

Tribute to Birubala Rabha through Musical Ballad 'Bala – A Musical Ballad' '



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Darpan Dance Akademi, a prominent dance institution located in Guwahati, recently presented 'Bala', an intricate and stimulating musical ballad, at the Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium of Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, honouring the late Birubala Rabha, a Padma Shri recipient celebrated for her valiant efforts in combating witch hunting and her commitment to challenging deeply ingrained superstitions. The musical ballad garnered significant attention not only for its artistic expression but also for its poignant message, which highlighted issues of social justice and empowerment.

The primary component that enthralled the audience was the depiction of the protagonist in 'Bala', skilfully performed by Dr. Anjana Moyee Saikia, who has also conceived and choreographed the musical ballad. Dr. Saikia is the head of Darpan Dance Akademi, and a renowned and multifaceted dancer proficient in Sattriya and Odissi. The musical ballad's intricate choreography, exquisite music, and the engaging narrative vividly brought to life the struggles faced by Biribala Rabha in her fight against witch hunting, superstition, and other deeply ingrained societal issues. The screenplay, design, and directorial vision for 'Bala' were meticulously crafted by Manik Roy, a prominent theatrical figure, wherein the unyielding essence of Bala was vividly manifested through compelling narrative techniques, judiciously incorporating the art of puppetry. Roy employed the ancient storytelling tradition of Assam referred to as the 'Shruti-Naad Parampara', which is an oral tradition or Vachik Parampara, where the narrative is conveyed and simultaneously represented through music, dance, and drama forms.

The musical ballad honours Birubala Rabha's unwavering resolve and her deep commitment to creating social change in Assam. It captures her spirit of determination and highlights her role as a tireless advocate for a better society. 'Bala' recognizes her persistence in fighting for justice, education, and rights for vulnerable groups, especially women and children. Rabha's efforts have helped raise awareness about important issues, pushing for policy changes and community support.

The musical ballad also reflects her leadership in activism, often risking personal comfort to stand up for those who need help most. Her work has led to tangible improvements in local conditions, such as better access to healthcare and education. The ballad honours her as a symbol of hope and resilience reminding viewers of her sacrifices and her unbreakable spirit.

The ballad emphasises Birubala Rabha's identity as a genuine social reformer who remains resolute in the face of adversity, simultaneously commemorating her accomplishments and motivating future generations to ardently pursue social justice with dedication and tenacity.

Each movement of the dancers conveyed a deep emotional resonance, mirroring not only the suffering and challenges faced, but also their tenacity and strength in overcoming adversity.

Dr. Anjana Moyee Saikia's choreography incorporated unique movements tailored specifically for the puppets, distinguishing them from those utilized in folk dances and dramatic contexts. In contrast, Manik Roy employed dramatic elements and poetic devices to enrich his script, as well as his design and direction, with the intention of enlightening the audience rather than merely providing entertainment.

The musical ballad serves as a reminder of the importance of awareness and education in breaking the cycle of fear and ignorance that often perpetuates these harmful practices. The creatively crafted music of Mandeep Mahanta was supported by the contributions of Rupjyoti Konwar and Jaynath Deka. The vocal performances were provided by Panchuna Rabha, Bhiolina Boro, and Mandeep Mahanta. The poems featured in the musical ballad were composed by Debajyoti Sarmah, while the lyrics were penned by Luit Konwar Rudra Barua and Manik Roy. The lighting design was executed by Tapan Kumar Baruah, while the live instrumental music featuring authentic Assamese percussion contributed significantly to the dramatic impact of the performance. Dolly Malakar served as the anchor for the event.

The various other roles in 'Bala - A Musical Ballad' are portrayed by Abhijit Chutia, Kaushik Kishore Hazarika, Karnika Phukon, Tanmoyee Bora, Tamasha Saharia, Bandita Deka, Deekshita Das, Sunita Boro, Bhagyashree Mazumdar, Mriganga Raj Roy, Evan Saikia, Param Das, and Firdoss Amin Choudhury. Mamoni Sakia, a close friend of Birubala Rabha, was recognized at the conclusion of the event, and Komoli Bala, the daughter of Birubala Rabha, was also honoured by Darpan.

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