

Kalidas and Rumors

by Dr. V. V. Raman



Kalidas Cast of "Rumors"

Front (from left): Neda Muzaffar, Sanjay Maggirwar, Vithal Sanapala
Back (from left): Jose Maliekal, Janani Parthasarathi, Balwant Karlekar, Lata Karlekar, Shalini Damani, Baal Bhagat, Vasantha Ravindra, Samir Bhagwat, Rekha Gholkar, and Padmanabh Kamath (Producer)

The Indian community in Rochester has launched yet another project of cultural interest: They have formed an amateur dramatic association and named it Kalidas, after the preeminent Sanskrit playwright of classical India. Their debut was a dinner performance on November 17 to a packed hall of mostly ICC members who had just finished a hearty meal catered to everyone's delight by India Palace of the Bajajs, and enlivened by friendly conversations at various tables.



As if to affirm the fact that most of us have made America our home, the first play attempt by this group was an American play: Neil Simon's

Rumors. It is a light-hearted farce in which a series of guests arrive at the home of the Deputy Mayor of New York City to celebrate the 10th wedding anniversary of Charley and Myra Brock. The first couple to arrive (the Gormans) discover to their shock and surprise that Charley had survived what seemed like a failed effort to shoot himself. As other guests come one after another, the Gormans try to cover up their awkward discovery, and then they reveal to them little by little what they had found. Even as the guests bring their own stories to the scene, attempts to conceal and then reveal the finding lead to a series of hilarious situations, until a couple of police knock at the door to investigate a totally unrelated matter. At this point, the guests try their best to hide the imagined

crime. But in the end, it is a case of all's-well-that-ends-well. It is discovered that it had been an accident and not a suicide attempt. The performances turned out to be superb, to the pleasant surprise of everyone, and especially of the skeptics who wondered about the choice of an American play by an Indian group whose tongues still remember their various Indian languages.

All the actors were professionals: not professionals in acting, but in software engineering, teaching, librarianship, computer science, etc. There was even a retired professor and his wife, a retired financial analyst. Everyone played the part remarkably well, enthused as much by their own obvious love of acting as a hobby, as by the hearty laughter of a cheering and entertained audience.



Sanjay Maggirwar who directed the play deserved to be congratulated and credited, and all the actors and behind-the-scene workers must also be thanked. Credit

for initiating this project goes perhaps to many people, but I would like to mention two of them explicitly. One is Shyamal Mitra who did a superb job of directing and presenting the first full length play by Indians in Rochester, and whose success probably inspired the founding of this drama club; and the other is Padmanabh Kamath who is untiring not only in his support of ICC's activities,



but also commendably creative in introducing newer projects to the community. Kalidas's resounding success in this first endeavor bodes well for its future. I wish the participants every success in the fulfillment of the promise they have made to the community to bring out at least two plays every year, one in May and one in November, from 2007 on. Let each of us do our little to enable Kalidas in their undertakings.

Kalidas is currently under the umbrella of the Hindu Heritage Summer Camp, Inc. – a not-for-profit corporation. Following are members of the Kalidas Committee: Shashi Gholkar, Surendar Jeyadev, Padmanabh Kamath, Satish Kandlikar, Sanjay Maggirwar, Rajesh Mehta, Shyamal Mitra, Vasantha Ravindra, Nagin Shah and Ram Prasad Sunkara.