**Ragamala Dance Company**

presents

**Sacred Earth**

**Creators/Directors/Choreographers**

Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy

**Original** **Artwork**

Anil Chaitya Vangad (Warli)

Ranee Ramaswamy (Kolam)

**Original Compositions**

Prema Ramamurthy

**Development of Score**

Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy

with Preethy Mahesh, C.K. Vasudevan, Sakthivel Muruganantham, Ramanathan Kalaiarasan,

Lalit Subramanian, Anjna Swaminathan, Rajna Swaminathan

**Dancers**

Aparna Ramaswamy, Ranee Ramaswamy,

Tamara Nadel, Jessica Fiala, Chaitra Chandrashekar, Sri Guntipally

**Musicians**

Lalit Subramanian (vocal), Kasi Aysola (*nattuvangam*),

Rohan Krishnamurthy (*mridangam*), Sruti Sarathy (violin)

**Light Design**

Jeff Bartlett

**Video Projection Design**

Perimeter Productions

**Lighting Supervisor/Production Manager**

Mary Shabatura

**Sound Engineer**

Maury Jensen

**ABOUT SACRED EARTH**

***Sacred Earth***

Our original dance work, *Sacred Earth,* is a multidisciplinary experience of dance, music, poetry, and visual art that explores the interconnectedness between human emotions and the environments that shape them.

The creative impetus for this work comes from the grounding philosophies of two ephemeral folk art forms from India—Kolam floor drawing and Warli wall painting—each of which uses natural materials to engrain into human actions an awareness of the land.

Each morning, women in southeastern India undertake the silent ritual of ***kolam***, making rice flour designs on the ground as mindful offerings to Mother Earth. This daily ritual creates a sacred space and becomes a link between the intimate home and the vastness of the outside world. In our family, the tradition of *kolam* has been passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter for generations.

The *Adiwashi*(Indigenous) **Warli** people of western India revere the land and live in perfect and intentional coexistence with nature. Using their everyday lives as inspiration, their dynamic wall paintings find the spiritual in the everyday. Master Warli artist Anil Chaitya Vangad (of Ganjad Village, India) spent six weeks in residence with Ragamala, creating large-scale original paintings as we simultaneously built the choreography—working in constant and dynamic conversation between visual art and movement.

The **Tamil Sangam poets of South India** (300 B.C.E. – 300 C.E.) saw divinity in the physical world. They divided nature into five landscapes, or *tinais*: *kurinji* (mountainous region), *mullai* (forest), *neythal* (seaside), *marutham* (farmland), and *paalai* (desert). Recognizing that human activities are interwoven with all of creation, they used nature as a metaphor to examine the intricacies of human emotion.

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 quest to hold the human and the natural in joyous balance.

Our original choreography for *Sacred Earth* is rooted in the ethos of these art forms. We find synergy between inner and outer landscapes, using the natural world as a metaphor to examine the intricacies of human emotion. As *Sacred Earth*builds from meditative beginnings, the performers create a sacred space to honor the divinity in the natural world and the sustenance we derive from it. We surrender to the beauty of this sacred earth that has been given to us to safeguard, cherish, and pass on to our future generations.

**—Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy, Creators**

**THE POETRY OF SACRED EARTH**

For translations of the poetry featured in *Sacred Earth,* please visit Ragamala’s website and follow the “Poetry of Sacred Earth” link at [www.ragamaladance.org/sacred-earth](http://www.ragamaladance.org/sacred-earth) or scan here:

**Scatter chart, qr code

Description automatically generated**

**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

Under the leadership of South Indian American artists Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy, Ragamala Dance Company creates original dance works for the stage. Through creating multi-disciplinary dance works, engaging the community, and educating the next generation, Ragamala epitomizes intercultural and immigrant narratives that evoke a shared sense of humanity. Rooted in the South Indian dance form of Bharatanatyam, Ragamala seeks to realize the kindred relationship between ancient and contemporary that is urgently needed in today’s world.

