



**Esplanade
Presents**

Kalaa Utsavam
Indian Festival of Arts



AN ESPLANADE CO-PRODUCTION

Anjaneeyam:

HANUMAN'S RAMAYANA

by **Apsaras Arts** Singapore

17 Nov 2017, Fri, 8pm
Esplanade Theatre

(2hrs 20mins, including a 20min intermission)

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore’s national performing arts centre and one of the busiest arts centres in the world. Since its opening in 2002, the centre has presented more than 37,000 performances, drawing an audience of 26 million patrons and 92 million visitors. This architectural icon, with its distinctive twin shells, houses world-class performance spaces complemented by a comprehensive range of professional support services. Its two main venues are the 1,600-seat Concert Hall and a Theatre with a capacity of 2,000. In March 2014, Esplanade’s Concert Hall was listed as one of the “world’s 15 most beautiful concert halls” by Hamburg-based building data company Emporis.

Esplanade’s vision is to be a performing arts centre for everyone and it seeks to enrich the lives of its community through the arts. The centre’s programming is guided by its mission—to entertain, engage, educate and inspire. Its year-long arts calendar of about 3,000 performances presented by Esplanade, its collaboration partners and hirers cater to diverse audiences in Singapore and span different cultures, languages and genres including dance, music, theatre, and more. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are non-ticketed. Also presented free are the extensive visual arts programmes at the centre’s public spaces which allow visitors to view and explore art works in their own time.

Esplanade regularly presents world-renowned companies and artists that attract international attention and add to Singapore’s cultural vibrancy. The centre is also a popular performance home for arts groups and commercial presenters who hire its venues to stage a wide range of programmes. These carefully curated presentations complement Esplanade’s own diverse offerings for audiences.

Esplanade works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. The centre supports the creation of artistic content and develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. In 2016, The Charity Council awarded TECL the Charity Transparency Award and the Special Commendation Award – Clarity of Strategy.

In October 2017, Esplanade launched #mydurian—a year-long celebration for its 15th anniversary—comprising programmes and activities that bring together people and stories that have helped shape the iconic arts centre fondly dubbed the Durian.

Visit www.esplanade.com for more information.

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FESTIVAL MESSAGE



It’s that time of the year the team looks forward to most, when Esplanade comes alive with the Indian arts during the 10-day *Kalaa Utsavam – Festival of Indian Arts*. As the centre turns 15 in 2017, we are thrilled to welcome back the artists whom we have worked and built close relationships with. We invite you to join us during the festival as we celebrate these journeys and take in the beauty of Indian culture.

Apsaras Arts, who is commemorating their 40th anniversary this year, has been a close partner with Esplanade since 2006. For the past 11 years, we have worked together to produce and stage some of their new works, such as their first large-scale production, *Angkor: An Untold Story*, which we co-produced as part of *Kalaa Utsavam 2013*. This year, we partner up once again on *Anjaneyam – Hanuman’s Ramayana*, conceived by a creative team from Singapore and Asia.

Festival commission *from: The Platform* is dancer-choreographer Raka Maitra’s latest piece. Raka, whom we have worked with since 2010, has developed a unique vocabulary from

her foundation in *odissi*. She has carved a niche in the Indian contemporary dance scene locally, and successfully toured the works created with us.

We also celebrate our journey with veteran musician Mohamed Noor, who first performed at Esplanade at our opening festival in 2002 as part of Indian carnatic fusion band, Brahmma. Through the years, he has been featured in Esplanade’s *Mosaic Music Festival*, *Baybeats* and *Late Nite*, as well as our free programmes series. He has also inspired younger musicians as part of Esplanade’s *Fusion Beats Mentorship Programme*.

Indian theatre practitioner Atul Kumar, is also back with *Khwaab-Sa*. We first noticed him when he acted in our sold-out run of *Hamlet – The Clown Prince* by Cinematograph. The festival has also presented two plays by The Company Theatre which were directed by him, in 2010 and 2012, which were well received.

From carnatic rock to folk music, comedy to film screen, and parent-child workshops to a day-long *Chakra-thon*, there is something for everyone at *Kalaa Utsavam*. We hope that this year’s line-up brings you an unforgettable experience.

Rajeswari Ramachandran
Producer
On behalf of the *Kalaa Utsavam* team

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTES



Anjaneyam is an attempt to stage the evergreen tale of the *Ramayana* from the perspective of Hanuman the monkey god, bringing together the traditions of India and Java, Indonesia. *Anjaneyam* commemorates 40 years of Apsaras Arts founded by Singapore's pioneers in the arts, S. Sathyalingham and Neila Sathyalingham.

My mission at Apsaras Arts has been to continue working towards the vision of the company to create a rich repertoire of dance productions for ensemble casts. We do this by redefining the boundaries of Indian classical dance, with themes inspired by the common narratives and the traditions of performing arts of Southeast Asia and India. *Anjaneyam* is another milestone in this quest, following our earlier creation *Angkor – An Untold Story*.

The ensemble dancers take centrestage as the core cast in *Anjaneyam*, inspired by the chorus traditions of Greek theatre, driving and underscoring the plot. Our ensemble dancers are the heavenly nymphs apsaras gently navigating the audience through Hanuman's world within the story.

Through this journey of making *Anjaneyam*, I have discovered that the *Ramayana* dance traditions of India and Indonesia complement each other and can beautifully coexist on stage. This is done through the contemporary reading of the *Natyasastra*, the ancient Indian treatise on theatre, dance and music. *Anjaneyam* has allowed me to explore *bharatanatyam* and Javanese classical dance, the *Ramayana* narratives of India and Java, carnatic and hindustani music of India and Javanese gamelan music, as well as costume designs and fabrics of both the traditions. I am ever grateful to my *maanasika* Guru Dr Padma Subrahmanyam for opening my eyes to Southeast Asian dance traditions and for her continued support of my artistic explorations.

