Concept: Aparna Ramaswamy

Creation and Choreography: Aparna Ramaswamy and Ranee Ramaswamy

Composer: Rudresh Mahanthappa

Dancers: Aparna Ramaswamy, Ranee Ramaswamy, Ashwini Ramaswamy, Tamara Nadel, Jessica Fiala

Musical Ensemble:
Rudresh Mahanthappa (alto saxophone), Rez Abbasi (guitar), Rajna Swaminathan (mridangam)
Raman Kalyan (Carnatic flute), Anjna Swaminathan (Carnatic violin)

Light Design: Jeff Bartlett

Set Design:
Concept by Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy
Architectural design by Anjali Ganapathy
Technical direction by Jeff Bartlett and Louise Robinson
Bell procurement by Anju Kataria and Khazana Gallery

Sound Design: Maury Jensen

Lighting Supervisor/Production Manager: Mat Terwilliger

Stage Manager: Elise Erickson

Commissioners:
Walker Art Center, Lead Commissioner and Developmental Partner
Krannert Center for the Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Lead Commissioner
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, Co-commissioner
Lincoln Center for Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Co-commissioner

Program will be approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes with no intermission.

Please join the artists for a conversation with the audience following the performance.

This performance is funded in part by a generous gift from Janet and Jay Hawley.
In *Song of the Jasmine* we explore the interconnectedness of the spiritual, the sensual and the natural that is the lifeblood of the Indian psyche. We are guided by the writings of the 8th-century Tamil mystic poet Andal, whose Sacred Sayings of the Goddess erases any dichotomy between the sacred and the personal and seamlessly interweaves the two as she expresses deep longing, anguish, ecstasy and the desire to merge the soul with the Supreme Consciousness.

For us, her unparalleled intensity of emotion inspires a dynamic world of contemporary interpretive possibility. Our commitment to entwining our Indian and American artistic genres speaks to the cultural fluidity in our hybrid existence and frees us to approach the poetic, visual and aural elements of the work as a sort of prism — different upon each viewing.

*Song of the Jasmine* was born of a close collaboration in which the choreography and the music were constructed simultaneously in a constant artistic dialogue that spanned more than a year.

We would like to thank The Clarice Smith Center and its staff for their support in the creation of *Song of the Jasmine*. We would also like to thank Paul Brohan for his support of this work over the course of its development.

—Aparna Ramaswamy, Ranee Ramaswamy, Rudresh Mahanthappa

### Selections from ‘Nachiar Tirumozhi’

...the state of bliss attained by the total surrender of body, mind and soul, or Atma, to the Paramatman, or the Divine Existence

He has invaded my heart; and while I pine and sigh for his love, He looks on indifferent as if it were all a play. I feel as if my bones had melted away and my long javelin eyes have not closed their lids for these many days. I am tossed on the waves of the sea of pain without finding the boat that is named the Lord of the highest realm.

My vow to him courses through my body like a ripened blossom strung on your bow to release with keening motion the name of the only one capable of ocean-breaths dotted with song cleaved from between beaks. Draw the bow at me, loosening braids of reason until I am an untied string without a knot...

I have nothing left to give. I’ve expended all at Govinda’s feet, who while dancing... plucked the stem of me in such heightened state. Frozen in ecstasy, is it fair to be further tormented? If the blazing lord of Arangam finds kindling of virtue, then he will reveal what’s outside himself inside me.

—Translations by Subramanya Bharathi and the poet Ravi Shankar

### About Andal

Throughout her short life, Andal refused to marry any mortal man — Krishna was the sole object of her affection. Her feverish urgency to unite with Him is likened to the unbearable urgency of a fish out of water. It is said that He was so pleased with her devotion that He appeared to her father in a dream, instructing him to bring Andal to the temple at Srirangam, on the banks of the Kauveri River in southern India.

Legend says that the moment she entered the sanctum of the temple, she was surrounded by a blaze of light and was absorbed into the image of Vishnu. She was only 15 years old.
Under the direction of Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy, Ragamala creates work that conveys a sense of reverence, of unfolding mystery, of universal celebration. Now in its 22nd season, Ragamala has been hailed by the New York Times as, “movingly meditative… [Ragamala] showed how Indian forms can provide some of the most transcendent experiences that dance has to offer.” The company has been featured at the American Dance Festival (North Carolina), Lincoln Center (New York), Kennedy Center (Washington DC), Music Center of Los Angeles (California), University Musical Society (Michigan), Just Festival (Edinburgh, United Kingdom), Bali Arts Festival (Indonesia), Soorya Festival (Kerala, India), and National Centre for Performing Arts (Mumbai, India).

