

**Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy's
Ragamala Dance Company**

Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim

Creators/Directors/Choreographers:

Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy

Choreographic Assistant:

Ashwini Ramaswamy

Dramaturg:

Ranee Ramaswamy

Original Compositions:

Prema Ramamurthy, Ranee Ramaswamy, S. Sakthivel Muruganantham, and Lalit Subramanian

Development of Score:

Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy, with the musical ensemble

Choreography of *Bho Shambho*:

(performed by Aparna Ramaswamy)

Padmabhushan Smt. Alarmél Valli

Dancers:

Aparna Ramaswamy, Ranee Ramaswamy, Ashwini Ramaswamy,
Chaitra Chandrashekar, Jessica Fiala, Sri Guntipally, Ramya Kapadia, Tamara Nadel,
Radhika Naidu, Garrett Sour, Alan Tse

Musicians:

Preethy Mahesh (vocal), Lalit Subramanian (vocal), C.K. Vasudevan (*nattuvangam*),
S. Sakthivel Muruganantham (*mridangam*), Ramanathan Kalaiarasan (violin), Sruthi Sagar (flute)

Maulav Ganga (performed by Ranee Ramaswamy) pre-recorded by Vidwan Sri T.M. Krishna (vocal),
with K. Arun Prakash (*mridangam*), R.K. Shriram Kumar (violin), and Bhagyashri (tanpura),
included by special permission from the artists

Scenic and Lighting Design:

Willy Cessa

Costumes:

D.S. Aiyellu, Raneeramaswamy, and Carole Bruns Couture

Production Manager/Sound Engineer/Prop Construction:

Maury Jensen

Associate Lighting Designer/Technical Director:

Mary Shabatura

Set Construction:

Joseph Stanley

Sound Recording, Editing, and Mixing:

Kalaiarasan Ramanathan, Baba Prasad, Michael DeMark

Tour Manager:

Erik Madsen-Bond

Exclusive Representation by:

Laura Colby, Director, Elsie Management

Commissioners:

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
(Lead Commissioner)

The Harris Theater for Music and Dance
Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College
Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts at Cal State Northridge
Northrop at the University of Minnesota
(Co-Commissioners)

With additional commissioning support from:

The Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University
Meany Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Washington
American Dance Festival
The Joyce Theater Foundation's Stephen and Cathy Weinroth Fund for New Work

Developed in Part in Residence at:

Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College
Northrop at the University of Minnesota

The Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center,
with support from Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy's Guggenheim Fellowships

Creative Producer

Laura Colby, President, Elsie Management

Special Thanks:

This work is a reflection of the long training Ranee, Aparna, and Ashwini have had under our respected *guru* Smt. Alarmél Valli. As a *guru* par excellence, she has molded our technique, elevated our thinking, imparted clarity of aesthetic, and mined the depth of *abhinaya*. As she has said many times, a true *guru* is like a banyan tree and the students are its numerous roots that drop to form individual trees. We are humbled to take root to form our own plants, but always be a part of that magnificent tree. With deep respect and love to the one who has given us everything.

FROM THE CREATORS

Varanasi, India is a city where past, present, and future mingle within a single space—the sacred city is a portal between the ancient and the current. We have created *Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim* as a narrative nested within a narrative, nested within another narrative—the art forms, philosophies, and rituals borne from our Hindu ancestry which remain a source of hope, solace, and truth; the pilgrim who travels through time and space singing and dancing the name of the Sacred; and finally, the powerful voices of those who journey from one home to another.

We began envisioning this project after the death of our father/grandfather away from his homeland of India. A devout Hindu, his desire was for his ashes to be scattered in the Ganges River in Varanasi just as our ancestors before him.

For millennia, Varanasi has symbolized the crossing place between this world and the 'far shore.' Cremation fires burn night and day, and one is surrounded by rituals of death, both beautiful and apocalyptic. Ours is a religious tradition that contemplates life and death as an integrated whole. Upon death, the funereal fires dissolve the five elements of the physical body in order to take these elements to a new body.

Our dance tradition of Bharatanatyam provides a rich and expansive lexicon that serves as our wellspring. With a history that goes back over two millennia, the form grows within and with each practitioner. Through this language, we celebrate body and spirit, and the joyous and healing quest for physical and spiritual transcendence.

