

CULTURE



Alison Bradshaw — THE BATTALION

Members of the Odissi Dance Show perform their classical form at Rudder Sunday.

## Odissi show spotlights classical Indian dance

By Keely Wirries

In a tribute to Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra, a crowd filled Rudder Forum almost to capacity Sunday for the fourth annual Odissi Dance Show. The event featured Odissi dancers from Texas and New York.

Most of the items were choreographed by Mahapatra and his son, and the show was

an opportunity to pay tribute to him, said Yashwini Raghuram, assistant artistic director to the ODC dance company.

The shows' dances focused on the oldest surviving classical Indian dance style, called Odissi. Aparupa Chatterjee, artistic director and agricultural research assistant, said the dance style is a great platform for people today to connect with their heritage.

Chatterjee said the event is a way for Indian-American students to learn about their culture and be connected with home.

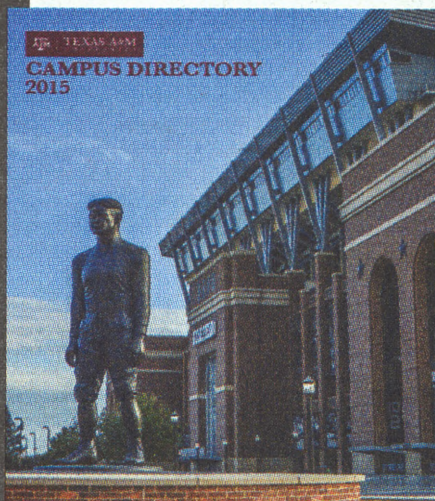
For students who are not Indian-American, there is still much to learn from Indian dancing, said sociology freshman Victoria Heriford.

"I saw a flier and am really interested in the Indian culture so I thought it'd be a really cool experience to come check out," Heriford said.

In Chatterjee's dance, hands, eyes and motions are used to tell a story. The dancers use their feet and bells tied around their ankles to accentuate the beat of the "raga" and "thala" of the song.

"This isn't something you do everyday. When you dance you train different parts of your muscles to do something different for you, which you don't need for everyday life, so you have to do some body conditioning to be able to do this for a long, long time," Raghuram said.

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this huge political terrorist organization running through the Middle East — now you see them in the media almost every day, this Islamic extremist group, so then that kind of just pushes that idea of Islamophobia on to people."

Munir said the event is key to raising awareness and working toward fixing the image of Islam.

"I think it's important for people to know that we are Muslims, but we are also students, Americans just like everyone else," Munir said. "We are just trying to protect our faith from being hijacked by these barbaric people and I think that it's important for people to see that this is just a small percentage of the Islamic population of the world, that most Muslims are kind, loving, warm-hearted people."

Sana Rahman, psychology senior, said the key to fighting Islamophobia is knowledge.

"Fear is bred by not knowing something or the unknown and all that stuff, so I feel like once people know more they feel more comfortable talking to you," Rahman said.

Rahman said being a good Muslim is reflected in one's actions.

"You can dress a certain way, you can wear a Hijab, but that doesn't make you a good Muslim," Rahman said. "Because there are people who will act one way in front of people and act another way behind closed doors. So you are supposed to be a good Muslim, and treat others kindly and do good deeds and that should reflect your religion as well."

Nadeem said he believes that the differences that divide religion are just perceived.

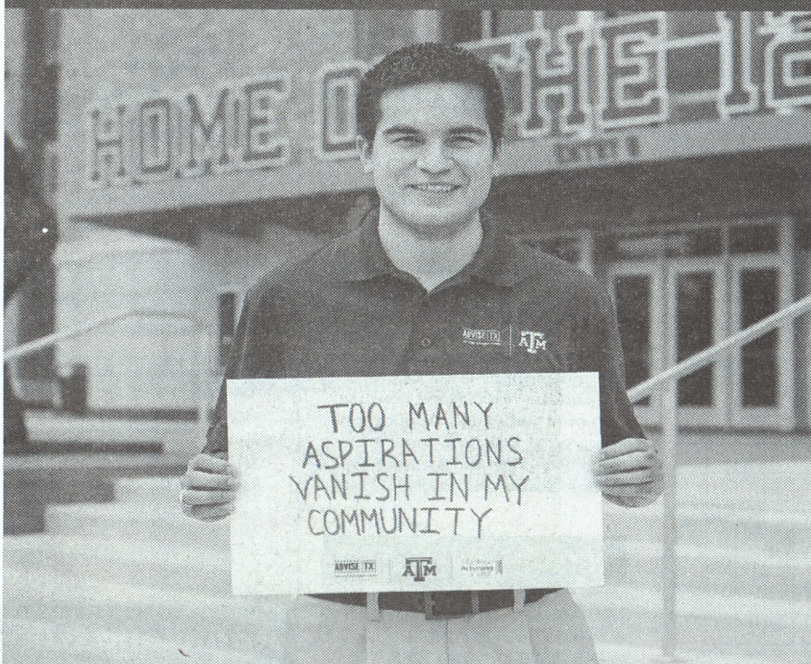
"I feel like people think that Allah is a separate God than the God that Christians pray to, when in fact Allah, when you look it up, it's an Arabic word for God. It's just Arabic for God, and I hesitate to say this because when I say this people get upset. They say, 'No way do we pray to the same god,' but in fact I really do believe we all pray to the same God."

Munir said he encourages people to come and ask questions.

"We want to make sure they know that we are like everyone else, our beliefs might be a little bit different, but at the end of the day we are all Aggies," Munir said.

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