Song of the Jasmine premiered at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in May of 2014. An 11-city tour of the work began in August with a performance at Lincoln Center Out of Doors, which the New York Times called, “soulful, imaginative and rhythmically contagious.”

For upcoming tour dates in the U.S. and India, please visit www.ragamaladance.org
612-824-1968 | info@ragamala.net

Exclusive representation by
Laura Colby, Director
Elsie Management
TEL (718) 797-4577

About Ragamala Dance

Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy (Concept/Choreography) are Artistic Directors, choreographers, and principal dancers of Ragamala Dance, founded by Ranee in 1992. As dancemakers and performers, they explore the dynamic tension between the ancestral and the contemporary, making 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 the curiosity, openness and creative freedom fostered in the United States. As protégés and senior disciples of legendary dancer and choreographer Alarmél Valli, known as one of India’s greatest living masters, Ranee and Aparna’s training in the South Indian classical dance form of Bharatanatyam is the bedrock of a creative aesthetic that prioritizes truthful emotion above all else.

Ranee and Aparna’s work is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, National Dance Project, MAP Fund, The McKnight Foundation, New Music/USA, USArtists International and the Japan Foundation, and has been commissioned by the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), Lincoln Center Out of Doors (New York), the Krannert Center (University of Illinois), The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (University of Maryland) and the American Composers Forum. Ranee and Aparna were jointly named “2011 Artist of the Year” by the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Their upcoming work, Written in Water, has been selected for a development residency at the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC).

Ranee is a 2014 recipient of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award and currently serves on the National Council on the Arts, appointed by President Obama. Among her many awards are 14 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Choreography and Interdisciplinary Art, a Bush Fellowship for Choreography, a 2011 McKnight Distinguished Artist Award and a 2012 United States Artists Fellowship.

Aparna’s choreography and performance have been described as “a marvel of buoyant agility and sculptural clarity” (Dance Magazine), “thrillingly
three-dimensional” and “an enchantingly beautiful dancer” (the New York Times). She has been awarded several honors, including three McKnight Artist Fellowships for Dance and Choreography, a Bush Fellowship for Choreography, an Arts and Religion grant funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, choreographic and travel support from the Jerome Foundation and Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Lakshmi Vishwanathan Endowment Prize from Sri Krishna Gana Sabha (Chennai, India). Her solo work has toured the U.S. and India with support from the National Dance Project and USArtists International. In 2010, Aparna was named one of “25 to Watch” by Dance Magazine. Aparna is an empaneled artist with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (of the Government of India). She serves on the Board of Trustees of Dance/USA.

Rudresh Mahanthappa (Composer/Alto Saxophone), Guggenheim Fellow and DownBeat Critics Poll winner, is considered one of the world’s foremost jazz saxophonists and composers. Hybridizing progressive jazz and South Indian classical music in a fluid and forward-looking form, his music speaks in a voice dedicated to forging a new path forward. Current projects include his quintet Bird Calls, a 21st-century tribute to Charlie Parker that will release a highly anticipated album in early 2015. His performance history includes presentations at Carnegie Hall, Walker Arts Center and Royce Hall; jazz festivals of Montreal, North Sea and Newport; and prestigious jazz clubs such as Blue Note, Birdland and Bimhuis. He has been awarded two New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships, and multiple commissions from the Rockefeller Foundation, Chamber Music America and American Composers Forum. He has also been named alto saxophonist of the year by the Jazz Journalists’ Association numerous times. Mahanthappa is a Yamaha artist and uses Vandoren reeds exclusively. More information can be found at www.rudreshm.com