I am grateful to the amazing team of dancers and art makers at Apsaras Arts and to our guest dancers and musicians, for their dedication and passion in realising this production. *Anjaneyam* would not have been possible without the eminent creative team of scholars—Dr Madhavan, Dr Sudha Sheshyan and Dr Pappuvenugopal Rao; composer Dr Rajkumar Bharathi; music director and designer Sai Sharavanam; choreographers Mohanapriyan Thavarajah, Jeyanthi Subramaniam, Hari Padman and Osman Abdul Hamid; dramaturg Lim How Ngean; light and set designer Gyandev Singh; and projection mapping designer Himanshu Gosh, all of whom have held my hand through this journey of discovery.

I am honoured by the belief that Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay has placed in my team and me, and for this co-production opportunity. I am also humbled by the continuous support and guidance of our board members led by our chairman Ambassador K Kesavapany, National Arts Council of Singapore, and our sponsors, the members of Devata – Friends of Apsaras Arts, in enabling us to achieve this milestone in our journey.

We dedicate this world premiere of *Anjaneyam* in loving memory to our founders S. Sathyalingham and Neila Sathyalingham. Not to mention, we are honoured to have their contemporaries and colleagues at Kalakshetra – the legendary VP Dhananjayan and CK Balagopal – who make their guest appearances in this tribute.

Aravinth Kumarasamy

DRAMATURG'S NOTES



Anjaneyam : Revitalising the Dance Drama

As much as telling the same story through different characters might lead to certain chaos and confusion, these multi-focal strands of the same narrative offer new insights most of the time. And that's what Apsaras Arts' *Anjaneyam* attempts to do: present an ancient tale anew through a different lens.

Artistic director Aravinth Kumarasamy wants us to consider the life journey of yet another all-important character, the Monkey God Hanuman and the contributions his character makes in the *Ramayana* narrative. And, *Anjaneyam* begins right at the start with the epic conception of Hanuman, paving his destiny to fight alongside Rama. This is the heart of a modern staging of a time-honoured epic, moving away from the monolithic narrative and characters of Rama and Sita.

In terms of the narrative, Aravinth pays careful attention to the human drama of complex emotions as he teases out the lament of Sita, who recalls the incidents that led to her abduction. Additionally, the relationship between Hanuman and Sita is also highlighted, a bond that is strengthened by hope and light.

In terms of staging, Aravinth allows for cross-cultural performance elements as he juxtaposes classical Javanese and Indian aesthetics through the meeting of gamelan and carnatic music, and Javanese and *bharatanatyam* choreographic gestures. This is the result of Aravinth's fascination with the trajectories of Indic art forms manifesting in Southeast Asian expressions. Not to mention his employment of contemporary stagecraft in lighting and projection that contribute significantly to revitalising the dance drama form.

Having said that, Aravinth still astutely observes the ancient *Natyasastra* – the Indian dramatic treatise – in all its tenets of dramatisation, characterisation, theatrical staging and dramaturgical guides that it offers. The difference is in the sensitive interpretation of the dramaturgy of today's spectatorship situated in a complex and multifocal world.

Lim How Ngean

Prelude

In his sunset years, after the completion of authoring the epic *Ramayana*, Maharishi Valmiki retreats to the Himalayas to lead an ascetic life in prayer. As he walks along the mountain range and valleys, he stumbles upon a version of the Ramayana, written on stone tablets, that is very different from his own. Intrigued by this discovery, Maharishi Valmiki is puzzled by its authorship. The heavenly nymphs, the apsaras (female nymphs) and the gandharvas (male nymphs), lead Valmiki into this version, which narrates the story of Hanuman's life.

Act 1: Birth of Hanuman

There once lived King Dasharatha of Ayodhya who was advised to perform the ritual of *putrakameshti yagna* to produce an heir to his throne. He received some sacred pudding (*payasam*) to be shared between his three wives.

Meanwhile, far away in the forest, there was an apsara named Puñjikastalā, who had been cursed to live on earth. Anjana was her human name, and she was married to a Vanara chieftain named Kesari. To redeem herself from this curse, Anjana prayed intensely to Shiva to beget a child.

At the end of his *yagna*, King Dasaratha gave the pudding to his first and second wives, Kausalya and Kaikeyi. As he was about to hand the rest of it to his third wife, Sumithra, a bird snatched the bowl and flew away. As it turned out, the bird was another apsara named Suvarchalam, who was also cursed due to her impulsiveness, and could only be freed if she touched the pudding.

After doing so, Suvarchalam transformed back to an apsara, and the bowl of pudding fell from her claws. Vayu, the Wind God, by order of Lord Shiva, blew it gently into the outstretched hands of Anjana, who consumed it. As a result, Hanuman was born; he was named Anjaneyam, the son of Anjana.

Back at the palace, Kausalya gave birth to Rama, while Kaikeyi gave birth to Bharata. The two queens had previously shared their pudding with Sumithra, who had given birth to twins as a result, Lakshmana and Shatrugana.

The heavens rejoiced as Lord Vishnu, the Protector of the Universe, was born as Rama. At his request, many devas from the heavens were born as vanaras, including Hanuman, who was considered the son of Vayu.