The creation process of *Fires of Varanasi* began well before the pandemic, yet the themes of mortality and resilience became even more salient, and the sharing of stories and honoring of ancestors even more urgent. We are incredibly grateful to our commissioners and funders who made this work possible. We could not have created this work without the commitment of our dancers, musical and technical collaborators, and staff, who spent hundreds of hours with us and each other over Zoom and WhatsApp.

Finally, we dedicate *Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim* to the memory of our dear friend, Patricia Barretto, who lost her battle with cancer in March, 2020. Patricia was a visionary and a force, and we miss her greatly. Thank you, Patricia, for blessing this work with your light.

—Aparna Ramaswamy and Ranee Ramaswamy

FIRES OF VARANASI: DANCE OF THE ETERNAL PILGRIM

The Sacred pilgrimage routes, The Ganges River, and the patron deity Shiva together form the cosmic trinity of Varanasi, each providing a *tirtha*—or metaphorical crossing place—where one may leave the mundane and enter into the world of immortality.

Fires of Varanasi opens at dusk with a ritual on the banks of the Ganges River, its sacred waters offering a purification for the living and salvation for the dead. Through the work, eleven dancers undertake a sacred pilgrimage through shifting landscapes as they seek a mystical connection between the divine and the human. The dancers are engrossed in an ecstatic and communal prayer, the soloists become the ‘Eternal Pilgrim’ seeking a solitary and internalized ritual of sacred contemplation. Ultimately the physical journey transforms into a psychic one.

SCENE ONE

Darshanam, To See and Be Seen

Agni

Soloist: Aparna Ramaswamy

The fire god, Agni, is the intermediary between Gods and humans, and a witness of our actions. The blessings of Agni are sought on all solemn occasions, including birth, marriage, and death. He is conceptualized in ancient Hindu texts to exist at three levels—on earth as fire, in the atmosphere as lightning, and in the sky as the sun.

The banks of the Ganges River become the altar to worship the sun every morning, bringing light and life, an end to the actual and metaphoric darkness.

Sankalpam, Conviction to the Deity of Cosmic Balance

Soloist: Raneer Ramaswamy

As the veil of darkness lifts, we prepare to glimpse Shiva, the reigning deity of Varanasi.

SCENE TWO

Liquid Shakti

The Power of the Ganges River

The Ganges River—mythologized as falling from heaven to earth—is a manifestation of Shakti, the female life-energy of Shiva. Bathing in the Ganges River is an essential daily act of the pilgrim in Varanasi, invoking the water as a giver of life, immortality, and healing.

The Myth of the Rivers

Soloists: Raneer Ramaswamy, Ashwini Ramaswamy, Aparna Ramaswamy

The Ganges is believed to feed thousands of rivers and water bodies, forever making the gods present and humans linked.

In His incarnation as Vamana, Vishnu transformed into Trivikrama, lifting His left foot and, with His big toe, tearing the sheath of the universe and releasing Ganga from the heavens. Shiva calmed Her ferocious waters by trapping them in His hair, releasing Her in small streams.

As Vishnu's incarnation of Krishna, He saved the Yamuna River. The water of the Yamuna seethed with the poison of the snake-demon, Kaliya. Nothing grew on the river bank; no bird or beast was spared. To save the river and the people, Krishna leapt onto Kaliya's head, assuming the weight of the whole universe, dancing the snake into submission.

Ganga as Mother Goddess

Goddess Ganga is the liquid essence of life, the celestial river cascading from heaven to nourish humanity.

Goddess Ganga is worshipped through an immersive engagement with the river. The repetitive pouring of water by devotees recognizes the life-giving force of the water, the ability to wash away troubles, and the acceptance of old age and death. The devotee ultimately seeks the embrace of Mother Ganga to cross over into a place of joy after death.

SCENE THREE

The Purification of the Living and the Salvation of the Dead

Weaving Eternity

Soloist: Chaitra Chandrasekhar

"An extraordinary weaver has woven this shawl of life, by stretching the vertical threads of one's actions and the horizontal threads of destiny. This human body is a combination of past actions and destiny."

—15th c. Sufi poet Kabir Das of Varanasi

The Eternal Pilgrim

Soloist: Raneer Ramaswamy

The 5th century Bhakti poet Karaikal Ammayar is the symbol for the 'Eternal Pilgrim.' In her longing for Shiva, she yearned to shed her body—flesh, skin, and gender—to emphasize the true essence of her humanity.

