

नागेश्वरहाय त्रिलोचनाय भस्माङ्गराय महेश्वराय RAGAMALA  
• DANCE COMPANY •

नतियाय शुद्धाय दशमभार्याय तस्मै नमः Raneeramaswamy & Aparna Raneeramaswamy's  
Fires of Varanasi:  
Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim

म द्वाकनीसललिचतदनचर्चिताय नन्दीश्वरपरमथनाथ महेश्वराय  
सण्दारपुष्पवह्णुष्पसुपूजिताय तस्मै नमः शनिाय॥२॥

म द्वाकनीसललिचतदन  
सण्दारपुष्पवह्णुष्पसु

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## ABOUT *FIRES OF VARANASI*

Bharatanatyam choreographers Raneeramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy's *Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim* evokes an elaborate ritual where time is suspended and humans merge with the divine. Through images that reflect the cosmic trinity of Varanasi, India—sacred pilgrimage routes, the Ganges River, and the patron deity Shiva, heightened by the chants of Vedic priests—the choreographers imagine a metaphorical crossing place where one may leave the mundane and enter into the world of immortality.

*“With the death of our father/grandfather away from his homeland of India four years ago, we became part of an age-old tradition that accepts life and death as an integrated whole. A devout Hindu, his desire was for his ashes to be scattered in the Ganges River in the sacred city of Varanasi, India, just as our ancestors before him. In this theatrical reimagining, we expand upon the birth-death-rebirth continuum in Hindu thought to honor immigrant experiences of life and death in the diaspora.*

*The transformation of the soul after cremation becomes a powerful symbol for human resilience and the tenacity of people and cultures across time. In this full-length work for 10 performers with an original, recorded score, French scenic and lighting designer Willy Cessa transforms the stage as the performers traverse the iconic stairways and landings along the river banks, performing ritual ablutions in the sacred river.”*

—Raneeramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy





Photo by Three Phase Multimedia, LLC

## RAGAMALA IN THE PRESS

“Thrillingly three-dimensional... rapturous and profound. Ragamala shows how Indian forms can be some of the most transcendent experiences that dance has to offer.”

– *The New York Times*

“Ragamala imbues the South Indian dance form of Bharatanatyam with a thoroughly contemporary exuberance.

A visionary approach to an ancient form.”

– *Dance Magazine*

“Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy, the mother-daughter team that heads Minneapolis’ Ragamala troupe, ground their creations in Bharatanatyam’s vast lexicon in thrilling detail.”

– *Financial Times*

“Ragamala fuses the traditional and contemporary, body and spirit. The dancing could be fierce as well as soft...light jumps and rapid barefoot pounding punctuated the curving, gentle Bharatanatyam style of classical Indian dance, with its velvet footwork. At times the women would gaze into the audience with such a fiery focus you felt an irresistible pull.”

– *The Washington Post*

“Ragamala has become the standard bearer of a singularly successful kind of hybridity, merging ancient traditions into high-end productions that are hard to resist.”

– *The Huffington Post*

“A wholly magnificent piece of live art.”

– *The Chicago Tribune*

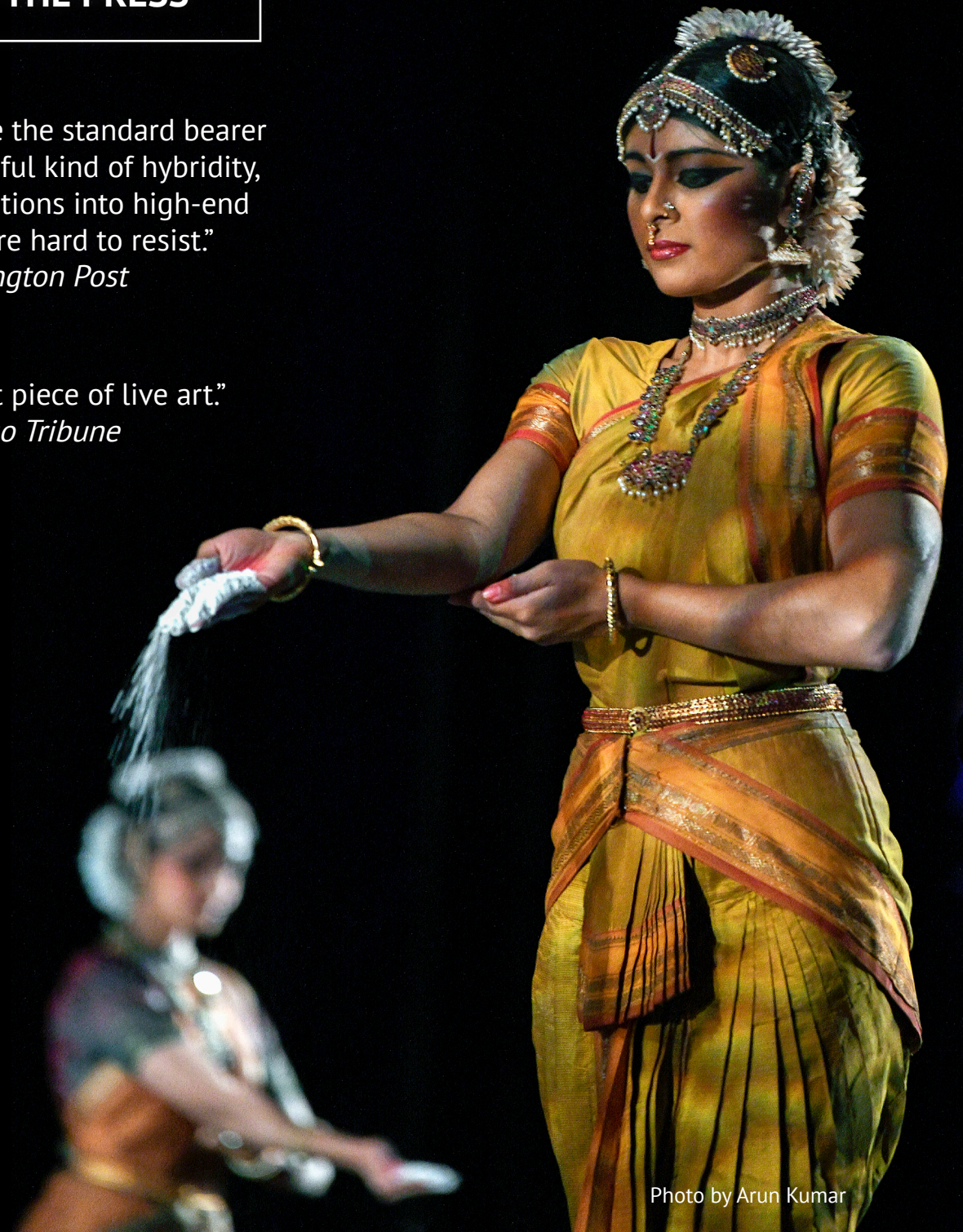


Photo by Arun Kumar

[Watch \*Fires of Varanasi\* creation footage](#)

### Commissioning Partners

*Lead commissioner: The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*

*Co-commissioned by the Harris Theater for Music and Dance*

*Co-commissioned by and developed in part at  
the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College  
and The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts, Cal State Northridge  
and Northrop, University of Minnesota*

*With additional commissioning support from:*

*Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University;  
Meany Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Washington  
and the American Dance Festival*