Act 2: Childhood Pranks of Hanuman | Hanuman meets Rama

As a child, Hanuman thought that the sun was a ripe mango and tried to eat it. At the same time, Rahu, a planet god, was trying to eclipse the sun. The two clashed. Hanuman thrashed Rahu and took the sun in his mouth. The angry god approached Indra, the king of devas, and complained that a monkey child had prevented him from the scheduled eclipse. This enraged Indra, who responded by throwing his weapon *vajra* (thunderbolt) at Hanuman, striking his jaw. A permanent mark was left on his *hanuḥ* (meaning "jaw" in Sanskrit), which explains his name.

Upset over the attack, Hanuman's father figure, Vayu, went into seclusion, taking the air with him. As living beings began to suffocate, Indra withdrew his thunderbolt and the devas revived Hanuman, blessing him with multiple boons to appease Vayu.

Years later, while Rama (during his 14-year exile) and his brother Lakshmana went searching for his wife Sita, who had been abducted by the Demon King Ravana, they came upon the mountain Rishyamukha, where the exiled Monkey King Sugriva, his followers and friends were in hiding from his older brother Vali. There he met Hanuman, who brought him to meet Sugriva. Rama offered to help Sugriva kill Vali and save the Vanaras, who in return agreed to help Rama's search. Hanuman was sent to the South as an emissary of Rama.

When Hanuman crossed the ocean to reach Lanka, he encountered Surasa, the sea monster. She declared that he was food provided to her by the gods. She told him that he could only pass through her mouth, as per a boon given to her. Hanuman challenged her to open it wide enough as he expanded his form, becoming larger. As Surasa's mouth widened, Hanuman assumed a tiny form (size of a thumb), entering it and leaving through her ear.



Act 3: Hanuman in Lanka

When Hanuman reached Lanka, he was astonished by its beauty. It was a beautiful city with golden towers studded with gem stones piercing through the clouds, houses with *karpaga* trees that could give anything one desired, and heavenly maidens at the beck and call of the women.

Combing through Lanka, he found Sita in captivity in the Asoka garden, depressed and guarded by Ravana's demons. Tirjada, the only friendly demoness who was guarding her, revealed her dream of seeing Sita being saved by Rama. Hanuman saw the Ravana threaten Sita for not accepting his love. The distressed Sita tried to end her life. Hanuman revealed himself to her and handed over Rama's ring as proof of his identity.

Sita told him about what happened before she was captured: getting tricked by the golden deer, which led to her abduction, and the subsequent attempts by Jatayu, the king of birds, to rescue her. Hanuman consoled Sita by assuming his gigantic form, his *visvaroop*, thereby lifting her spirits. He also offered to carry her back to Rama. However, Sita refused his offer, saying it would be an insult to Rama as his honour would be at stake. Hanuman promised to return with Rama, taking her hairpin, *choodamani*.

Before leaving Lanka, he allowed himself to be captured by Ravana's guards so he could meet the Demon King. Ravana, whose court was renowned to have the best dancers, musicians and poets, insulted Hanuman by denying him a seat. In response, Hanuman lengthened his own tail and coiled it up into a seat that rose higher than the Demon King's throne.

He conveyed Rama's message of warning and demanded the safe return of Sita. Enraged, Ravana ordered for his tail to be lit. In the soldiers' attempt to wrap cloth around his tail, Hanuman lengthened it, before allowing it to be lit and escaping with it on fire. He then burned down much of Lanka, and after extinguishing the flames in the sea, headed back to Rama.

Act 4: The Great War

With the help of Hanuman and the Vanaras, Rama and Lakshmana crossed the ocean bridge, into Lanka. During the battle with Ravana's son Indrajit, Lakshmana got severely wounded and fell unconscious. Hanuman was sent to fetch the Sanjivani, a powerful life-restoring herb from the Dronagiri mountain range to revive him. When he was unable to find the herb before nightfall, he lifted the entire mountain and brought it to Lanka, an act which saved Lakshmana. An emotional Rama hugged Hanuman, saying that he was as dear to him as his beloved. In the end, Ravana was defeated by Rama with the help of Hanuman and the Vanaras.

Epilogue

After the victory, Hanuman went to the Himalayas to continue his worship of the Lord. There he scripted a version of the *Ramayana* on the mountains, recording every detail of Rama's deeds. When Maharishi Valmiki met Hanuman, he said that his version of the *Ramayana* was no match for Hanuman's splendid one. Hanuman took the stone tablets on which his and Valmiki's versions of *Ramayana* were written, and rushed to the sea. He then threw his into it as an offering to Rama. His version, called the *Hanumad Ramayana*, has been lost ever since.

Maharishi Valmiki was so taken aback that he said he would gladly be reborn to sing the glory of Hanuman, which he had understated in his version. It was believed that the Saint Tulsidas, who composed the *Ramcharitmanas*, was none other than Valmiki fulfilling this desire.

Lyrics compiled from *Valmiki's Ramayana* (Sanskrit), *Kambar's Ramavatharam* (Tamil), *Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas* (Hindi) and commissioned lyrics penned by Dr Pappu Venugopala Rao (Sanskrit) and R. Krishnamurthy (Tamil)



Ramayana: A Cultural Phenomenon

An introduction to the ancient epic, by T. Sasitharan

There is, arguably, no other text in known history, that has had as pervasive and as powerful an influence over the cultures of more distinctly different and diverse people than the *Ramayana*.

Amidst all the speculation, guesswork, hyperbole and disputations surrounding it, one fact, plain and simple, stands out: The *Ramayana* can still be, it seems, all things to all men. And, sometimes, to women too. This, surely, is the secret of its abiding appeal.