Rez Abbasi (Guitar) has been blazing a new trail as a leading figure in South Asian-American cutting-edge jazz for more than a decade. His work spans far and wide, performing in award-winning groups as Rudresh Mahanthappa’s Indo-Pak Coalition and Kinsmen, and Indian multiple Juno award-winning vocalist Kiran Ahluwalia’s ensemble. In 2013, Abbasi was voted #1 Rising Star Guitarist in DownBeat magazine’s prestigious International Critics Poll. Abbasi has released several albums as a leader, from acoustic guitar driven quartet music, to electrified organ trio featuring Indian vocals. His ultra-modern quintet, Invocation, pulls all aspects of his persona into a cohesive, distinctive voice rarely paralleled in today’s jazz. Including band mates, Mahanthappa, Vijay Iyer, Dan Weiss, Johannes Weidenmueller and guest, Kiran Ahluwalia, Invocation’s debut release, Things To Come (2009) was included in DownBeat magazine’s ‘best albums of the decade.’ That same year he received the prestigious Chamber Music America NJW grant to compose more music for Invocation. Abbasi’s new compositions focused on a musical form from Pakistan called, Qawwali. With hard-driving grooves and sophisticated melodies, Suno Suno (2011) ended the year on many critics, ‘best of’ lists. In Fall 2012, Abbasi released his ninth album and his first ever trio, with John Hebert on bass and Satoshi Takeishi on drums. Continuous Beat hit #1 on the CMJ radio charts with Abbasi featured on the front cover of CMJ magazine. In 2014 he will release his tenth album, featuring the Rez Abbasi Acoustic Quartet (RAAQ). (www.reztone.com)

Jessica Fiala (Dancer) began training with Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy in 2006 and has toured with Ragamala throughout the U.S. and to India and the UK, including performances at The Kennedy Center, the American Dance Festival and the Soorya Festival. Outside of the company, she has studied rhythm tap and modern dance and continues to perform with choreographers Kaleena Miller and Vanessa Voskuil. Fiala holds an interdisciplinary master’s degree in museum studies and cultural studies.
through the University of Minnesota, with a thesis titled “Ordering ‘the Other’: Heterotopias and the Musée du Quai Branly.” Most recently, she presented research at the MeLa conference “The Postcolonial Museum” in Naples, Italy (2013), which she has since expanded for publication in the upcoming MeLa collection *The Ruined Archive* (2015). Fiala has been active at the Walker Art Center since 2009 in roles as a tour guide, blogger and SpeakEasy facilitator. She is the International Research Coordinator for Forecast Public Art, a Research Associate at Lutman & Associates and an administrative assistant at the Caux Round Table.

**Raman Kalyan** (Carnatic Flute), breathing magical melodies on the Indian bamboo flute, is one of the leading flautists in the Carnatic style of music. Kalyan has released more than 60 CDs and many DVDs. His CD *Music for Deep Meditation* reached #1 on the iTunes world music charts and remained in the top 50 for more than six months. Kalyan has been featured as guest artist in more than 300 commercial recordings and Indian movies. Apart from being a soloist, Kalyan has scored many audio/video albums, dance dramas and theatre productions. Kalyan won the “Best Flautist Award” from Madras Music Academy twice for his concerts during December Music Festival 2009 and 2013. Kalyan is a featured artist in the Miles from India tour and performs with legends Glen Velez (GRAMMY Winner) Dave Liebman (GRAMMY Winner), Pt. Vishwamohan Bhatt (GRAMMY Winner), Mandolin Shrinivas, Selvaganesh (Remember Shakti), Darryl Jones (Rolling Stones) and John Beasley (*Finding Nemo*) and has performed at the Montreal Jazz Festival, San Francisco Jazz Festival and Miles from India fest in Paris. Kalyan has performed with South Indian music legends like Dr M. Balamuralikrishna, Dr N. Ramani and A.K Palanivel and has also been touring as a special guest with legendary singer and Guinness record holder K.J. Yesudas. Kalyan’s accompaniment for Martha Graham’s documentary *The Flute of Krishna* has been appreciated globally and his meditation music YouTube videos have more than 300,000 views. Kalyan is founder/president of the Indo American Academy of Classical Music. (www.ramankalyan.com)

**Tamara Nadel** (Dancer) is a disciple of Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy. She is a founding member of Ragamala and has toured extensively with the company throughout the U.S. and in Russia, Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, India and the UK. Nadel was a 2006 McKnight Artist Fellow in Dance, and has received grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council and a Jerome Foundation Travel Study Grant. She has been studying Carnatic music under Lalit Subramanian since 2011. Nadel is also Ragamala’s Development and Outreach Director and a teacher at the Ragamala School. She holds a degree in religious studies and dance from Macalester College. Nadel served on the City of Minneapolis Arts Commission from 2008-2010, and currently serves on the board of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts.

