

THE CEMETERY CLUB by Ivan Menchell

– A Kalidas Play reviewed by Marilu Raman

Once again Kalidas, the Indo-American Community Theater Group of Rochester, staged a delightful play on May 29, 30 and 31, 2009..This poignant play with a touch of dark humor is about three Jewish friends who enjoyed life together, have lost their husbands within a period of four years. What binds them now is their shared sorrow and their agreement to have tea followed by a visit to their husbands' gravesites once a month. However, each reacts to the loss in very different ways:

Ida (Janani Parthasarathi) is the even-tempered, sensitive one, who keeps the trio anchored. She is ready to move on with her life and proposes that they relax their rigid cemetery routine, which is welcomed



by Lucille but scorned by Doris. Of course, there is a romance budding here, with the butcher on the corner!

Lucille (Kathryn Jude) is feisty, noisy, interested in expensive clothes at bargain prices, and flirtatious with any man who comes her way. We discover that she was not really happily married and that in spite of all the man-chasing she brags about she has been unsuccessful in landing a real date and consequently has been a rather lonely woman these years.

Doris (Shahida Rehmani) is traditional, even priggish and judgmental. She is not ready to let go of the regular cemetery visits, in fact, she vehemently opposes any such thought. When she and Lucille discover that Sam, the butcher, (Rahul Laroia) is becoming interested in Ida, and offers to take her to the wedding of a common friend, the two friends scheme to talk Sam out of his plans. They are well-meaning, but selfish and insensitive to Ida's needs.

Poor Sam is caught in the net of the meddling women, and wisely decides to take a fourth woman, Mildred, (Kanchana Mendes) to the wedding. Ida is shocked and hurt. After the party, when the friends are staying the night at Ida's, she discovers that her two "friends" were instrumental in scaring Sam away.

She is livid and leaves Lucille and Doris to fend for themselves. Doris is repentant of her actions but does



not get a chance to tell Ida because she dies in her sleep of a heart-attack. Luckily Sam gathers his courage to ask Ida out again. On that

score at least there is a happy ending.

Janani Parthasarathi, Shahida Rehmani and Kathryn Jude played off each other wonderfully well. Janani showed a range of emotions that had the audience often listening in pin-drop silence. She got us wrapped up in the pathos of the story. Kathryn Jude was hilarious in her outrageous fur-coat, fur hat and golden purse. She exhibited a range of facial expressions that had some of us just watching her! And no one would have guessed that Shahida Rehmani did not have any prior stage acting experience. She seemed so natural, and she projected great self-assurance. Kanchana Mendes was a dashing, confident date for Sam, with obvious prior acting experience, and clear diction that was a pleasure to listen to. I hope we'll see more of her on the Kalidas stage in the future.

Rahul Laroia portrayed his character in a gentlemanly quiet way. We saw him more as a kindly professor than a neighborhood butcher in a Jewish quarter, but we appreciate his willingness to accept such an out-of-character role!



Heartfelt thanks to Sanjay Maggirwar, director of the play, for another wonderful evening of entertainment. We know the many hours that are required from all participants to create such a production. Our community is grateful to

have dedicated people like him, the Kamaths, and the cast, willing to put in the effort in order to entertain us

twice a year. Kudos to the set designers, set construction crew and stage managers: that was a great stage set, very cleverly designed with the cemetery behind the large window curtains of Ida's home. It all seemed to work! At the performance that we attended, the voices were clear throughout, which attests to the skill of the technical assistants.

The Cemetery Club

A review by

Libby Cardy, Medical Assistant. Penfield OBGYN

The Ladies of Penfield, OBGYN would like to thank Kalidas, the Indo-American Community Theater Group of Rochester for a wonderful evening of lively entertainment. A production of "The Cemetery Club", written by Ivan Menchell and directed by Sanjay Maggirwar.

We entered the auditorium to a lovely ambiance of low lighting, the smell of wonderful food, and lots of smiling faces and handshakes. And much to our delight we were seated at the best seats in the house right in front of center stage. It was just lovely.

The production of "The Cemetery Club" was very well done. The story is about three Jewish widows who meet once a month for tea before going to visit their late husbands' graves. Ida, (played by Janani Parthasarathi) is sweet and ready to move on with her life, Lucille, (played by our very own Kathy Juda) is feisty and just wants to have lots of fun, and Doris, (played by Shahida Rehmani) is judgmental and not as willing to accept change.

There is a "love interest" that all the ladies try to win his affection, Sam the Butcher (played by our very own Dr. Rahul Laroia), who seemed a bit confused at times about who exactly he would date. All players did a wonderful job. The comedic styling of Kathy Juda, (Lucille) kept us laughing throughout the evening. Janani Parthasarathi (Ida) kept our hearts warm with her sweetness and sincerity. Shahida Rehmani (Doris) kept us guessing if should would finally accept change, that was so badly wanted by her two friends. Dr. Rahul Laroia (Sam the Butcher) made us fall in love with him with his smile and charming manner.

This play is very heartwarming and thought provoking. The production was extremely well done and expertly directed by Sanjay Maggirwar. It would be a pleasure to see the players and director all together in another production in the future. They all had very good chemistry together and were a very "nice fit".

Thank you again for the very pleasurable evening at the Kalidas, Indo-American Community Theater Group of Rochester.

HSC Summer Camp at ICC

Janani Parthasarathi

Once again ICC was buzzing with laughter and activity all of July with the Hindu Heritage Summer Camp. This year saw the largest enrolment with 185 kids plus



an additional 60 for counselors and Staff, for both sessions. Campers came from California to Boston and from Canada to Louisiana.

Those of us involved with this year after year find it enormously satisfying more than words can describe. The joy of watching a kid come into camp on the first day, very reluctant, hesitant and unsure and by the third day or so, entertaining the entire camp with his or her antics is unparalleled. The camaraderie and the sense of identity this camp provides lasts a life time.

The first session Camp Director was Praveer Melwani of Toronto, a nine year veteran of camp and the second session was Camp Director was Anjali Parthasarathi of Fairport, a eleven year attendee of camp. We have had the privilege of watching these children attend every single summer, grow into responsible positions at camp and finally take the lead. Both directors were 19 years old and had to manage and execute the activities on a daily basis for 2 full weeks. The camp provides unmatched leadership opportunities for kids from the ages of 13 to 19 in roles like Karma Yoga, Counselor, Cabin Head, Assistant Director and Director.

While the basic structure remains the same, some new activities are introduced every year. An extra highlight this year was a visit by the rock band called Bamboo Shoots, which entertained the campers with a 2 hour rock concert. The band's drummer is a camp Alumni from many years ago.

We also had a documentary film maker from NYU who plans on creating a half hour film for PBS.



We hope that this product will be done in the next 6-8 months.

Stay tuned.