Whatever it is we may take its genre to be, literature, scripture, dharmic oracle, legend or (as some insist) history; no matter how we may wish read it; the Romance of Rama: the tender love story of prince Rama for his chosen princess; the Adventures of Rama: the compelling saga of court intrigue, forest exile and the violence of countless duels and honour-fights, of men, beasts and demons, the word of God, whatever ... the epic-poetic text referred to as the *Ramayana* is a veritable font of stories, that is endlessly and wondrously captivating.

Millions of people of every clime, culture and country, since time immemorial, have been gripped by its narrative sway, moral subtlety, ethical currency and the truth of the all-too-human foibles of its characters.

Whether you are a faithful devotee, convinced of its divinity, hanging on the very utterance of the name "Rama", or a die-hard fan of the innumerable cultural products spun-off the tale – from theatre, drama, dance, puppet shows and shadow plays to comic books, films, songs, TV serials and cartoons – or an artist-scholar theorising a new instance of the "distributed diasporic imaginary"¹ of the narrative, the *Ramayana* speaks to each of us individually and uniquely. As if, it is speaking to no one else. This is the source of its indisputable, undiminished power.

As the *Ramayana* scholar Paula Richman has shown, the tradition of the epic consists of multiplicities and pluralities; a lineage that implicitly permits questioning, elaboration, extension and elision within a convention of prescribed boundaries.² Therefore, in positing hegemonic interpretations and "weaponizing" the *Ramayana* against groups who do not conform to their own narrow worldview, powerful groups in Indian society in effect deny part of its core nature. Ironically, the extremism of India's Hindutva nationalists serves only to intellectually defile the *Ramayana*. Even so it would be quite wrong to think of the Ramayana as a work consisting of a single, canonic, hegemonic, invariant text. As the late poet, scholar and translator A.K. Ramanujan has argued, there is no original, inviolable *Ur-text*.³ There are merely "tellings" and "re-tellings" of the story. Each telling is always somewhat in sympathy with others, and always somewhat different from the others.

The oldest telling of Rama's story

The earliest of these tellings, when the *Ramayana* was still part of India's great oral tradition, date back to circa. 1500 BCE. The revered Valmiki text, running to all of 24,000 stanzas in classical Sanskrit, is usually dated to be around 400 BCE. Throughout the span of this vast ocean of time, the story of Rama has remained largely unchanged.

Rama is born the eldest son and heir to the throne of Ayodhya's King Dasharatha. Rama's stepmother Kaikeyi, who wishes to see her own son Bharata ascend to the throne, asks Dasharatha to fulfill a boon he had granted to her years before for saving his life, requesting that Rama be exiled to the forest. She was encouraged to make this demand by Kooni, her maidservant. Rama, the obedient son, immediately relinquishes the throne and leaves with his faithful wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana.

In the forest Sita is abducted by the demon king of Lanka, Ravana, and held by other demons, in Lanka. Rama asks for help rescuing Sita from the monkey King Sugriva, son of the sun god, and from Hanuman, who goes to Lanka to find Sita on Rama's behalf. After a great battle between Rama and Ravana in which Rama kills Ravana, Sita is rescued, beaming with happiness to be reunited with her husband.

However, Rama receives her with coldness, saying that she can no longer be his wife after having dwelt with Ravana. Sita insists on her innocence in vain and finally orders her funeral pyre to be built, since she would rather die by fire than live without Rama. Rama sees her enter the flames to undergo the trial by fire, which is supposedly a test of her purity. Sita passes the trial, emerging unscathed in the arms of Agni, the fire deity.

She is now welcomed by Rama, whose behaviour she tenderly forgives, but not before the gods reveal Rama's divine nature to him by way of admonishing him for his treatment of Sita. The conquest won, Ravana defeated, and Sita restored, Rama returns to govern Ayodhya with Sita by his side.

Many Ramas, innumerable languages

So much for the Valmiki's story, which bleeds into the re-tellings and adaptations which follow suit, and, because this is India, there are stories to explain why this must be so. One of the stories, involving Rama's devotee Hanuman, goes like this:

"Hanuman was in the netherworld. When he was finally taken to the King of Spirits, he kept repeating the name of Rama. 'Rama Rama Rama . . .'

Then the King of Spirits asked, 'Who are you?'

'Hanuman.'

'Hanuman? Why have you come here?'

'Rama's ring fell into a hole. I've come to fetch it.'

The king looked around and showed him a platter. On it were thousands of rings. They were all Rama's rings. The king brought the platter to Hanuman, set it down, and said, 'Pick out your Rama's ring and take it.'

They were all exactly the same. 'I don't know which one it is,' said Hanuman, shaking his head.

The King of Spirits said, 'There have been as many Ramas on earth as there are rings on this platter. When you return to earth, you will not find Rama. This incarnation of Rama is now over. Whenever an incarnation of Rama is about to be over, his ring falls down. I collect them and keep them. Now you can go.'

So, Hanuman left."⁴

Imagine, for every Rama there is a *Ramayana*.



Just a listing of languages in which the Rama story has been told is astounding: Annamese, Balinese, Bengali, Cambodian, Chinese, Gujarati, Javanese, Kannada, Kashmiri, Khotanese, Laotian, Malay, Marathi, Oriya, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Santali, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tibetan and Western languages. Some of these languages have more than one telling of the story.

