

Saturday, April 9, 2022

## Ragamala Dance Company Returns to The Soraya with the World Premiere Production of Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgr

Company: Ragamala Dance Company  
Venue: The Soraya  
Location: Northridge, CA

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One of the foremost classical Indian dance companies returns to The Soraya with the world premiere production of Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim co-commissioned by The Soraya and The Kennedy Center. Rooted in the expansive South Indian dance form of Bharatanatyam, Ragamala Dance Company manifests a kindred relationship between the ancient and the contemporary. In this evening-length performance, eleven dancers conjure a realm where time is suspended and humans merge with the divine. Award-winning creators Ranees Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy imagine a metaphorical bridge to a ritualistic world of immortality, evoking the Hindu belief of birth-death-rebirth continuum to honor immigrant experiences of life and death in the diaspora. Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim features an original, recorded score and scenic/lighting design by Willy Cessa.

Tickets for Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim are available starting at \$36 at [www.thesoraya.org](http://www.thesoraya.org) and by calling 818-677-3000. The Soraya is located at 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330. After the company's praised performance of Written in Water in 2018, Ragamala returns to The Soraya. It is one of three offerings in The Soraya's Music Knows No Borders series which also includes Silkroad Ensemble: Home Within on April 2 and Amir ElSaffar's Rivers of Sound Orchestra on April 23.

### About Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim

Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim is a site-specific work and ritual for the stage where time is suspended and humans merge with the divine. The choreographers honor the cosmic trinity of Varanasi—sacred pilgrimage routes, the Ganges River, and the patron deity Shiva—and imagine a metaphorical crossing place, where one may leave the mundane and enter the world of transcendence. In this theatrical reimagining, with original, recorded score and scenic/lighting by French designer Willy Cessa, they expand upon the Hindu belief in a birth-death-rebirth continuum in Hindu thought to illuminate immigrant experiences of life and death in the diaspora. Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim was commissioned by the Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.); The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya), CSUN, Northridge; the Harris Theater (Chicago); the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College; Northrop at the University of Minnesota; the Gogue Performing Arts Center at Auburn University; Meany Center at the University of Washington, and American Dance Festival.

### About the Ragamala Dance Company

Celebrated as one of the diaspora's leading Bharatanatyam ensembles, Ragamala Dance Company, led by mother-and-daughter team Ranees Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy, embodies the artistic and spiritual traditions of India while creating a dialogue about the contemporary human experience. The company has been hailed by The New York Times as "soulful, imaginative, and rhythmically contagious." By creating 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. The company'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, aesthetics, and communities, and is rooted in the idea of Bharatanatyam as a dynamic living tradition. Led by the artistic matriarchy of Ranees Ramaswamy (Founder and Artistic Director), Aparna Ramaswamy (Artistic Director), and Ashwini Ramaswamy (Choreographic Associate), Ragamala Dance Company is a pioneering, intergenerational, family-run organization committed to the idea that while history is time bound, the stories we share are timeless. For more information, visit [ragamaladance.org](http://ragamaladance.org). Ranees and Aparna's work has been commissioned by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College, the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts at Cal State Northridge, Northrop at the University of Minnesota, 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), Opening Nights Performing Arts at Florida State University, the 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; and developed in residence at the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC), the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center (Italy), the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College, the Arts Center at NYU Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), an NPN residency at The Yard and a forthcoming residency at the Bogliasco Foundation Center (Italy).

#### The Soraya Tickets and Covid Protocols

The Soraya's Safe and Sound pledge: We offer the basics of human bonding, a return to days when a community wasn't a herd, when social wasn't only social distance, and when your health and welfare included joy and celebration. At The Soraya, you can be Safe and enjoy the Sound. At the time of the ticket purchase, customers will be asked to attest that everyone in their party has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or will be able to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test at the venue doors. At the venue doors, all attendees who are 2 years of age and older will be required to show proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 or a negative viral test result prior to entry. If providing a negative test result, it must be either a PCR test taken within 2 days of the event, or an antigen test taken within 1 day of the event. Over the counter "self-tests" will not be accepted. In addition, ushers will cross-check proof of full vaccination or negative COVID-19 viral test result against photo identification for attendees who are 18 years or older. Face masks are required in all indoor spaces for anyone 2 years of age and older, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status. Any updates and recommended guidance from our public health experts; further information and updates will be posted here: <https://www.thesoraya.org/>.

#### Calendar listing:

What: Ragamala Dance Company

Ranee and Aparna Ramaswamy Artistic Directors

Fires of Varanasi: Dance of the Eternal Pilgrim

Co-Commissioned by The Soraya and Kennedy Center

Where: Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)

18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330.

When: Sat., April 23 at 8pm

Tickets: Start at \$36

Phone: 818-677-3000

Website: [www.thesoraya.org](http://www.thesoraya.org)

#### About Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)

The 2021-22 Season marks the 10th Anniversary for the celebrated Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya) located on the vibrant and diverse campus of California State University in the heart of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley. Under the leadership of Executive and Artistic Director Thor Steingraber, The Soraya continues its vigorous commitment to innovating, excelling, and amplifying access by offering a wide variety of performances that reflect LA's many distinctive communities and featuring new and original work from the Los Angeles region as well as artists from around the world. In 2020, The Soraya's online programs garnered attention from around the globe and from media such as The New York Times. In addition to its LEED Gold certified venue—a rarity among performing arts centers—the 1700-seat Soraya has been nationally recognized for its environmentally sustainable practices and programs. After enduring a year without live performances, the 2021-22 season will offer a joy-filled reunion featuring a vibrant program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family, and international events that will further establish The Soraya as one of the top arts companies in Southern California that uplifts and inspires its audiences.

Find The Soraya on their new social media pages:

Facebook: [Facebook.com/TheSorayaStage](https://www.facebook.com/TheSorayaStage)

Twitter: @TheSorayaStage

Instagram: @TheSorayaStage

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Ragamala Dance Company  
18111 Nordhoff St, Los Angeles, CA 91325  
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6467654773  
<https://www.thesoraya.org/>

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Schedule  
April 9, 2022: 8:00pm

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