Founded by Ranee in 1992, Ragamala is now celebrating its 30th Anniversary Season. 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](http://www.ragamaladance.org)

Or contact us at,

[info@ragamaladance.org](mailto: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](file:///G:\Shared%20drives\Performances\Programs\2021-22%20Home\youtube.com\c\RagamalaDanceCompany)

For booking information, please contact,

Laura Colby, Director, Elsie Management

[www.elsieman.org](http://www.elsieman.org) • [info@elsieman.org](mailto:info@elsieman.org) • 718-797-4577

**ARTISTS’ BIOGRAPHIES**

Hailed by *The New York Times* as *“a master of abhinaya… her careful art glimmers with the strangeness of the divine,”* **RANEE RAMASWAMY (Co-Creator/Choreographer/Principal Dancer)** isFounding Artistic Director of Ragamala Dance Company. As a dancemaker, performer, and culture bearer, Ranee’s creative vision is driven by a profound commitment to the artistic lineage imparted to her through four decades of training under legendary Bharatanatyam dancer/choreographer Padmabhushan Smt. Alarmél Valli, intertwined with a pioneering spirit of innovation and collaboration across culture and discipline.

Since immigrating to the U.S. in 1978, Ranee has been a trailblazer, working tirelessly to create a place for her culturally rooted choreographic work on the major stages of the U.S. dance landscape. Her work has been commissioned and presented by the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Joyce Theater, Northrop, Walker Art Center, American Dance Festival, International Festival of Arts & Ideas, and Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi, among many others, and supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, National Dance Project, MAP Fund, Wallace Foundation, and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. In September 2021, Ranee’s *Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim* (created in collaboration with Aparna Ramaswamy) was selected to open the Kennedy Center’s 50th Anniversary celebration with an outdoor, site-specific performance.

Ranee serves on the National Council on the Arts, appointed by President Barack Obama. Her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, Bogliasco Foundation Fellowship (Italy), Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Research Fellowship (Italy), United States Artists Fellowship, McKnight Distinguished Artist Award, Bush Choreography Fellowship, and 14 McKnight Fellowships for Choreography and Interdisciplinary Art, among many others. ([www.raneeramaswamy.com](http://www.raneeramaswamy.com))

Described by The New York Times as *“thrillingly three-dimensional… rapturous and profound,”* **Aparna Ramaswamy (Co-Creator/Choreographer/Principal Dancer)** is a dancemaker, performer, and culture bearer whose work mines the artistic, philosophical, and intellectual depths of her artistic lineage, evolving ancestral and cultural knowledge in the diaspora as a catalyst for contemporary human thought. She is the life-long disciple and hand-picked protégé of legendary dancer/choreographer Padmabhushan Smt. Alarmél Valli, one of India’s greatest living masters, who has selected Aparna as the artist to carry her artistic lineage into the future.

As Executive Artistic Director of Ragamala Dance Company, Aparna has catalyzed a bold new vision for Bharatanatyam in the diaspora, charting previously unimagined paths for South Asian dance in the U.S. Her work has been commissioned and presented by major festivals and cultural institutions—including the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Joyce Theater, Harris Theater, Northrop, American Dance Festival, Silk Road Ensemble, Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi, and many others—and supported by the National Dance Project, MAP Fund, Wallace Foundation, Joyce Foundation, and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, among others. In September 2021, Aparna’s *Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim* (created in collaboration with Ranee Ramaswamy) was selected to open the Kennedy Center’s 50th Anniversary celebration.

Aparna’s choreographic work ranges from emotionally spacious yet intimate solo presentations performed with live music, to large-scale, multidisciplinary theatrical works. Her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, Bogliasco Foundation Residential Fellowship (Italy), Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Research Fellowship (Italy), Joyce Award, four McKnight Fellowships for Dance and Choreography, and the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award from Carleton College, among others. ([www.aparnaramaswamy.net](http://www.aparnaramaswamy.net))

**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.

**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.

**TAMARA NADEL (Dancer)** is a disciple of Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy and a founding member of Ragamala, having performed with the company throughout the U.S, India, Russia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, and U.K. Tamara has received grants and fellowships from the McKnight Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Minnesota State Arts Board, Rimon: The Minnesota Jewish Arts Council, and the Brin Fund for Jewish Arts, 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.

