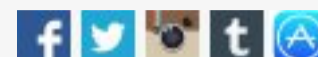




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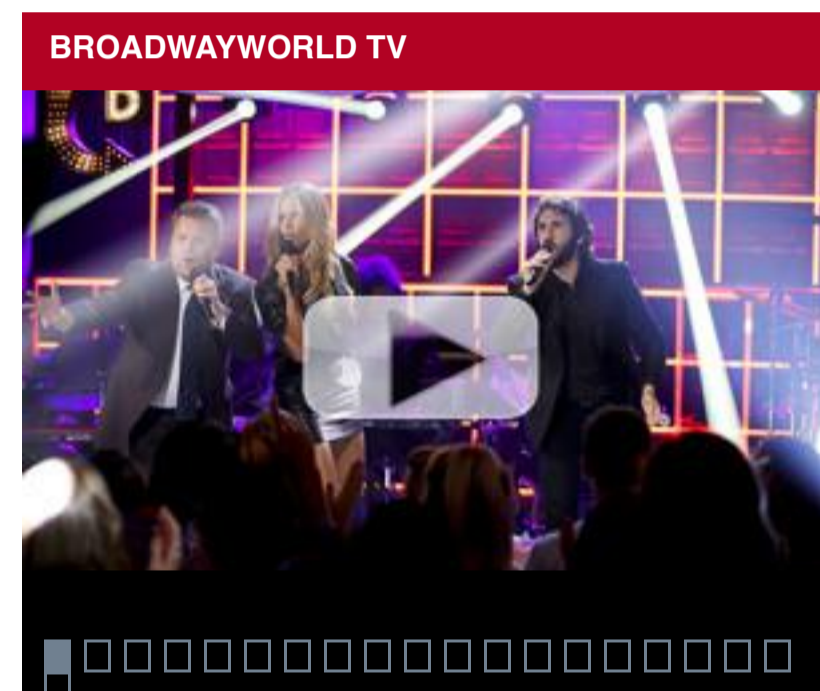
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BWW Review: ERASING BORDERS FESTIVAL Transports The Audience To A Higher Plane

August 17 6:50 AM 2016



by Juan Michael Porter II



Carolina Prada
Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.
Photo Credit: Darial Sneed

Presented in association with the **Indo-American Arts Council**, The Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance took over day two of **Battery Dance Festival** on Monday, August 15th, 2016 to showcase paragons of various Classical Indian Dance styles to New York audiences. Continuing in the generous spirit put forth by **Battery Dance Company's** Artistic Director, **Jonathan Hollander**, the artists of the Erasing Borders Festival

transported the audience to a higher plane of existence through their technical virtuosity and rhapsodic delight in performing. A special thank you must be given to Air India for transporting these marvelous artists to our shores free of charge. As I stated in my **review** of opening night, "It takes a village." In the words of Mr. Hollander, "I want to say it's kind of obvious but the biggest sponsors of this festival are the dancers themselves." Thank goodness for this village of wonderful sponsors.



Carolina Prada
 Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.
 Photo Credit: [Darial Sneed](#)

A highlight of this year's Erasing Borders Festival was that it took place on India's Independence Day; perhaps that is why each artist infused the work with such celestial splendor. We opened with [Carolina Prada](#) of Colombia - who is based in New Dehli, India - performing the choreography of her Guru, Janmejy Sai Babu in the Mayurbhanj Chhau style. It should be noted that each artist seemed to personify a specific human virtue. In the case of Ms. Prada, that virtue was intimacy. I felt as if she were dancing for me alone during her majestic solo. This piece showed the embodiment of feminine and masculine energy in one godly being. With her extreme extension, gravity defying barrel turns, leaps and bounds, perfect balances, and tremendous expression, Ms. Prada proved the perfect incarnation of God as a dual gendered being.



Surabhi Bharadwaj
 Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.
 Photo Credit: [Darial Sneed](#)




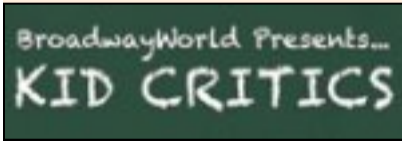
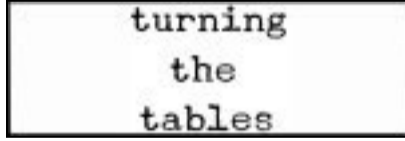

[Surabhi Bharadwaj](#) of San Francisco taught the audience the power of projection through her solo, "Aadu Pambe". Choreographed in the Bharatanatyam style, every gesture and turn of the head in this emotionally affecting piece seemed to convey exquisitely rendered details from an epic mythological tale. Ms. Bharadwaj expressed graceful supplication before some godly creature through the power of

kundalini (the feminine energy at the base of the spine). With shocking balances that never seemed to freeze - rather they constantly shifted almost imperceptibly - and coiling arms that looked serpentine, Ms. Bharadwaj kept the audience entranced even as her movements repeated themselves. In repetition, the power of her gestures seemed to deepen. A curious thing about Indian Dance is that the transitions between movements occur without much cause. In western dance, performers attempt to disguise the shifts of weight as if they were gauche; Indian Dance

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honors transitions and preparations as worthy and beautiful in their own right.