*I aspired to only one thing;
I settled on it and left the rest
I kept in my heart only that lord
whose crest bears the Ganga
whose matted locks
are adorned with the sun and moon
whose palm holds the flames—
and I have become his servant.*

*At twilight,
flawlessly in time to the rhythm
of heavenly drums
effortlessly bearing fire in his palm*

the beautiful one dances.

The City of Shiva

Soloist: Aparna Ramaswamy

The cosmic dance of Shiva symbolizes the interplay of dynamic and static divine energy flow, containing the five principles of eternal energy—creation, preservation, destruction, illusion, and emancipation.

The ecstatic pilgrimage journey begins and ends at the Kasi Vishweshvara temple—the center of Varanasi, a city where people surrender their earthly bodies to death and receive spiritual bodies like Shiva himself.

For additional information, please visit Ragamala's website to access ***Fires of Varanasi: An Illustrated Guide***, developed by Raneer Ramaswamy:

www.ragamaladance.org/fires-of-varanasi-links

ABOUT RAGAMALA DANCE COMPANY

“Ragamala shows how Indian forms can be some of the most transcendent experiences that dance has to offer.”
—The New York Times

Founded in 1992 by Raneer Ramaswamy, Ragamala Dance Company is the vision of mother-daughter South Indian American artists Raneer Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy. Through multi-disciplinary dance works for the stage, engaging the community, and educating the next generation, Ragamala epitomizes intercultural and immigrant narratives that evoke a shared sense of humanity.

Ragamala is a pioneering, intergenerational, family-run organization committed to the idea that while history is time bound, the stories we share are timeless. Ragamala's work in the performing arts field is expansive. We set our gaze far beyond the stage to realize the kindred relationship between ancient and contemporary that is urgently needed in today's world. Ragamala engages in a collaborative practice with myriad artists and aesthetics and is rooted in the idea of Bharatanatyam as a dynamic living tradition. Raneer and Aparna's training under legendary artist Alarmél Valli is the bedrock of a creative ethos that springs from beauty, truth, and spirit.

Ragamala has toured extensively throughout the U.S., India, and abroad, highlighted by the Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Joyce Theater (New York), Lincoln Center (New York), Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (MA), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), American Dance Festival (Durham, NC), Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, International Festival of Arts & Ideas (New Haven, CT), Cal Performances (Berkeley), Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), Just Festival (Edinburgh, U.K.), Bali Arts Festival (Indonesia), Sri Krishna Gana Sabha (Chennai, India), and National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai, India), among others.

For upcoming tour dates or to subscribe to Ragamala's e-newsletter, please visit,

www.ragamaladance.org

Or contact us at,

info@ragamaladance.org • 612-824-1968

Facebook: [@ragamala](https://www.facebook.com/@ragamala) **Instagram:** [@ragamala_dance](https://www.instagram.com/@ragamala_dance)

YouTube: youtube.com/c/RagamalaDanceCompany

For booking information, please contact,

Laura Colby, Director, Elsie Management

www.elsieman.org • info@elsieman.org • 718-797-4577

RANEE RAMASWAMY and APARNA RAMASWAMY (Artistic Directors/Creators/Choreographers/Principal Dancers) explore the dynamic tension between the ancestral and the contemporary, highlighting the fluidity between the secular and the spiritual, the human and the natural. As dancemakers and culture bearers working in an intergenerational partnership between mother and daughter, their creative vision merges the rich traditions and deep philosophical roots of their Indian heritage with their hybridic perspective as first-generation Indian Americans. Their training in the South Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam under legendary dancer/choreographer Padma Bhushan Smt. Alarmél Valli, known as one of India's greatest living masters, is the bedrock of their creative aesthetic.

Ranee and Aparna's choreographic work has been commissioned by the Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.), Lincoln Center (New York), Joyce Theater (New York), American Dance Festival (Durham, NC), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), and the Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), among others, and supporters of their work include the National Endowment for the Arts, National Dance Project, MAP Fund, the Wallace Foundation, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. They have developed work in residence at MANCC (the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography), the Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi, the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College, Northrop (Minneapolis), and during an NPN residency at The Yard.

