

## Travelling light

For those who doubted that Shakespeare's spelt entertainment with a capital 'E', Yohangza Theatre Company proved it emphatically. A clever and laud adaptation that used elements of Korean folklore and focussed on the central characters created more time for music, dance and audience interaction. A seamless blend of the traditional and the popular with tributes to everything from the Rock Musical to Korean (or was it Tamil) cinema. A generous dose of local flavour, with an understating touch of the ritual. All held together beautifully by the unbridled energy and spontaneity of the actors effortlessly masking the rigorous discipline that went into its creation. All, adding up to a true celebration of Shakespeare. Yes, Will Shakespeare traveled light last evening. Speaking an age old language of love, lust and longing. Creating a spicy blend of Kim chi and vadu mings. We started hesitantly, sampling it gingerly with our chopsticks, but very soon they fed us eating out of their hands.

Rajiv Krishnan

T. Nagar

## Theatre over technology

Adaptation at its best" and "Theatre at its best" are two terms which come to mind after viewing Yohangza Theatre Company's version of the celebrated 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' by William Shakespeare. The bard would have been pleased at the way in which director Jung-Ling Yang has absorbed the essence of the play and incorporated themes and characters from Korean culture and folklore, transforming it into a Korean play. We could easily forget that Shakespeare was the original author. Surtitles helped overcome the language barrier. But, strictly speaking, they were not needed. The movements, the miming and the music took the play forward without any hitch. In fact, it almost looked as though they were mocking at the need for "word" in a theatre production. Minimal sets and imaginative lighting helped the flow of the narrative. With their lithe and fluid movements, expressions that filtered through their faces with the ease of lightning and the absolute abandon with which they gave themselves to the stage, the actors helped the play to move smoothly. Once again, Yohangza has given the theatre back to the actor. Technology has taken the backseat. The other remarkable feature was the impressive humour, and the fantastical element, which were highlighted at every stage by the actors. Lapsing into occasional and simple Tamil was a smooth and convincing device adopted by the actors. Last but not the least, the man and the woman being made the suit of muscle, thereby ensuring a much needed lesson, was very welcome. After all, a man hating what a woman and indulging in extra-marital affairs is more believable than a woman wanting to keep a tiny slave for herself! Kudos to the director for the female perspective without raising any overt feminist flag!

Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan

Chelput

## The Yohangza magic

The busy traffic on the roads on Friday evening did not seem to deter people from turning up with gusto to see the opening play of the The Hindu MetroPlus Theatre Fest. Though the storyline was construed a little differently from the original, the cast successfully captured the minds of the audience. Special mention must be made of the cast's attempt to reach out to the Tamil section of the audience. Their interjections of a heartfelt 'anbee...' (love...) and the pleas for 'their seat' from Ajumi had the audience in fits of laughter. The surtitles (English translations of the dialogue running on a screen above the stage) ensured everyone was able to appreciate the Korean dialogues. Yet, there were a few instances where the surtitles for a couple of lines were missing, causing the audience to miss out on the flow for a few minutes. Also, the artificial smoke that was released on the stage clouded the screen at times, making it difficult to read the translations. Friday's performance proved that the theatre scene in the city is getting better by the day.

Yashasvini Rajeshwar

Student, Class X

## Stunning

An intensely physical, musical and visual play lit up the Chennai theatre scene. Exaggerated gestures decoded the dialogue better than the surtitles in a performance that was more a dance drama. The USP of the play was the seamless blending of Korean mythology with a well-known Western story. The minimal use of sets and props gave the actors the freedom to explore the stage space. The constant running, pushing, hugging, falling, throwing, gliding and dancing sustained the audience's interest for more than 90 minutes.

Mousami Ghosh

## Back to kindergarten

Yohangza's play is a 90-minute rediscovery of kindergarten days. Even the worst snob wouldn't have been able to resist cracking up at the playful antics of the Dokkabi. The prowess of the Korean performers is seen in their ability to have a predominantly adult audience guffawing at gross humour. The success of the play, to a great extent, lies in the way the actors connected with the audience. They either swung glowing rings in front of people or tossed them, bugged them and gifted them the glowing rings. There are a few performances that render evasive adjectives inadequate. Yohangza's play was one.

Vijay Ram

Velliveyal Chavan

## An Asian Bard

Shakespeare cannot sound more Asian than this. This is not just a dream, it is a revere.

Sarvaswaran. M

## Perfect connect

An eclectic mixture of impietness and the droll, bits of risqué and a lot of graceful movements, reverberating music and simple beats — this play had them all. Small wonder the audience loved it. The Dokkabi jumped all over the stage with the agility of acrobats and made it look so simple. The costumes in gossamer white for the sprites, the primary colours for the lovers and the earthy tones for Ajumi, the madstone herb gatherer, were perfect in conveying the mood and setting. The Tamil expressions ensured the connection with the audience and the litting Korean ditties, tinged at times with love and other times with fear, conveyed the midsummer madness to perfection. The actors whirled, jumped, danced and even fought with perfect rhythm and absolute grace. This season's themes were not new — all of us have seen them before — but it was the Koreanisation of the theme that left one enthralled. The joie de vivre of the Dokkabi filled the hall and resurrected the child in everyone. The tonfology left a clear message in the end and the thoughtful surtitles helped understand the nuances of the Korean belief in the spirits of the woods. The expressions on the faces of the chameleonesque lovers evoked among the laughter a sense of sadness even when you knew they would find their true love at last. Little moral mugglets are strewn everywhere and, in the midst of all the limbobery, and one can cuff them capably. The enchantment of the Korean folklore lingers long after the curtain call and all the senses are satiated. An opening night that has raised the hopes of the Chennai theatre lover, and as one of the characters in stylised Tamil would have said, poga poga perukalam.

G.MADHAVAN

Basant Nagar

## Visually magnificent

Yohangza's adaptation of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' was, firstly, a visual spectacle. All other aspects were secondary to its visual magnificence. One hardly knew what to watch as stylised choreography, tangential cantatares, energetic musicians and ongoing surtitles to the Korean dialogues demanded one's attention, all at the same time, coming together as a unified whole in the glory and magic that such a text demands. As adaptations go, this was fairly faithful to the primary plot of the original; the lovers stayed true to the characterisations of the original, while Shakespeare's Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus were eliminated, and the loines were brilliantly double-cast as the lovers themselves. The role mechanics, specifically Titia Bottom the weaver, and the sub-plot of the play-within-the-play were deftly replaced by a herb-collecting woman and her singing. Robin Goodfellow was played cleverly by a pair of impish brothers who display Puckish tendencies of mockery and laughter. But the finest attention was also the play's greatest subversion: in a wicked reversal, it is the Dokkabi queen who tricks her husband, not the other way around. The play used stylised movement that was both appealing and meaningful, accompanied precisely by thunderous beats, the choreography was varied and perfectly attuned to the play's live music of percussion and chimes. The play used quite a bit of slapstick as its humour mechanism; the movements included corporal and bodily comedy; dialogues were occasionally followed by extremely literal depictions (for example, when the character II goes back to Hermia's famous demands to be treated as a spaniel, she accompanies this with a humorous impression of a barking dog).

Manasi Subramaniam

Alwarpet