Since the 10th century the retellings have been innumerable within India itself. What is more remarkable is that many are literary masterpieces: Kamban's *Ramavataram* (Tamil), Gona Budda Reddy's *Ramayanam* (Telugu), Madhava Kandali's *Saptakanda Ramayana* (Assamese), Krittivasi Ojha's *Shri Rama Panchali* (Bengali), Sarala Das' *Vilanka Ramayana* and Balaram Das' *Dandi Ramayana* both in Oriya, Sant Eknath's *Bhavarth Ramayana* (Marathi), Tulsidas' *Ramcharitamanas* (Hindi), Thunchaththu's *Adhyaathmaramayanam Kilippattu* (Malayalam) and Sikh, Jain and Buddhist adaptations.

"Astounding" barely does justice to the cultural phenomenon that is the Ramayana.

The promise of justice

No Indian ever hears the *Ramayana* for the first time. It inheres in all our various, multifarious milieus; an ambient, pre-natal presence in all our lives.

For Indians and non-Indians alike we may rightfully say: "[...] that the cultural area in which *Ramayanas* are endemic has a pool of signifiers (like a gene pool), signifiers that include plots, characters, names, geography, incidents, and relationships. Oral, written, and performance traditions, phrases, proverbs, and even sneers carry allusions to the Rama story."⁵

The *Ramayana* is such a cultural phenomenon because it holds out a promise; imperfect, fleeting and unlikely as it may seem, it is the promise of the possibility of justice and order in life, ultimately based on goodness, virtue, beauty and the fellowship of man and beast, anywhere on earth.

T. Sasitharan (Sasi) is Co-Founder and Director of the Intercultural Theatre Institute. Together with the late Kuo Pao Kun, he conceived and started ITI in 2000. He was the erstwhile Artistic Director of Substation (1995-2000), Singapore's only independent arts centre, and the theatre and visual arts critic of *The Straits Times* (1988-1995). For more than 40 years, Sasi has worked in theatre as an actor/performer, director and producer. He received the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest award for artists in 2012.

FROM THE ENSEMBLE DANCERS



Aishwaryaa Kumar, Project Dancer

"To be part of the Anjaneyam team has been a transcendental experience, as it's kindled all the nine Navarasas within me! Working with specialists from varying fields gave me the opportunity to hone my skills as an artist. I am truly proud to be on stage, presenting to you this epic adventure!"



Anuja Varaprasad, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer & SIFAS Alumni

"Something happens when different art forms coalesce organically. Music and dance, light and sound when combined with the energy, love and grace of Hanuman, can only result in the upliftment of the heart and soul! What started as someone's vision and passion, manifests itself on stage as magic!"



Banupriya Ponnarasu, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer & Apsaras Arts Alumni

"Anjaneyam is a production I am truly proud to be part of. It has been a rare experience to work with an intriguing team of people, who are extraordinarily intelligent and talented. Having to delve deep into the rasas of every character has been a challenging experience. This requires skills far beyond the mere lessons a dancer is taught; instead it pushes one to explore the rasas. Anjaneyam drives its performers to develop new narratives to abhinaya, redefines a dancer's technique and challenges the mental and emotional capacity of its artistes."



Ila Gokarn, Project Dancer & Apsaras Arts Alumni

"It has been an honor to be part of a production as extensive and immersive as Anjaneyam. The opportunity to dance with and learn from so many talented artistes, has truly been an amazing experience for me."



Iswarya Jayakumar, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer & Apsaras Arts Alumni

"This production created an avenue to network with dancers with a like-minded passion for the arts, as well as offered a platform to broaden my artistic spectrum by exploring various aspects of dance. This offered a holistic experience for me and the team. I am truly honoured and excited to share the stage with renowned artists from around the world. I hope you will enjoy the production as much as I enjoyed being a part of it."



Kshirja Govind, Project Dancer & SIFAS Alumni

"Anjaneyam has been a fresh and insightful learning experience as I was able to interact with dancers from Singapore, as well as esteemed and renowned artists from around the world. I feel extremely fortunate to be part of this production, as the concept is a fresh take on the well-known epic, connecting the audience as well as the dancers to the journey."



Maanasa Sri Ganesh, Project Dancer & SIFAS Alumni

"I believe that in any production, the team of performers shape your experience. In Anjaneyam, I had a wonderful time knowing and dancing alongside various talented dancers. I also consider it a blessing to have met many great legends in both the music and dance fields through this process."



¹ The myths of a people have the power to become part of their collective unconscious. They seed imaginations; endless sources for expression, spanning distances of geography and history. The finest articulation of this power was the St. Lucian poet Derek Walcott's (1930–2017) remembrance of Ramlee-la, the epic dramatisation of the Ramayana. "Derek Walcott - Nobel Lecture: The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory". Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 4 Oct 2017. <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/walcott-lecture.html>

² Richman, Paula, editor. Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1991 1991. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3j49n8h7/>

^{3, 4 & 5} Ibid. Richman, Paula, editor.

**Manju Rajesh, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer**

"Anjaneyam was to me a mystical journey, led by Lord Hanuman's perspective of the epic. I feel blessed to have performed with this team of artists, as their collective effort and dedication has made it a marvelous experience! Anjaneyam's new age visual effects have created a trailblazing production!"

**Meera Balasubramanian, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer & SIFAS Alumni**

"It has been a humbling experience to be a part of this magnum-opus. What makes this production unique is its deep and well researched concept coupled with the intricate choreography. It is indeed a learning experience for upcoming artists like me, to share the stage with some of the stalwarts of dance."

**Mohana Paramasivam, Project Dancer & Apsaras Arts Alumni**

"Dancing in Anjaneyam is simply a blessing for me. Working as a nurse and having to juggle classes and dancing was a huge challenge. I would like to thank everyone who helped me through this challenge. Anjaneyam is not only enriching to the eyes, but also soothing to the ears."