**LALIT SUBRAMANIAN (Vocal)** Lalit Subramanian is a Carnatic and Hindustani Classical vocalist from Cleveland, Ohio. Originally from Pune, India, he received his initial Carnatic vocal training from Smt. Chitra Subramanian and Smt. Rajalakshmi Pichumani, and further sought training from Sri Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Sri Tiruvarur Girish, and Smt Alamelu Mani. He received his Hindustani training from Pandit Mahadev Pednekar of Goa and Pandit Shekhar Kumbhojkar of Pune, both disciples of Pandit Jitendra Abhishekhi. Lalit is also a percussionist and has studied Tabla with Pandit Anand Godse of Pune and mridangam with his cousin Shri Vijay Shriram. He holds a Sangeet Visharad degree with a gold medal, and was a Yuva Wani artist with All India Radio, Pune for Hindustani vocal music. He has also sung playback for a Marathi film. He is known both as a solo performer and as an accompanist for dance. He has worked extensively on projects with well-known dancers and dance companies in the US, his work ranging from musical performance to creative work such as composing individual pieces to entire production scores. He teaches music and percussion to several students as part of his music school Madhuralaya. He is also periodically a guest lecturer of World Music at the Cleveland Institute of Music and Case Western Reserve University Music Department in Cleveland, Ohio. Lalit is a Biomedical Engineer and works for a medical device firm.

**KASI AYSOLA (*Nattuvangam)*** is a dance artist based in the United States. Kasi is a performer, choreographer and nattuvangam artist whose foundational training in Bharata Natyam was under celebrated Guru Viji Prakash and Mythili Prakash. He had the great fortune to train in Kuchipudi under late Guru Vempati Ravi Shankar and Yamini Saripalli. He co-founded Prakriti Dance, an innovative dance company, in 2014, with the intention to explore the human experience through the idiom of Indian performing traditions. He serves as the Artistic Director of Prakriti Dance developing and touring original dance works.

Indian-American percussionist, composer, and educator Dr. **Rohan Krishnamurthy (*Mridangam)***is one of the leading voices of Indian classical and cross-genre music in the South Asian diaspora. Acclaimed a *"musical ambassador"* by The Times of India, he received mridangam training from the esteemed Indian guru, Sri. Guruvayur Dorai, tabla with Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri at the Ali Akbar College of Music, and drum set with Alan Hall at the California Jazz Conservatory. Distinguished as a soloist, composer, and collaborator, Rohan performed with legendary Indian classical musicians and Grammy Award-winning global artists. Rohan holds a Ph.D. in musicology from the Eastman School of Music and directs the RohanRhythm Percussion Studio. Rohan is the recipient of prestigious international awards and grants including recent commissions from the San Francisco Arts Commission, Zellerbach Foundation, and Goethe Institute (Germany). He has taught at renowned institutions and his patented RohanRhythm drum tuning system is available worldwide. ([www.RohanRhythm.com](http://www.RohanRhythm.com))

**Sruti Sarathy** **(Violin)** is a leading Carnatic violinist, singer, and composer. A rare artist who possesses both mastery in the rigorous classical form as well as a boundary-pushing musical vision, she animates the stage in diverse contexts across the globe, from the *sabhas* of Chennai to music festivals in San Francisco. Sruti began her training as a prodigious three-year old under Guru Anuradha Sridhar of the Lalgudi family of musicians. Sruti regularly performs with top Carnatic musicians, and has received awards three years in a row for her performances at the prestigious Madras Music Academy. Her independent work has been supported by institutions such as Fulbright, the Creative Work Fund, and InterMusic SF. A Bay Area native and Stanford University alumnus, Sruti is also a versatile composer for Carnatic, crossover, film/theater, and experimental new music contexts. Sruti’s inimitable style and sound bring out the voice of the Indian violin in a contemporary and imaginative way. ([www.srutisarathy.com](http://www.srutisarathy.com))

*The creation of* Sacred Earth *was made possible in part with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts (with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and additional funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Community Connections Fund of the MetLife Foundation, and the Boeing Company Charitable Trust), and generous support from members of Ragamala’s Rasika Circle.*

*Additional support for Ragamala’s 2022-23 season comes from comes from the Wallace Foundation; The McKnight Foundation; the Shubert 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.*