Ranee serves on the National Council on the Arts, appointed by President Barack Obama. Among her recent awards and honors are a Guggenheim Fellowship, Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, Bogliasco Foundation Fellowship (Italy), Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Research Fellowship (Italy), United States Artists Fellowship, and McKnight Distinguished Artist Award. Ranee immigrated to the United States in 1978 and, since that time, her work has merged the classical language of Bharatanatyam with a contemporary Western aesthetic to create timeless pieces that freely move between the past and the present, including bold experimental collaborations with national and international artists across forms and genres. (www.raneeramaswamy.com)

Aparna is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, Bogliasco Foundation Fellowship (Italy), Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Research Fellowship (Italy), Joyce Award, Bush

Fellowship for Choreography, and four McKnight Fellowships for Dance and Choreography, among others. Most recently, she was named a recipient of a 2022 Distinguished Achievement Award from Carleton College. Described by *The New York Times* as “*thrillingly three-dimensional... rapturous and profound*,” she has been selected as one of *Dance Magazine’s* 25 to Watch and is an empaneled artist with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). In addition to her large-scale, multidisciplinary theatrical works, Aparna’s choreographic work includes intimate solos with live music that have toured widely, nationally and internationally, and been commissioned by the American Dance Festival and the Silk Road Ensemble, among others.
(www.aparnaramaswamy.net)

ASHWINI RAMASWAMY (Choreographic Associate/Dancer) has spent over 25 years studying Bharatanatyam from her gurus - her mother Raneeramaswamy, sister Aparna Ramaswamy, and the legendary Smt. Alarmél Valli of Chennai, India. *The New York Times* describes Ashwini as “*weaving together, both fearfully and joyfully, the human and the divine*.” As a founding member of Ragamala, she has toured extensively, performing throughout the U.S. and in Russia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, the U.K., and India. Ashwini’s choreography was listed among the “Best of the Year” in *The Washington Post*, *The Star Tribune*, and *Minnpost*, and as a critic’s pick in *The New York Times*. Her work has been presented by the Joyce Theater and Baryshnikov Arts Center (NYC), Cowles Center (Minneapolis), The O’Shaughnessy (St. Paul), The Scottsdale Center (Arizona), The Yard (Martha’s Vineyard), and the Just Festival (Edinburgh, U.K.), among others. Ashwini’s work is supported by USArtists International, MAP Fund, National Performance Network, New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, MN State Arts Board, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, South Asian Resiliency Fund, Jerome Foundation, a Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship and McKnight Fellowships for dance and choreography; commissioned by The Liquid Music Series, The American Dance Platform, Augsburg College, and Macalester College; and developed in residencies at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, UNC Chapel Hill, Kohler Arts Center, the National Center for Choreography, the Bogliasco Foundation (Bogliasco, Italy), and the Camargo Foundation (Cassis, France - 2023). Her next project, *Invisible Cities*, is commissioned by The Great Northern Festival, Northrop, The Cowles Center, The Perelman Center, The Kohler Center, and The Bates Dance Festival. (www.ashwiniramaswamy.com)

SMT. PREMA RAMAMURTHY (Composer) has been an outstanding vocalist and composer for more than four decades. She received intensive training under the great Maestro ‘Padmavibhushan’ Dr. Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna, specialized in the art of ‘Pallavi singing’ from Vidwan Sri T. V. Gopalakrishnan, and learned the art of singing ‘Padams & Javalis’ from the veteran musician, Mrs. T. Muktha. An A-TOP Grade Artist of All India Radio and Doordarshan TV, she has won critical acclaim as a composer, and has performed in many of the top venues and festivals of India, the U.S., Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Australia, Mexico, and South Africa.

WILLY CESSA (Scenic and Lighting Design) has worked as a director, light director, and light and set designer since 2001. In 2007, he met Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui in Paris for the project La Zon-Mai at the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration. Since that time, they have collaborated on 13 projects for Cherkaoui’s Antwerp-based company Eastman. Additionally, he has worked with multiple renowned artists and institutions, including Yabin Wang, Aakash Odedra, Wang & Ramirez, Damien Jalet, Fanny de Chaillé, Herman Diephuis, Esther Aumatell, Le Centre Dramatique Régional des Pays de la Loire, Cie Les Aphoristes, Cie KLP, Danse l’Afrique Danse!, and Franck Il Louise.