**Nikita Menon, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer & SIFAS Alumni**

"Not only is the concept of Anjaneyam been refreshing to work on, but the thrill of working alongside accomplished artists and choreographers from around the world has been immense. Every rehearsal has been a learning experience and the journey towards the show has been a stupendous one."

**Nithyashree Nadeson, Project Dancer & Bharathaa Arts Alumni**

"It is always a joy to meet and work with dancers of different backgrounds as it gives one an opportunity to learn and more importantly unlearn. The passion the dancers have portrayed is inspiring and dancing alongside them has challenged me to be a better version of myself."

**Preethi Devarajan, Project Dancer & SIFAS Alumni**

"Working on Anjaneyam has been an enriching experience for me. It gave me the rare opportunity to work with artists outside of Singapore, which I enjoyed immensely. The rehearsals were a lot of fun - I not only made many new friends, but also learned so much more about the Ramayana that I wasn't aware of before."

**Sangeetha Venkitt Karthik, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer**

"Being part of this wonderful production Anjaneyam, made me feel that Hanuman represents the ideal of selfless service. He represents leonine courage, being not the least hesitant in sacrificing his life for the good of Rama. He displays a supreme indifference to everything, even to the attainment of the status of Brahma and Shiva, the great world of gods! Such whole- hearted devotion is much needed in the world today!"

**Sathvikaa Shankar, Apsaras Arts Company Dancer**

"It has been an exhilarating experience to work on this mammoth project. Everything from the choreography and music, to the set design and costumes have been meticulously planned and executed to perfection. As a dancer in this vast production, I feel humbled and appreciative of such a once in a lifetime opportunity. My salutations to the people who have worked tirelessly in putting together this mega production."

**Soo Mei Fei, Project Dancer & Apsaras Arts Alumni**

"Anjaneyam has been an absolutely enriching experience; it has given me the opportunity to learn more about the great Hindu epic - stories, characters and emotions that transcend time and culture. Tonight, we present to you Hanuman's Ramayana, a narrative not commonly explored, but equally intriguing and meaningful."

**Varsha Vishwanath, Project Dancer & TFA Alumni**

"Ramayana is a story that every Indian child hears, growing up. To watch the same unfold through the eyes of one of its most loved characters, Hanuman, is a treat for the inner child. Being part of Anjaneyam has offered me an interesting perspective of different dance styles and techniques."

FROM THE CREATIVE TEAM

**Rajkumar Bharathi, Music Composer**

"It was an exhilarating experience to be part of Anjaneyam. As its music composer, my challenge was to rise up to match the grandeur of the production. Kudos to the team! Special thanks to Aravinth for his unflinching faith in us, and to the Esplanade team for their wonderful support."

**Sai Shravanam, Music Co-Direction & Sound Design**

"Anjaneyam raises the bar in dance-theatrical production to its pinnacle. It is not only about the elements of dance, music or sound & light technology involved, but will remain an outstanding prototype for many art producers to envision a wholesome production of such grandeur in the years to come"

**Thavarajah Mohanapriyan, Resident Choreographer and Principal Dancer of Apsaras Arts**

"I am humbled and delighted that I was able to be a part of the team crafting Anjaneyam. Indeed, this production has given me a precious opportunity to push my boundaries to a new horizon, which has enriched my journey in terms of choreography, costume design and performing the epic's key characters - Jatayu, Vayu & Indrajit. I value the experiences that I have gathered by working with a genius creative team of Anjaneyam, which has added value to my creativity and artistic potential. It's equally inspiring to see the young talented dancers who have worked tirelessly to communicate the choreographic work envisioned effectively to the audience. My sincere gratitude to Aravinth Anna who is my guide and mentor for giving me such a great opportunity to work on Anjaneyam, which has enabled us to raise standards of Indian dance theatre in Singapore."

**Jayanthi Subramaniam, Guest Choreographer & Nattuvangam**

"Working on Anjaneyam has been like adding a small piece to a gigantic and spectacular jigsaw puzzle. The magnitude of work that has gone into this production in terms of research, music, dance, costumes and lighting is truly mind-boggling! It has been a truly enriching experience to have played a part in its making."

**Hari Padman, Choreographer, Kalakshetra Foundation**

"Anjaneya, the mighty ape god, one of the predominant characters of the Ramayana and one of the most popular gods of the Hindu pantheon also happens to be my personal favourite, because he possesses the ultimate quality that every dancer should possess. Shapeshift. To completely transform one's physical form. In the case of dancers, it's the ability to transform into any character that is thrown at is you which is of utmost importance. Hanuman is a source of interminable inspiration for me and every time I perform this character, I feel an aura of divinity around me. His godliness wells up in me Bhakti, a sense of his might gives me confidence and his energy brings a kind of strength in me that no other character does. To me Hanuman is guru, as this character has helped mould my identity and inspire me. A lot of sweat and toil has gone into the making of this production and by God's grace we hope it will be successful."

**Osman Abdul Hamid, Era Dance Theatre**

"I am so honoured to be part of this magnificent production. I was involved in Apsaras Arts' production Angkor, I played the role of an architect but in this production I am playing the role of Ravana. There are always challenges especially trying to understand the different rhythms and melodies in Indian classical music blending with Javanese movements. I am really humbled by this collaboration."

**Gyan Dev Singh, Lighting Design & Projection Mapping Design Concept**

"The experience has been great. The highly professional and competent technical team at the Esplanade has made it possible for me to dream up a stage design that is exciting and terrifying both at the same time. And my talks with Aravinth ji and his team of able choreographers has made me feel as a part of a family."

