

Bombay Dreams

Judith van Praag

Mark your calendars for Bollywood is coming to town! Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre is the final stop on the National Tour of "Bombay Dreams".

Entranced by the allure of Bollywood movies and the music of celebrated Indian composer A.R. Rahman (The Lord of the Rings: The Musical) filmmaker Shekhar Kapur and Andrew Lloyd Webber came up with the idea of a Bollywood based musical.

Bollywood is the epicenter of the thriving South Asian film industry, India's answer to Hollywood. Bollywood films already show the elements of a musical: song and dance. But Bollywood films offer more than that; they are extravaganzas complete with comedy and daredevil thrills. The plots are usually melodramatic and frequently employ familiar story lines such as: star-crossed lovers, angry meddling parents, love triangles and conniving villains.

"Bombay Dreams" tells the story of Akaash (Sachin Bhatt - known for The Asian/European tour of West Side Story, Aida at the Gateway Playhouse), a handsome young tour guide from the slums of Bombay who dreams of becoming the next Bollywood star, the object of his desire Priya (Reshma Shetty - known for West Side Story, La Boheme, Don Giovanni) and all the complications that arise when Akaash faces fame, fortune, and the obligations to his family, friends and Paradise slum. The plot includes frequent reference to the city's change of name from Bombay to Mumbai, as well as the accompanying identity issues.

This musical journey within "Bombay Dreams" is an exploration of the importance of cultural heritage, the price of success, the bonds of friendship and the power of true love.

The original show (with lyrics by Don Black and plot by Meera Syal) ran in London from June 2002 through June 2004. For the eight month Broadway run, the "book" of the musical was rewritten, many songs were cut, and other songs added. The musical has received three Tony Nominations for Costume Design, Choreography and Orchestrations.

For the road show, the musical experienced another makeover, all with the intent to make the material more accessible. Before each performance audiences are treated to half an hour of Bollywood culture and trivia on the big screen.

For cast member Diane Angela Fong "Bombay Dreams" made one of her own dreams come true. A dancer from early childhood on, she had just graduated from UC Berkeley with degrees in Molecular Cell Biology and Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies, and had started working with a Mohs surgeon, when she was asked to audition for the musical. Going on tour was a wonderful experience.

"The cast and crew have become like family to me. I've made so many lifelong friends in this show, they've made this tour an enjoyable and unforgettable experience."

So much so, that for now she'll put her other dream, to become a pediatrician, on the back burner to pursue a career in the theatre.

The musical's lush score, glittering costumes and exotic dance numbers will be right at home at The 5th Avenue Theatre. The lavish sets include a giant fountain that drenches the cast in a spectacular "Hollywood of Old" manner.

"The fountain is as integral to the show as the chandelier in "The Phantom" [of the Opera]. There must be a wet sari scene in every Bollywood movie," says Nick Manos, Atlanta's Theater of the

Stars Managing Director, and producer for the tour. "Bombay Dreams" is all about spectacle, charisma, color and choreography, a must see for the whole family.

"If it were a movie, it would probably be rated PG," says Nick Manos. "There are some mature themes in the show, some coarse language and suggestive situations that are not intended for young audiences. A reasonable comparison would be 'West Side Story'."

The tour cast for BOMBAY DREAMS includes Sandra Allen (Broadway's Sunset Boulevard, Flower Drum Song) as Rani; Deep Katdare (CSI: Miami, Law & Order, Broadway's Bombay Dreams) as Vikram; Aneesh Sheth as Sweetie; Christine Toy Johnson as Kitty DeSousa; Suresh John as Madan and Marie Kelly as Shanti.

Ensemble cast members are: Enrique Acevedo, Tia Altinay, Nita Baxani, Shane Bland, Wendy Calio, Sujana Chand, Tiffany Cooper, Aaron Coulson, Diane Angela Fong, Monica Kapoor, Namita Kapoor, Stephanie Crain Klemons, Jeremy Leiner, Garrick Macatangay, Kenneth Maharaj, Anil Margsayam, Skie Ocasio, Desmond Osborne, Christopher Quiban, Kristian Richards, and Rommy Sandhu.

"Bombay Dreams" is directed by Baayork Lee, choreographed by Lisa Stevens, and Kenneth Foy signed for scenic design.

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