CHAITRA CHANDRASHEKAR (Dancer) is a disciple of Guru Dr. Mala Shashikanth and Guru Vid. Asha Ravindra, and has practiced and honed the art form of Bharatanatyam for over two decades, performing at prestigious cultural events and competitions from a young age. She completed major levels of examinations conducted by KSEEB (Educational Board of Karnataka) in India and attained pre-*vidushi* honorary title. She is currently an Apprentice with Ragamala, learning under Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy since 2020.

JESSICA FIALA (Dancer) began training with Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy in 2006 and has performed with Ragamala throughout the US and in India, UK, and UAE. She holds an interdisciplinary master's degree in museum studies and cultural studies from the University of Minnesota and her research has been published in the anthology *The Ruined Archive*; the journals *Diálogos com a arte*, *Public Art Journal*, and the *Journal of Somaesthetics*; and the online publication *Immerse*. Jessica is also a research associate at the consulting firm 8 Bridges Workshop.

SRI GUNTIPALLY (Dancer) has been learning Bharatanatyam under Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy since 2018. She is an Apprentice with Ragamala and has performed with the company at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. Sri graduated high school in 2021 as valedictorian at Eagle Ridge Academy, a U.S. Presidential Scholar Candidate, and National Merit Scholar. She is attending the University of Minnesota to study Human Physiology, and aspires to be a dancing doctor.

RAMYA S. KAPADIA (Dancer) is a Knoxville-based Bharatanatyam dancer/choreographer and a Carnatic vocalist. Ramya has toured around the world to present solo and ensemble works and is a much sought-after vocalist and composer for Bharatanatyam dancers. She has received the Emerging Artist award, Choreography Fellowship and Individual Artist awards from the Durham Arts Council and the NC Arts Council and is a teaching artist with United Arts the Durham Arts Council.

TAMARA NADEL (Dancer) is a disciple of Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy and a founding member of Ragamala, performing throughout the U.S, India, Russia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, and U.K. She has received grants and fellowships from the McKnight Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, and Rimón: The Minnesota Jewish Arts Council, among others. Most recently, she was selected by the Conney Conference on Jewish Arts at UW-Madison to perform a solo choreographed for her by Ranee Ramaswamy, illuminating the synergies between Hindu and Jewish mystical traditions. Tamara is Ragamala's Director of Institutional Development and board member of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts.

RADHIKA NAIDU (Dancer) joined Ragamala in October 2019 as a participant in the development of *Fires of Varanasi*. As an immigrant to the U.S. in her teens, and having visited Varanasi, she was particularly drawn to and inspired by Ranee and Aparna's portrayal of the theme of this project through Bharatanatyam. In her spare time, Radhika is a practicing pediatrician.

GARRETT SOUR (Dancer) is a classical Cambodian dancer under the master teacher, Yousedy Peov and is a principal dancer and assistant instructor with Wattanak Dance Troupe. Garrett has also trained in different dance styles competing in many different competitions across the nation and has performed in South Korea

representing the USA in the 13th Gangneung International Junior Art Festival. When Garrett is not dancing, he is working towards his undergraduate degree at the University of Saint Thomas.

ALAN TSE (Dancer) is a creative soul expressing his artistic skills through design, dance, and yoga. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Alan moved to the Twin Cities two decades ago. He has danced with Sole to Soul Dance Conversion, Ballet of the Dolls, and MotionArts, and has performed in works by Myron Johnson, Jim Liberthal, Pam Gleason, and more. Alan is currently a company member of Continental Ballet Company.

PREETHY MAHESH (Vocal) is a Carnatic musician who has been accompanying eminent dancers since 2002. She owes her art to her respected *gurus* Sri DK Jayaraman and Sri S Kalyanaraman. A graded artist of All India Radio she has performed extensively as a soloist and has recorded multiple commercially-available albums of dance music. She has performed in some of the world's best theatres with accomplished artists such as Priyadarsini Govind, Shobana, Padmabhushan Alarmél Valli, Revati Ramachandran, Parvati Ghantasala, The Dhananjayans, and Ragamala. In recognition of her contribution to the art, has been honored her with the titles Gana Kokilam, Sangeetagna, and Nritya Sangeeta Varshini.

