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THE ARTS

CALCUTTA SATURDAY

Rhythms of silence

Patrizia Cerroni, whose name in ancient Rome meant the aristocrats, is a modern dancer from Italy. Though trained in various classical and modern dance forms, she has chosen to evolve a style of her own which she claims is free from the fetters of any rigid, stylised movements. And it sure is. It leaves the Indian audience a little stumped to see a dancer move around the stage without any music—she performs in total silence—keeping to a beat and a theme which comes to her in a “magic way.”

Patrizia believes in magic and mysterious things. “Any creation is magic. I believe in reincarnation and am interested in what is invisible. In Europe, I’m considered a very modern dancer but I always tell the critics that my style is very old. Who knows to which time it belongs?”

Is she influenced by the Indian philosophy and the theory of rebirth? She answers mischievously, “Maybe Indian philosophers were influenced by me, perhaps in my previous birth.”

Dancing since the age of six, Patrizia considers all her movements unique, because “the way in which I move is just my way. For me, dance is music,—inaudible but visible. In silence I compose a piece and later I sit with the musicians and set music to it. Others try to tell a story, they have themes outside the music. But my dance knows how to be like music,” she explains, her face showing intense concentration.

She considers her dance distinct from most of those in the western world. “In most western dances and culture, the movements are sharp and angular. Not that I can’t achieve angles but I just don’t want it. My dance movements are rounded, it is fluid like water. I’ve trained myself from inside, and developed my own technique. I have special exercises, special dynamics and a special way of breathing to conserve energy.”

She must have at least two hours of dancing all by herself in a day even if she has to practice 10 hours with her

Sumita Banerjea met Patrizia Cerroni, the modern dancer from Italy who delighted the audience by an item performed in total silence in a recital held this week in the city



Patrizia Cerroni: a silent dance

troupe which she established in 1974. “As soon as I wake up, I must dance for at least two hours,” she says.

Obviously with a busy schedule like hers, she never even thinks of getting married or

having and raising children. “My company is my family. Where do I have the time for children. I am afraid, it is very difficult to create dance forms as well as babies at the same time.” And then she follows up

her brief and pregnant silence with a smile, “May be I will be able to do that some time later.”

India for her is like water to the thirsty. “I have been coming to India since 1979 and I stay here for at least four months. I am thirsty for strength and India gives me a lot of impulses to create. “The most important experience for me in India was the influence of the classical music here which influenced me deeply.” No wonder this is her fourth visit to the country though she has come to Calcutta for the first time.

Does her style unique in its own way, become binding for her students, as she has faced the problems herself? “No, there is a discipline in this form too, although you can express yourself freely and give vent to your feelings the way you want to.”

Patrizia has an interesting outlook towards life. “I can die now or tomorrow, who knows? That does not worry me at all. Life and death are both interesting experiences. But how can I let a moment go without movement? You see, I am like the sun, full of life. I feel attracted to sorrows and darkness. My only way of growing up is through dance. This is my way to reach truth.”

Is Patrizia not scared of getting old and of not being so supple, of reaching a stage when she will not be able to dance the way she wants? “I am still young and use my body. What matters most is to dance to the music from within. I will reach the peak when I will be able to dance with my eyes alone.”

Does she feel that her students will continue her style of dancing? “What an artiste can leave behind is strength, not a person. Through the strength, other dancers continue the tradition. But the specific language of the dancer cannot continue in the same way. Art is only a pretext to give and leave strength and energy flowing in the world. And anyway, for me it hardly matters whether others see or hear me. I am not at all interested in history.”