

THEATRE REVIEW

Dynamic response to broken world

Story of war-rape victim gets hypnotic expression in dance and song

MATT RADZ
GAZETTE THEATRE CRITIC

MAI, which is short for Montreal arts interculturals, was built for works just like *A Leaf in the Whirlwind*, Teesri Duniya's company's dance-theatre creation that's running at the Jeanne Mance St. centre until the end of the month.

Rahul Varma's company, which took its community theatre act to the streets of Park-Ex this year, never repeats itself. Its latest category-defying production opened at MAI Thursday night before a packed house.

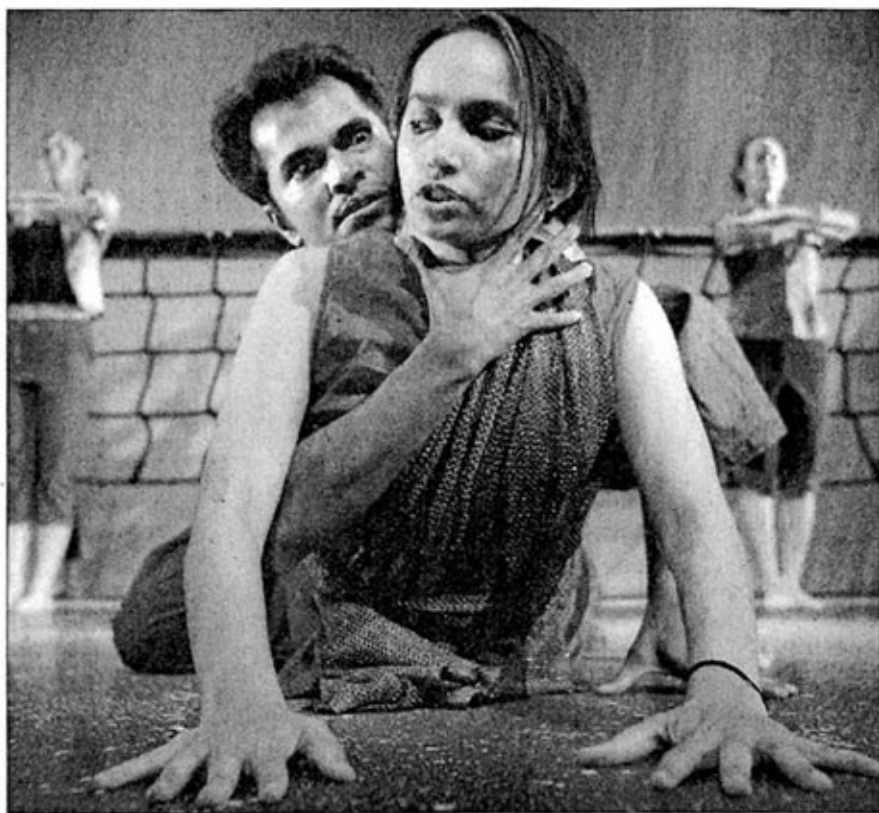
Well-designed and beautifully performed, the new show achieves a hypnotic effect through sophisticated simplicity in telling the poignant story of a war-rape victim and her child. The unspecified border conflict is all wars where women's bodies are used as a battlefield.

A powerful vehicle for the dancing and singing talents of Boston-based Aparna Sindhoo, who also directed and choreographed the performance, *A Leaf in the Whirlwind* brings together a United Nations of traditions and cultural inflections.

The original story, written by feminist author Lalithambika Atherjanam (1905-1985) was adapted for Teesri Duniya by Montreal playwright Jodi Essery. Spanish, Japanese, French, English and, of course, Hindi are all spoken during the performance by a cast that includes tango dancer Marjolyne Auger and Tomomi Morimoto, a Tokyo-trained ballet dancer and former figure skater.

The ensemble/chorus also includes UQAM-trained actor Michelle Parent who journeyed to India to learn the formal dance forms at the centre of Teesri Duniya's politically charged production.

A Mysore native, Sindhoo is recognized as the originator of a form of



JOHN MAHONEY THE GAZETTE

Director, choreographer and actor Aparna Sindhoo (foreground) and Anil Natyaveda on a set representing refugee camp, checkpoint and border crossing.

boundaries of the Bharatanatyam tradition she represents. Modern plagues like genocide, ethnic cleansing, or exile, cry out for contemporary forms of expression.

Two of India's most accomplished dancers, Anil Natyaveda and Pratheesh Shivandan, lead the ensemble/chorus, the pulse of the drama sung and danced by Sindhoo with such great passion.

Anoushka Anand's design is spare and efficient. A jungle-gym-like affair constructed with heavy rope strung between upright ladders, it worked well to represent various locations in a broken world - refugee camp, road checkpoint, border crossing, etc.

Playing live at stage right, well-travelled percussionist Patrick Graham makes a special omnicultural contribution of his own.

Teesri Duniya's slogan for the season is Staging Peace in Times of War. Its

Corrie, is a highly controversial play about a young American protester crushed to death by an Israeli tank. It runs Dec. 6-22 at the Monument National, with Sarah Stanley directing.

A Leaf in the Whirlwind, a Teesri Duniya Theatre production, until Oct. 28 at MAI, 3680 Jeanne Mance St.; 514-982-3386.

Worth noting: Jodi Essery is the only author with two of her works on a Montreal stage this week.

She's a co-founder of Sabooge Theatre, which is putting on her 2005 play *Speak Easy*, at Centaur this weekend. This year's choice for the Old Montreal theatre's Brave New Works showcase, *Speak Easy* runs at Centaur tonight through Sunday.