

RAGAMALA DANCE COMPANY***Written in Water*****West-Coast Premiere**

Ranee Ramaswamy & Aparna Ramaswamy, Co-Artistic Directors
Prema Ramamurthy & Amir ElSaffar, Composers

Saturday, October 29 at 8pm



(Los Angeles, CA) October 3, 2016 - Valley Performing Arts Center presents Ragamala Dance Company, the renowned Indian ensemble, led by mother/daughter, Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy on Saturday, October 29 at 8pm for the West Coast premiere of *Written in Water*.

The entire performance, audience and performers alike, will be held on the VPAC Great Hall stage; the capacity is strictly limited to 250.

Alastair Macaulay said in *The New York Times*, "Ragamala showed how Indian forms can provide some of the most transcendent experiences that dance has to offer ... this is an excellent company."

Ranee and Aparna are protégés of the legendary dancer and choreographer Alarmél Valli, known as one of India's greatest living masters. Their company work explores the dynamic tension between the ancestral and the contemporary. As choreographers and performers, Ranee and Aparna create dance landscapes that dwell in opposition — secular and spiritual life, inner and outer worlds, human and natural concerns, rhythm and stillness — to find the transcendence that lies in between. As mother and daughter, each brings her generational experience to the work — the rich traditions, deep philosophical roots, and ancestral wisdom of India meeting and merging with their hybridic perspectives as Indian-American artists.

Written in Water features a commissioned score from Amir ElSaffar, known for his distinctive alchemy of contemporary jazz trumpet and Iraqi Maqam. His score will be interwoven with original Carnatic (South Indian) compositions by India-based composer Prema Ramamurthy. The musical ensemble will feature second-generation American artists known for drawing on their training with great masters in India and the Middle East to forge new musical forms. (Instrumentation: vocals, trumpet, *santur*, violin, and *mridangam*)

"This mother and daughter duo has one foot firmly planted in the greatest traditions of Indian Classical dance, and the other foot delicately balanced in the future, with imaginative new combinations of movement, music, and storytelling," said Thor Steingraber, Executive Director of VPAC. "This brand new piece, *Written in Water*, will be experienced up close, with the audience sitting on VPAC's stage."

Steingraber continued, "On April 19, 2017, VPAC will present an entirely different side of Indian dance — with *Taj Express: The Bollywood Musical Revue* which captures the vibrant, expressive spirit of the world of Bollywood movies with a fusion of film, dance, and music -- a live cinematic journey through modern Indian culture and society."

About *Written in Water*

Written in Water is Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy's ongoing investigation of *Paramapadam* (the 2nd century Indian board game upon which Snakes and Ladders is based), the 12th century Sufi text *The*

Conference of the Birds, and the philosophical and spiritual underpinnings of both. The game board serves as a physical and metaphorical framework for a world of psychological complexity, in which dancers and musicians move freely between composition and improvisation. The performance will unfold upon a large-scale projection of a *Paramapadam* game board on the stage floor—an original design commissioned from Chennai, India-based artist [Keshav V.](#) On this metaphysical map, the seekers/dancers activate the space by negotiating snakes and ladders—which represent the heights of ecstasy and depths of longing—as they journey through the seven valleys (or states of being) central to *The Conference of the Birds*.

Single tickets, \$43, are available now. This will be a general admission event on the VPAC Great Hall Stage. For ticket and subscription information, visit ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org or call (818) 677-3000. Valley Performing Arts Center is located on the campus of California State University, Northridge (CSUN), 18111 Nordhoff Street Northridge, CA 91330-8448, at the corner of Nordhoff and Lindley.

About Ragamala Dance Company

Founded in 1992 and acclaimed as one of the Indian Diaspora’s leading dance ensembles, Ragamala Dance Company seamlessly carries the South Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam into the 21st century. For the past 30 years, Co-Artistic Directors Raneer and Aparna Ramaswamy have worked together in an intergenerational creative partnership. Together they have created their own specific sub-genre that combines a contemporary Western aesthetic with an Indian ethos.

Now in its 24th season, Ragamala’s work has been commissioned by the Walker Art Center, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, the Krannert Center for Performing Arts at the University of Illinois, the Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), and Opening Nights Performing Arts at Florida State University, and has been developed in residence at the Magee Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC) and during an NPN residency at The Yard. The company has been recognized with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Dance Project, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Japan Foundation/New York, Minnesota State Arts Board, USArtists International, New Music/USA, MAP Fund, American Composers Forum, and the Joyce Foundation.

The company has toured extensively, highlighted by the American Dance Festival, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Music Center of Los Angeles, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, International Festival of Arts & Ideas, University Musical Society at the University of Michigan, Just Festival (Edinburgh, U.K.), Bali Arts Festival (Indonesia), Sri Krishna Gana Sabha (Chennai, India), and National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai, India).

Calendar Listing for Ragamala Dance Company

Venue: Valley Performing Arts Center
18111 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330

Date: Wednesday, October 5 at 8:00pm

Tickets: **Price:** \$43
Please Note: This will be a general admission event on the VPAC stage
In Person: VPAC Ticket Office, located in the VPAC Courtyard
By Phone: (818) 677-3000
Online: ValleyPerformingArtsCenter.org

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Photos: Click here for photos from the 2016-17 Season:
<http://www.valleyperformingartscenter.org/press/press-photos/>

Ragamala Dance Company website: www.ragamaladance.org