Upa-Rupakas*. More than five hundred manuscripts that have come down to us reflect a synthesis of dance, word and music.

Sanskrit plays are not, like the western tradition of drama, conflict-oriented, and do not fit into the Aristotelian mold. They are *rasa*-oriented. In terms of Indian aesthetics, *rasa* is the joyful consciousness that is evoked in a spectator when the actors, through the mediums of speech, bodily movement, gesture, costume, make-up, stage properties and music, unfold human experience in its universalized form. The Sanskrit theatre is an actors' theatre, which does not depend upon elaborate stage settings or machinery.

The classical Indian theatre was not a commercial theatre. Actors were professionals and the theatre was patronized and financed by the kings, rich merchants, town and village councils and temples who maintained troupes of actors. Communities of actors thus evolved. Some regions in India to this day have such communities, although they are no longer strictly professional actors.

The audiences of classical Sanskrit theatre were initiated in Indian aesthetics and totally familiar with its conventions. Appreciation of the arts was a necessity and was very much a part of the ancient Indian education system. In watching a performance, discriminative

appreciation of the performance that was to follow. It also had the function of providing the audience with some information about the playwright, and the play that they were about to witness.

In Ancient India, the sophisticated classical theatre developed side by side with its flourishing folk theatre. The manuscripts that have survived are those of the refined or sophisticated theatre. This latter tradition was lost in India about the eleventh century, and is not at present a living theatre form. The continuity had been broken and in India today, nowhere are plays performed in the style described and prescribed by the *Natyasastra*, although regional forms such as the *Kudiyattam* in Kerala do have some Sanskrit plays in their repertoire.

The designing of sets, costumes, makeup and other elements of this performance in relation to the resources that may have been available in the ancient playhouses and its theatre conventions is by no means an easy task, in the absence of any existing model. A certain amount of experimentation is called for, but these experiments must conform to the requirements of the script. Costumes are based on the relief sculptures of the Kushan and early Gupta period. During the recent excavation at Kaushambi a medallion showing Vasavadatta and Udayana riding an elephant with Vasantaka hanging onto its tail was found. The set design is based upon the characteristics of the rectangular (*Vikrishta*) type of theatre described in the *Natyasastra*. The dominant mood (*Pradhan Rasa*) of THE VISION OF VASAVADATTA is that of love in separation (*Vipralambha Shringhar*), supported by minor moods like pathos, humor, heroism and wonder. The color scheme of this production takes into account the symbolism of *rasa* theory.

PRODUCTION STAFF

ASSISTANT TO THE DESIGNER: Richard P. Romer

STAGE MANAGER: Kate Bolton

LIGHT CREW: Charles Meyers, III and the students of Drama 640

HAIR STYLING: Mrs. Veena Shroff

MAKEUP CREW: Holly Whitney, Carol Kitson, Tricia Ely, Pat Sweet

COSTUME CREW: Cynthia Kunishige, Lynne Tanaka, Irene Ohashi

COSTUME CONSTRUCTION: Margaret Egbert, Lynn Tsuruda, Barbara Hartman, Debbie Farrell, Carol Kitson, Pam Chong, Molly Burns, Irene Ohashi, Mel Gionson, Lucielle Peters, Holly Whitney

TECHNICIANS: Ken Rohde, Kevin Murphy and the students of Drama 240 and Drama 299

PHOTOGRAPHY: Francis Haar

PROPERTIES: Joan Gossett

PUBLICITY: Jemm Kerr, Kitty Heacox

BOX OFFICE: Condelita Almazon, Steve Gilbert, Bonnie Killin, Kathleen Morishige

HOUSE MANAGERS: Farouk Wang and Phyllis Look assisted by Nancy Castle, Aileen Hamaj,

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The public is cordially invited to attend sessions of "The International Conference on Sanskrit Drama in Performance" March 19-23, 1-5 p.m., Asia Room, Jefferson Hall, East-West Center.

Scholars from India, Poland, and the United States will discuss the History, the Aesthetics, and the Art of Sanskrit drama.

Free admission but seating is limited. Sponsored by the Asian Studies Program. For information call: 948-8543.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The University Theatre wishes to thank Suzanne Bowen of Graphic Media Design for the poster design, Gay Burk and Michael Tamaru of the University Relations Office for their generous cooperation and assistance, Grady Bumpus and Rick Uggums of PAUL BROWN'S CUTTERS for hairdressing.

The director wishes to express her personal gratitude to Dr. Prithwish Neogy, Chairman of the Department of Art, University of Hawaii, for his keen interest in the production and for his advice and suggestions on the poster and program designs; to Dr. James Brandon for his understanding and sensitive support throughout the production; to Nancy Takei for her secretarial and organizational aid; to Mrs. Indru Watamull for her personal hospitality; to each and every member of the Department of Drama and Theatre and the East-West Culture Learning Institute for making her feel so welcome from the onset and thus encouraging her to enjoy the breaking of cultural barriers and to share with them the joy of aesthetic experience by

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HOUSE MANAGERS: Farouk Wang and Phyllis Look assisted by Nancy Castle, Aileen Hamai, Carol Ann Hee, Jim Farmer, Patti Najita, Ann Nishiguchi, Alberta Nōbu, Donna Ridenour

SPONSORS: Roosevelt High School, Waipahu High School (NHS), Castle High School Thespian Troupe #566, Radford Keyettes, Aiea High School (NHS), Iolani Drama Group, Sacred Hearts Academy (NHS)

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA AND THEATRE

FACULTY: Bernard F. Dukore, Chairman; Mark Boyd, James Brandon, Glenn Cannon, Dennis Carrol, Elizabeth Cole, Sandra Finney, Tamara Hunt, Terence Knapp, Edward Langhans, Richard Mason, Yasuki Sasa, Joel Trapido, Carl Wolz

STAFF: Art Caldeira, Takeo Miji, Nancy Takei

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS: Paul Cravath, Dennis Dubin, Peggy Egbert, Nell Fuson, Catherine Heacox, Tomas Hernandez, Jemm Kerr, Richard Romer, Young Saylor, Elizabeth Wichmann, Kozaburo Yukihira

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NOTICE: Smoking is not allowed in the auditorium nor may photographs or recordings be made during performance.

COMING EVENTS IN KENNEDY THEATRE

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|--------------------------------|---|
| March 17, 18, 19 | DON JUAN IN HELL (Lab Theatre) |
| March 29, 30* | AWAJI PUPPET THEATRE OF JAPAN (Mainstage) |
| April 4, 5, 6 | PETER AND THE WOLF (Honolulu Zoo) |
| April 5, 7, 8, 9 | THE RELUCTANT PRINCESS (Lab Theatre) |
| April 19, 20, 26, 27, 28 | METAPHYSICAL CIRCUS (Mainstage) |
| April 20, 21, 25, 26, 27 | HALF-WAY ROAD, PENANG (Lab Theatre) |

*Sponsored by the College of Continuing Education and the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.