**Renjith Babu, Rehearsal Master**

"Anjenayam a phenomenal production with the best of Indian aesthetics, theatre, music and dance. It is also unusual as it skillfully weaves Indian theatre and media design. Taking up the role of a rehearsal master has been a different experience. This has been a fruitful learning journey. This project has expanded my working capabilities with different groups of people from the technical team and creative team. My heartfelt thanks to Apsaras Arts for giving me this opportunity to be a part of this project."

**Vijaya Nadesan, Production Manager**

"I am so honoured to be part of this production as this will be my first project to take the role of a Project Manager under the guidance of Aravinth Kumarasamy. Being a Senior Dancer of Apsaras Arts I have only seen productions from the perspective of a dancer. However this project is so different when I have to take on a different role and undertake variety of tasks. It not only helped me to widen my knowledge in the creation of such a mega production but also on the nuances of every artists and their importance in bringing Anjaneyam alive."

FROM THE GUEST DANCERS**V.P Dhananjayan**

"Having played the role of Sriraama in Kalakshetra Valmiki Raamaayana series I consider it a blessing from heaven to play the role of Rishi Vaalmiki in this unique production - Anjaneyam, where Hanuman's narration of his version unfolds. This may surprise all. A collaborative venture with Indonesian artists is still an added dimension to this new Hanuman's Ramayana"

**C.K Balagopal**

"Connoisseurs of Naatya identify me with Aanjaneya hence I have special place in my heart for HIM. Until I retired from Kalakshetra, Anjaneya's role was my forte, here again in this production I am honoured to play the same role as the narrator of Raamaayana"

**Lavanya Ananth**

"Creativity, organisational skills and the big picture view later broken down into scenes, then into manageable tasks, attention to detail and executing to perfection are the highlights of Anjaneyam and it's been a great learning experience. Space for artistic exploration, collaboration with talented musicians and dancers and the warm hospitality of Apsaras Arts have made this a memorable experience for me. Essaying the role of Sita in the Sundara Kandam episode is a blessing indeed."

**Roshni Pillay Kesavan**

"I am delighted to be participating in the first major Apsaras Arts production since the demise of my dear dance teacher, Neila Sathyalingam"

**Prabin Villareesh**

"Anjaneyam serves as a source of absolute creative expression. It encompasses an excellent team of dancers, diverse cultures, various forms of dance and music and it comes with a learning experience of its own. I will cherish this experience as it has allowed the artist in me to grow and flourish."

**Prem Sagar**

"It is truly a blessing to be part of Apsaras Arts' Anjaneyam and bring the story of Hanuman's Ramayana to life on stage. Jai Shree Ram, Jai Shree Hanuman."

CREDITS

CREATIVE TEAM

Concept, Script and Artistic Direction: **Aravinth Kumarasamy**
Research: **Dr Sudha Sheshyan, Dr Pappuvenugopla Rao, Dr Charu Madhavan**
Music Composition: **Dr Rajkumar Bharathi**
Music Co-Direction and Sound Design: **Sai Sharavanam**
Choreography: **Mohanapriyan Thavarajah, Jayanthi Subramaniam, Hari Padman and Osman Abdul Hamid**
Dramaturge: **Lim How Ngean**
Costume Design: **Mohanapriyan Thavarajah**
Lighting Design & Projection Mapping Design Concept: **Gyan Dev Singh**
Projection Mapping and Animation: **Knownsense Studios**
Rehearsal Master: **Renjith Babu**

INDIA MUSICIANS

Conductor: **Dr Rajkumar Bharathi**
Vocals: **Abhishek Raghuram, Savita Narasimhan, Srikanth Gopalakrishnan**
Nattuvangam: **Jayanthi Subramaniam**
Violin: **Anantha Krishnan Balaji**
Veena: **Bhavani Prasad Teerthala**
Flute: **Vishnu Vijay**
Mridangam: **Karthikeyan Ramanathan**
Tabla & Percussions: **Ganapathi Venkatasubramanian**
Keyboards: **Sundar Navneeth**
Sitar: **Kishore Kumar**

SINGAPORE MUSICIANS

Chorus: **Lavanya Balachandran, Chitra Poornima Sathish, Gayatri Krishnan, Karthik Raveendran, VM Sai Vigneshwar, Nishanth Thiagarajan**
Percussions: **M Kajan**

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Led by **Bagus Mazasupa Anwaridwan**

GUEST DANCERS

V.P Dhananjayan as Maharishi Valmiki
C.K Balagopalan as Senior Hanuman
Lavanya Ananth as Sita
Hari Padman as Hanuman
Roshni Pillay Kesavan as Anjana
Osman Abdul Hamid as Ravana
P.N Vikas as Rama
P.K Geethananthan as Lakshmana
Prem Sagar as Dasaratha, Indra and Kumbakarna
Prabin Villareesh as Ragu, Maaricha, Gandharava & Asura
S Puniyamoorthi as Rishyashrigar
Karthikeyan P. Mani as Baby Hanuman
Athul Balu as Young Hanuman

KALAKSHETRA FOUNDATION, INDIA

Gandharvas and Asuras: **Sai Krishnan Nair, P.K Kailas Nathan, Rajkamal Ramadoss, Amalnath Koyabrath, Athul Balu**

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SINGAPORE DANCERS

Dasaratha's Queens: **Meera Balasubramanian, Ila Gokarn, Manju Rajesh**

Apsaras: **Banupriya Ponnarasu, Sangeetha Venkitt Karthik, Meera Balasubramanian, Nikita Menon, Sathvika Shankar, Nithyashree Nadesan, Preethi Devarajan**