Sooraj Subramaniam
Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.
Photo Credit: [Darial Sneed](#)

It was a special treat to witness [Sooraj Subramaniam](#) of Gent, Belguim. Much like Ms. Prada, there was a dual gendered nature to his portrayal. Interestingly he struck a balance between what is pretty and what is handsome. Every tilt of his head or flick of the wrist was delivered with the delicacy of a lovely maiden until the sudden opening of his arms in a martial gesture brought forth the bearing of Anjura. As a

virtue, Mr. Subramaniam's performance - of Guru Gajendra Kumar Panda's "Sthai" - choreographed in the Odissi style - exuded grace and hospitality. To my eyes, Mr. Subramaniam was an idol brought to life as a Pre-Raphaelite rendering of fire on the air; a will-o'-the-wisp dispensing benedictions unto the world. His choreography moved frequently from deep plié in second position to rapid turns with incredible head, eye, and ribcage isolations that kept the audience's gaze rocking back and forth. Simultaneously, Mr. Subramaniam's kept his head dancing along an arc on the diagonal with every step that he took. The precision of this coordination was breathtaking. If you've ever seen someone gracefully juggle fire, a bowling ball, knives, and a parakeet at the same time then you have an idea of how difficult this was; as performed by Mr. Subramaniam it looked like a walk in the park.

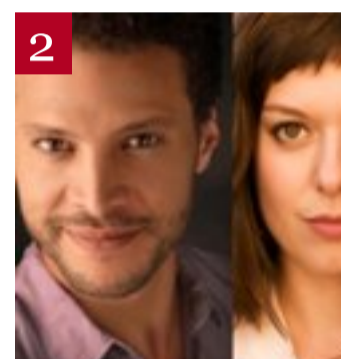


Sooraj Subramaniam
Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.
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V-Taper Solution

[Avijit Das](#) of Bangalore looked like a Disney Prince professing his undying love to some lucky damsel in "Dasavtaram, Tarangam". Choreographed by Guru, DR Vempatti Chinna Satyam, this



Avijit Das

Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.

Photo Credit: [Darial Sneed](#)

piece presented Mr. Das as both a prince and a warrior, or a tiger in love. Granted this tiger used spry pas de chats, slicing arms along a diagonal, and a powerful attitude devant - that looked like a tail ready to envelop a loved one within a tight embrace - to express his passion. Ardor - or pride that is strong because of love - was what this dance communicated to me, particularly during the bowl dance. In the final

section of this solo, Mr. Das stood on the edges of a brass bowl and shimmied rhythmically through lower body isolations to "walk" and slide forward across the stage. The vibrations of his lower body seemed to shake the very foundation upon which he danced, and yet to look at him from the waist upwards was to see a smiling man hovering in the air. Words are inadequate in detailing such marvels; some things have to be seen to be believed.



Pt. Krishan Mohan Mishra

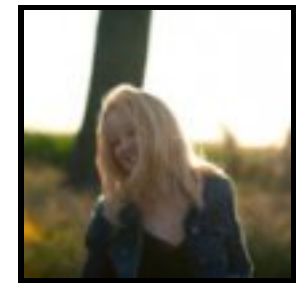
Battery Dance Festival Day 2. Wagner Park.

Photo Credit: [Darial Sneed](#)

All of the performers of the Erasing Borders Festival where masters of rhythm, though none more so than [Pt. Krishna Mohan Mishra](#), Maestro of the Kathak style who gave the audience a tutorial in musicality and percussion during his live improvisation. His virtue was wisdom. Accompanied by the Brooklyn based artists - [Narendra Budhkar](#) on Tabla accompaniment and [Abhik Mukherjee](#) on Sitar accompaniment - Maestro Mishra set the

stage ablaze with his fast footwork before dazzling the audience with an exhibition of ultra quick eyebrow isolations that reduced all in attendance to fitful giggles. After trading patterns back and forth with his fellow musicians - similar to tap dancers in tap circles - the audience was brought into the band and taught to clap a rhythmic code in conjunction with Maestro Mishra's rapid fire stamping feet. As a group, we were about one hundred years too early to work with Maestro Mishra but what a thrill to have experienced it. Every slap of his foot against the stage seemed to reverberate across the water into New Jersey; every gentle tap seemed to whisper to me as if we were sitting across the table from each other. This was power; this was range. Even now I can feel the energy that he sent forth into the ether buzzing at the tip of my fingers. What a wonder! The Erasing Borders Festival did precisely what its title suggests; it erased the borders between the souls of its performers and the audience. I am sad that is over, though I anxiously await tomorrow's performance at Battery Dance Festival.

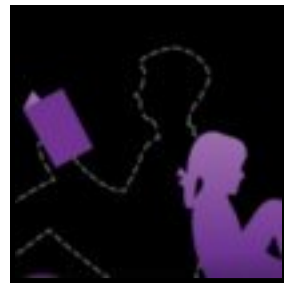
Battery Dance Festival continues through Saturday August 20th, 2016. For more information, visit: batterydance.org/battery-dance-festival



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Juan Michael Porter II was born in Mobile, Alabama. He moved to NYC as a teenager to study with David Howard, Troy Powell, Milton Myers.



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