LALIT SUBRAMANIAN (Composer/Vocal) is a vocalist proficient in both the South Indian (Carnatic) and North Indian (Hindustani) styles of Indian classical music. He is the disciple of renowned Carnatic musicians Tiruvarur Sri S. Girish and Neyveli Sri R. Santhanagopalan, and renowned Hindustani musician Pandit Shekhar Kumbhojkar. Lalit has won multiple awards and performs at various venues in the U.S. and India, both as a solo vocalist and as an accompanist for dance performances. He also plays the *mridangam* and the *tabla* and has trained under *tabla* artist Pandit Anand Godse. He has been a junior artiste at All India Radio as a Hindustani vocalist, and holds a graduate degree in Carnatic music from India. Lalit has been working with Ragamala Dance Company since 2008.

C.K. VASUDEVAN (Nattuvangam) is student of renowned Carnatic percussion maestro, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. Umayalpuram Sivaraman, and has been trained by Padma Bhushan Smt. Alarmél Valli in the art of *nattuvangam*. Mr. Vasudevan has provided vocal support to several renowned dancers at the major festivals and theatres of India, and in Europe, the U.S., Canada, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. He has a diploma in *mridangam* from the Tamil Nadu Government Music College, and is a recipient of multiple honors, including the Vaadhya Kalaimani, Laya Kala Sironmani, and Rukmani Thala Samuthiram awards and the title Laya Vidyadara.

S. SAKTHIVEL MURUGANANTHAM (Mridangam) has been a preeminent performer on the *mridangam*, specializing in the accompaniment of classical dance, for 34 years. He learned by traditional Gurukulavasam under the great Guru Shri Mayavaram G. Somasundaram Pillai and later under Guru Shri Bakthavatchalam, and Guru Shri M. Balachander. Mr. Sakthivel has accompanied preeminent dancers at leading festivals and theaters in India and worldwide, including Dr. Vyayanthimala Bali, Padmabhushan Alarmél Valli, Shri Leela Samson, and Priyadarshini Govind, and great *gurus* such as Shri K.J. Sarasa, Shri Udupi Lakshmi Narayan, and Shri Narasimhachari. His titles include Laya Vidhyadhara from Smt. Alarmel Valli's Deepashika, Natya

Sangeetha Kala Bharathi from Bharath Kalachar, Laya Kala Vipanchee from Vipanchee Trust, Laya Kala Ratna, Laya Sironmani, and Mridanga Mamani.

RAMANATHAN KALAIARASAN (Violin) is the son of distinguished Mirudanga Vidwan Sangeetha Bhusanam Professor Thiru A.S. Ramanathan. A disciple of Smt. Dhanadevi Mithradeve, he graduated with honors from Annamalai University, Chidambaram, India, with the title of 'Sangeetha Bhushanam.' He has over 25 years' experience accompanying leading dancers in India and abroad, and recording music and dance DVDs for E-Parampara Infotainment and Swathi Soft Solutions. He is a permanent staff member/performer with Padmabhushan Sri. V.P.Dhananjayan and Smt Shantha Dhananjayan's Bharatha Kalanjali. His honors include Best Violin Artist for Dance from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Best Accompanying Artist for Dance from VDS Arts Academy, and the Sudharani Raghupathy Endowment Award for senior musician from Natyarangam—the dance wing of Narada Gana Sabha, Chennai.

SRUTHI SAGAR (Flute) has earned a place for himself in the field of Carnatic Music. A disciple of Kalaimamani Dr. Sunder for more than fifteen years, he had his initial training on the Flute from Shri B. V. Balasai and his father Shri Sudarsana Rao. Sruthi Sagar has performed at prestigious venues and festivals throughout India and is a recipient of the Air India Radio first prize and other coveted awards such as Kuzhal Isai Chelvan, Yuva Kala Bharathi, and Yuva Kala Vipanchee. Since 2005, Sruthi Sagar has been a Central Government scholarship awardee, and recipient of a Young Achiever's Scholarship conferred by the Government of India. He has performed at the Olympic Games in London as part of the STACCATO Band.

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Additional support for Ragamala's 2022-23 season comes from the Wallace Foundation; The McKnight Foundation; The Bob and Kathie Goodale Legacy Foundation; the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund; and generous support from Friends of Ragamala.

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