Palace Dancers, Tree Dancers, Court Dancers & Fire Dancers:

Anuja Varaparasad, Iswarya Jayakumar, Mohana Paramasivan, Aishwarya Kumar, Kshirja Govind, Soo Mei Fei, Varsha Vishwanath, Maanasa Sri Ganesh

TECHNICAL TEAM

Production Manager: **Vijaya Nadesan**
Production Administrator: **Shankari Elavalahan**
Production Stage Manager: **Adesh Mohan**
Wardrobe Management: **Selvy Radhakrishnan, Nagaletchmi Balasupramaniam, Chitra Pubalan, Avinav Mukherjee**
Costume Tailoring: **SS Tailors (India) & Hiran Wijesekara Costumes (Sri Lanka)**
Sponsorship: **Himanshu Verma**

Special thanks to the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS for the loan of their gamelan set for this performance.



ABOUT APSARAS ARTS

With over four decades of international track record in creating and showcasing innovative Indian dance productions, Apsaras Arts has transformed into a premier professional performing company. Apsaras Arts was founded in Singapore in 1977 by Singapore's pioneers in the arts - Mr S. Sathyalingham and Mrs. Neila Sathyalingham, alumni of Kalakshetra Foundation, India. The company is known for its repertoire of innovative dance productions, inspired by Indian and South East Asian themes. Apsaras Arts is a non-profit organization and is a recipient of the Singapore National Arts Council's Annual Major Grant scheme. The company is guided by an advisory board comprising eminent personalities connected with the arts community in Singapore and the region.

"Over the past decade Apsaras Arts' productions including - *Nirmanika – The Beauty of Architecture*, *Aalam – The Banyan Tree of Bharatanatyam*, *The Heroines of Raja Ravi Varma*, *Angkor – An Untold Story*, *Alapadma – The Lotus unfolds*, and *Agathi – The Plight of a Refugee*, have premiered at the Esplanade and have been on many successful international tours. *Anjaneyam - Hanuman's Ramayana* for *Kalaa Utsavam* 2017 is more ambitious than our earlier mega production *Angkor* at the same festival in 2013. Over the years, the success for Apsaras Arts has been in being able to have a shared vision with the *Kalaa Utsavam* team in evolving our creative endeavours. Our founder Neila Sathyalingham believed in having our own version of the Ramayana as part of our repertoire. We are humbled to realise this vision in 2017, during our 40th anniversary of Apsaras Arts." - Aravinth Kumarasamy, Artistic Director, Apsaras Arts.

Founders S Sathyalingham, Neila Sathyalingham

Creative and Managing Director Aravinth Kumarasamy

Advisory Board

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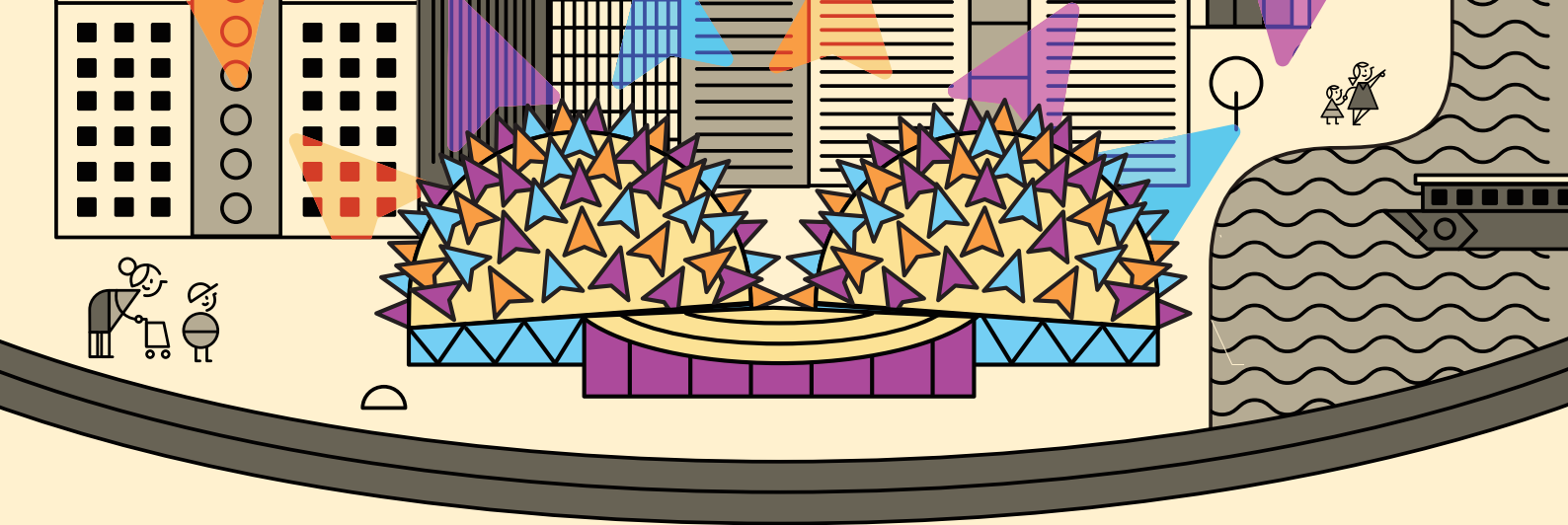


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#02-14 **CHEF WAN'S KITCHEN**
#02-12 **GAJALEE INDIAN SEAFOOD RESTAURANT**
#04-01, Roof Terrace **ORGO**
#02-23 **RESTAURANT LABYRINTH**



Gajalee Indian Seafood Restaurant

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