**Ashwini Ramaswamy** (Dancer) has studied Bharatanatyam with Ragamala’s Artistic Directors Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy, her mother and sister, since the age of five. She has been accepted as a student of Bharatanatyam legend Alarmlé Valli, one of the greatest living masters of the form. She has toured extensively with Ragamala, performing throughout the U.S. and in Russia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, the UK, and India. Ramaswamy is a 2012 McKnight Artist Fellow for Dance, and the recipient of two Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grants for Dance and a Metropolitan Regional Arts Council Next Step Fund grant. Ramaswamy recently began choreographing and is continuing to create new work. Ramaswamy is Ragamala’s Director of Publicity and Marketing and holds a degree in English Literature from Carleton College. She currently serves on the board of Arts Midwest.

**Anjna Swaminathan** is a budding artist in the field of South Indian Carnatic violin. A disciple of the late violin maestro Parur Sri M.S. Gopalar Krishnan and Mysore Sri H.K. Narasimhamurthy, she has been trained in both Carnatic classical and Western classical styles of violin. As a theatre artist and dramaturg with interests in postcolonial thought, gender and queer theories, and Hindu vedantic philosophy, Swaminathan often engages in artistic work that ties together multiple
aesthetic forms toward a critical consciousness. Using her hybrid and interdisciplinary perspective, she seeks a space for her deep-rooted vocabulary within the contemporary artistic landscape. Anjna frequently takes part in interdisciplinary collaborations, often developing scores and providing musical accompaniment for dancers and dance companies, most notably, Ragamala Dance (Minneapolis), with whom she has been working for the past four years, as well as Ragamala’s principal dancer and soloist, Aparna Ramaswamy. Swaminathan also performs regularly with the ensemble RAJAS, curated by her sister and frequent collaborator, Rajna Swaminathan, which brings together contemporary musicians to explore new directions of composition and improvisation. More recently, Anjna has delved into the realm of composition, and was commissioned to create original music for playwright/performer Anu Yadav’s (Washington DC) powerful one-woman play Meena’s Dream. In the summer of 2014, she was a participant at the celebrated Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music in Alberta, Canada. Swaminathan holds a bachelor’s degree in theatre from the University of Maryland, College Park. (www.anjnaswaminathan.com)

Rajna Swaminathan is an accomplished young artist in the field of South Indian classical percussion — mridangam. She is a disciple and protégé of mridangam maestro Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman. She has accompanied many renowned musicians widely in the U.S., Canada and India. She has also performed extensively in the December Music Festival in Chennai. She frequently presents workshops on South Indian rhythm, most notably at the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music, the Percussive Arts Society International Convention and the KOSA International Percussion Camp. Over the past three years, she has been collaborating with distinguished artists in New York’s jazz and creative music scene, including saxophonist Steve Coleman and pianist Vijay Iyer. Swaminathan is active as a composer-performer for dance and theatre works. Most notably, she has toured widely with the acclaimed Ragamala Dance (Minneapolis), as well as with Ragamala’s celebrated artistic director Aparna Ramaswamy in her solo work. Swaminathan’s most recent engagement as a composer is RAJAS, a nascent project that brings together contemporary musicians to explore new directions for composition and improvisation rooted in Indian musical concepts. She holds degrees in anthropology and French from the University of Maryland, College Park. (www.rajnaswaminathan.com)

Jeff Bartlett (Light Design) has been honored to light Ragamala Dance since A Canticle of Mary in 1994. He has lit many of the company’s signature works, including Sacred Earth, 1,001 Buddhas: Journey of the Gods, Yathra/Journey, The Transposed Heads, Body and Soul, Bhakti, Sthree and Ihrah. A dance lighting specialist based in Minneapolis, Bartlett has lit scores of artists in hundreds of productions over more than two decades. His design work has been recognized with 2010 and 2005 Sage Awards for Dance; a 2008 Artist of the Year listing in City Pages; and a 2003 McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship. Bartlett is Production Manager at the Weitz Center for Creativity at Carleton College.

Support for the creation of Song of the Jasmine was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts; the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts; the MAP Fund, a program of Creative Capital, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; New Music/USA’s Commissioning Music/USA program, made possible with generous annual support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and endowment support from The Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, The Helen F. Whitaker Fund, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trust; the RBC Foundation USA; The McKnight Foundation; Target; the General Mills Foundation; the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund; Ragamala’s Board of Directors Institutional Growth Fund; the generous support of Ragamala’s “Rasika Circle,” including Prakash and Usha Asirvatham, The Goodale Family Foundation, the Dale Schatzlein and Emily Maltz Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation, Ranee Ramaswamy and David McKay, Wallace and Margaret McKay, and Anonymous; and Friends of Ragamala.