



ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

12/13 Season SEPT-JAN



Rama Vaidyanathan

Rama Vaidyanathan dance
Kameswaran Sivakumar nattuvangam
Vidya Srinivasan vocals
Arun Kumar mridangam
Vikram Raghukumar violin

Saturday, November 3 @ 8 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

Program

Sannidhanam-The Temple and the Goddess
 Varnam-Declaration of intense love
 Javali-A friend's plea to the Lord

Bhayili Piya-A woman's dual emotions of passion and devotion for Lord Krishna
 Yenna Tavam Sheidanay-What did you do, Mother Yashoda?

Tillana-A finale number showcasing the pure dance movement technique of Bharata Natyam

Join us for a post-show chat with Rama Vaidyanathan hosted by Raji Venkatesan of Sruti.

This performance is co-presented by Sruti, The
 India Music and Dance Society of Philadelphia.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Rama Vaidyanathan is one of India's leading classical dancers. She is considered as one of the best interpreters of the ancient art form of Bharata Natyam. She has been fortunate to have trained intensively under the legendry dancer Yamini Krishnamurty. Rama has also been under the guidance of the eminent Guru, Saroja Vaidyanathan.

Everyone who has seen Rama perform is struck by her unique thought process and fresh approach to dance. While deeply rooted in tradition, she has evolved her own individual style without forsaking the core principles of Bharata Natyam.

Rama has been performing professionally for the past 20 years and is one of the most sought after dancers of her generation. She brings to her dance a rare sense of devotion and dedication, which leaves the audience with a sense of spiritual fulfillment

PROGRAM NOTES

Sannidhanam-The Temple and the Goddess

The architecture of the Hindu Temple is based on the principles of symmetry, balance and precision. Right from the sacred lane leading to the Temple, the four doorways facing the four directions, the tall copper flag staff, the quadrangle courtyard, the long corridors with intricate carvings to finally the stark and simple Sanctum Sanctorum, the architecture is designed for the human mind to journey from the outward to the inward, from the physical world to the metaphysical. After journeying through the different layers of the Temple premises, the devotee finally comes face to face with the enshrined Deity, the empowered Goddess in this case.

While the movement dynamics of Bharata Natyam are used to celebrate the architectural brilliance of a Hindu Temple, the "Beeja Mantra" from The Devi Mahatmayam, an ancient Sanskrit text, is used to describe the multi-faceted Goddess. While she mercilessly destroys all evil, she is the universal mother, compassionate, beautiful and sensuous.

Ragamalika, Talam Adi - 15 minutes

Varnam-Declaration of intense love

The heroine, deeply in love with Lord Siva, unabashedly declares her love for the dancing Lord. She says, "I am enchanted by your cosmic dance. Do not be indifferent towards me, for I have come expectantly at your door step to unite with you. You are enshrined in the beautiful temple town of Tiruvavur, and here I am amazed to see every one chanting your name fervently. I am equally delighted to be a part of the magnificent procession when your idol is taken out on to the streets amidst joyous celebrations. Liberate my body and soul oh Lord, for Cupid's arrows of love are striking me incessantly and I am unable contain my passion any longer." This is a composition of the Tanjore Quartet.

Ragam Bhairavi, Talam Rupakam - 35 minutes

Javali-A friend's plea to the Lord

The heroine's friend approaches the lord and says, "Oh Lord, please listen to my friend's plea and take note of her pitiable condition. You claim that you love her, but is this what you call true love? To ignore her and reject her advances?" Sending a strong message across through her friend, the heroine says "Hey you! You better mend your ways, because this kind of behavior is totally unacceptable to me." A composition of the Tanjore Quartet.

Ragam Suruti, Talam Adi - 7 minutes

Bhayili Piya-A woman's dual emotions of passion and devotion for Lord Krishna

"Oh darling, don't go away, sit with me to savor this beautiful moon lit night. Let us lock ourselves in each other's arms." This statement reflects her passionate self. In a deeper mood reflecting her true devotion she says, "I have been unnecessarily embroiled in the unending circle of worldly affairs. I should actually leave everything for you. For who cares for me?"

Who is there for me other than you, my Lord.” A Hindi composition of the 19th Century Poet King Swati Tirunal.

Ragam Sorath, Talam Adi - 12 minutes

Yenna Tavam Sheidanay-What did you do, Mother Yashoda?

The devotee in this Tamil poem is unable to fathom the reason for Mother Yashoda's good fortune. “What penance did you do?” she asks. “What pious deed did you do to have the supreme Lord Krishna himself address you as “mother?” You have cajoled him, reprimanded him, fed him, sung him a lullaby and even tied him to the mortar when he was naughty. Even the Gods are envious of this special relationship you share with Lord Krishna.”

A composition of Papanasam Sivan. Ragam kapi, talam Adi. - 12 minutes

Tillana - A finale number showcasing the pure dance movement technique of Bharata Natyam

The performance ends with a Sankeertanam, or calling out to the Lord, where the devotee actually immerses herself in the unparalleled beauty of Krishna. Sensing his presence everywhere, she dances with him in sheer ecstasy.

The Tillana is in Ragam Dwijavanti Talam Adi, and the Sankeertanam is in Ragam Manorama Talam Adi. Both are compositions of the legendary Balamurali Krishna.

Bharata Natyam is one of the oldest dance forms of India. It was nurtured in the temples and courts of southern India since ancient times. Later, it was codified and documented as a performing art in the 19th century by four brothers known as the Tanjore Quartet, whose musical compositions for dance form the bulk of the Bharata Natyam repertoire even today. The art was handed down as a living tradition from generation to generation through the Devadasi system, under which women were dedicated to temples to serve the deity as dancers and musicians, forming part of the elaborate rituals. These highly talented artists and the male gurus (nattuvanars) were the sole repository of the art until the early 20th century, when a renewal of interest in India's cultural heritage prompted the educated elite to discover its beauty. By this time, the Devadasis had fallen upon evil days due to lack of state patronage and changed social mores. The revival of Bharata Natyam by pioneers such as E Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi Arundale brought the dance out of the temple precincts and onto the proscenium stage, though it retained its essentially devotional character.

Today, Bharata Natyam is one of the most popular and widely performed dance styles and is practiced by male and female dancers all over India. Due to its wide range of movements and postures and the balanced mélange of the rhythmic and mimetic aspects, the dance lends itself well to experimental and fusion choreography. Degree and post graduate courses covering the practice and theory of Bharata Natyam as well as the languages associated with its development are available at major universities of India.

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