

Dear Judges:

Reporter Abhinaya Natesh was just getting started in the newsroom when her colleague (that would be me) passed on a story idea about a local Indian classical music festival that could use additional video coverage.

What I didn't know at that point is that Abhinaya herself is a trained classical dancer who loves Indian classical arts. The story hooked her from the start.

She was excited to discover that New West residents Cassius Khan and Amika Kushwaha were working so hard to keep Indian classical arts alive in this country – when those same arts are struggling even in their homeland.

“We talked all about the couple's passion for keeping the classical arts alive when people (including people of South Asian origin) almost categorize the art form as ‘boring,’ and the importance of being connected to your roots,” Abhinaya explains.

“As a video reporter, I had a mini-doc-style vision in my mind of how I wanted the video element. Once I filmed the interviews with the couple on camera about their passion, I directed them for some B-roll shots,” she outlines.

“Given the art form's intricate movement, I knew right from the start I wanted to capture the footage of the dancer's footwork and her grace. My knowledge of customs also helped me jot out a storyboard in my mind to capture everything about the art form in the video, which would complement the written story — including the Ghungroo (the jewellery with bells that's wrapped around the dancer's ankle), the incense sticks in their house and more.

“Ultimately, the story was a reflection of my own understanding of the art form and what I would like for the readers to know about the art form the couple was working hard to keep alive.”

The end result was an appealing and engaging feature that both informed and entertained readers in our print and online editions, with a thoughtfully crafted written narrative to accompany the mini-documentary-style video.

We're very proud of Abhinaya's work and excited about what she adds to the newsroom. We hope you enjoy this multimedia feature.

Sincerely,
Julie MacLellan, assistant editor