BALI BY CALIFORNIA MOONLIGHT
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It was a lovely moonlit evening. Even the five-lane freeway seemed peaceful. As we neared San Jose, just south of San Francisco, my thoughts flew back to when I was a small girl listening to my Dutch step-father tell me all about exotic Bali. He was born and raised on Java. I heard fascinating stories of their people, pagoda, temples, the incredible beauty of the island and all about their dance and music. He showed me pictures of Balinese women and I remember thinking that they were surely the most beautiful and graceful women in the world.

Tonight, April 13th, many years later, I was about to "revisit" that faraway enchanted paradise here in downtown San Jose, transported by the 1991 Asian Pacific Performing Arts Festival's "Musical Beasts and Beings."

Once parked, my companions and I began searching for the entrance. A cool breeze made my friend Devi Param and I glad we had brought along our Indian wool shawls. Finally, other sari-clad women converged on the walk in front of us and we discreetly followed them to the entrance. Anticipation grew as we settled in front row seats.

They program burst open with a ferocious Chinese lion dance. The bigger-than-life beast benignly terrorized us with bulging yellow eyes and huge, batting green eyelids. He chases away evil spirits and brings good luck, I was told.

Mythili Kumar of Abhinaya Dance Company with two of her best dancers and Jyothirmayi Lakkaraju ignited the fiery potential of the Kuchipudi dance style to

convey an uninhibited spectrum of human emotion in "Power of Saturn."

The highlight of the evening for me was "Arjuna Tapa," performed by the outstanding Bay Area Balinese ensemble, the Gamelan Sekar Jaya. Choreographed by Ni Wayan Iriani, the music score was by I Wayan Sujaha.

Gamelan music consists of metal gongs, flutes, several varieties of metallophones (bronze-keyed xylophones) and double-ended drums. The musicians, men and women, in their elegant costumery of bright emerald greens and gilt lavenders, sat on either side of the stage, facing each other. The artists danced in between four rows of musicians weaving a tapestry of sight and sound. The opening dancers, three ladies in salmon pink and livid lavender costumes with shimmering headdresses, seemed to float and glide across the stage in slow motion with the fluttering of their fingers matching perfectly the music which seemed to flow endlessly rising and falling in volume like small waves lapping up on a beach. It was almost hypnotic, and I found myself wishing it would never end.

Though I definitely missed not seeing the Tibetan Chaksam-Pa group supposed to be there - I heard they spent the day with their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, visiting from India - the evening was pure magic.

A Balinese Gamelan dancer frightens in a friendly way at the 1991 Asian Pacific Performing Arts Festival.

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