

## **Rasa Unmasked** *Wisdom of India, Invoked and Savoured*



**Rasa Unmasked is a sensuous, contemporary dance work that sheds new light on India's most vital aesthetic theory.**

**The performance premieres in Sydney, Australia - March 2009, before an international tour to Malaysia, Singapore and India.**

Rasa Unmasked is the result of a collaboration between Anandavalli & Australia's Lingalayam Dance Company, Ramli Ibrahim & Malaysia's Sutra Dance Theatre and ethnomusicologist/composer, Alex Dea – all pioneers of classical art forms in contemporary contexts.



*L-R: Anandavalli, Ramli Ibrahim & Alex Dea*

It is a stunning collaboration, seducing Malaysian dance doyen, Ramli, back to Australian shores after more than 25 years, since his time as dancer and choreographer at the Sydney Dance Company. As if that wasn't remarkable enough, the collaboration has also convinced Indian classical dance icon Anandavalli to return to the stage, after retiring from performance five years ago to focus on choreography and direction. "The integrity and passion that Ramli and Alex bring to their art forms transcends the knowledge and barriers passed onto them by their Gurus," she said. "It was this that awakened in me the desire to dance again, with these soulful artists." Ramli and Anandavalli will lead the best of their company dancers on stage in *Rasa Unmasked*.

*The eloquent grace of the Lingalayam Dance Company... is a glorious showcase of the mastery of technique by Anandavalli's dancers, from the expressive precision of the hand gestures to the flawless classical gesture of line, form and balance, lending the dance an exquisite and captivating artistry. Anandavalli imbues her company with a deep love and respect for traditional classicism, that, ironically, through a highly stylised art form, manages to achieve a deep emotional truth. I freely fell under the mesmerising spell...*

Peter Wilkins, Canberra Times, August 2006

*Ramli's Odissi choreography transcends national, religious, and ethnic boundaries. I thought Sutra's most provocative contribution to Odissi was incorporating sensuality into the movements... unabashedly referenced Odissi's sensual history .. an element missing from other troupes' performances—and arguably in classical Indian dance as it is now practised.*

Richa Gulati, freelance writer based in New York on Sutra's Carnegie Hall performance, 20/09/08

Anandavalli & Ramli have integrated their Indian classical dance vocabularies to choreograph a bold and vibrant new work, underscored by Alex Dea's haunting compositions. Eight dancers will perform, accompanied by a cross-cultural orchestra, led by Alex on traditional Javanese vocals and rebab with an Indian Carnatic vocalist and Indian classical percussionist. "Fusion is an over-used term meaning nothing, and often the result is close to nothing except surface and facile combinations of the obvious," says the American/Chinese composer, Alex Dea. "I have studied long enough so that the elements of Bach, Stockhausen, Cage and Stravinsky meet carelessly but respectfully with Cokro Wasito, Pandit Pran Nath, M.S. Subbulakshmi, and Nakanoshima."

*"Alex Dea's score, evocative and appropriate, seemed to guide the performers through the choreography, giving some much-needed breathing space for interpretation."*

For ATMA by Maya Dance Theatre at Esplanade Theatre Studio Oct. 26, 2007;

From a review by Stephanie Burrige for The Flying Inkpot.

Rasa Unmasked will take the audience on a vibrant passage through the full spectrum of human emotion. For 2,000 years, India's aesthetic notion has been underpinned by the "Rasa theory" – mapping out the core human emotions into nine main "rasas": srīngara (love), veera (heroism), karuna (compassion), adbhuta (wonderment), hasya (mirth), bhaya (terror), bibhatsa (disgust), raudra (anger) and shanta (serenity).

Our globalised, interconnected world - that makes a collaboration such as Rasa Unmasked possible - was vastly different to the society which had inspired the ancient Indian sage, Bharata Muni, to conceive the Rasa theory. Akin to a rich, classical feast with nine courses, Rasa Unmasked revitalises and transforms Bharata's eternal understanding of emotional states into a contemporary framework that connects with the modern audience.

*The Rasa Theory is generally regarded as the all-compassing aesthetic theory that underlies traditional works not just from India but the world over. Rasa is about the emotional states, flavours and juices brought out when partaking/experiencing an artistic work. This is a unique human encounter with 'art' which is universal. It produces not only a civilising and cathartic influence but is also able to bring about 'moksha' or liberation from the mundanity of our lives.*

- Ramli Ibrahim

*Rasa Unmasked is a unique opportunity to combine my long-term love and study of Indian and Javanese classical music. The rasa theory, so prominent in Indian arts, is also prevalent but somewhat hidden, suggested and implied in Java.*

- Alex Dea

Ultimately, Rasa Unmasked moves beyond genre and the culture it springs from – it is an event that offers audiences a universal vision of humanity's contemporary, emotional landscape.

## **Rasa Unmasked**

**Artistic Direction & Choreography: Anandavalli and Ramli Ibrahim**

**Music composition: Alex Dea**

**Set & Lighting Design: Sivarajah Natarajan**

*Duration 80 minutes*

### **Tour Dates**

#### **Australia**

March 7th Sat & 8th Sun: Premiere at Casula Powerhouse

March 11th Wed: Arts After Hours @ The Art Gallery of NSW

March 13th Fri, 14th Sat & 15th Sun: The Studio, Sydney Opera House

#### **Malaysia**

April 7th -12th: Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac)

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (presented by Sutra Foundation)

April 15th: Dewan Sri Penang, Penang, Malaysia (presented by Sutra Foundation)

#### **Singapore**

April 19th: Theatre Studio, The Esplanade, Singapore

#### **India**

April 22nd: Chowdiah Hall, Bangalore

April 25th: Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall, Chennai, presented by Forum Art Gallery

April 28th: Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi

### **Touring Cast**

#### **Lingalayam Dance Company - Australia (6 members)**

Artistic Director/Choreographer/Dancer: Anandavalli

Dancers: Navamani Krishnamoorthy, Abirami Srikhanta, Seran Sribalan

Musicians: Aruna Parthibhan (Indian Carnatic vocal), Bala Sankar (Indian classical percussion)

#### **Sutra Dance Theatre – Malaysian (5 members)**

Artistic Director/Choreographer/Dancer: Ramli Ibrahim

Dancers: Guna, January Low, Rathimalar

Set & Lighting Designer: Sivarajah Natarajan

**Musical composition and live performance: Alex Dea**

**Tour Media and Public Relations: Shakthidharan**

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Visit <http://www.rasaunmasked.wordpress.com> for updated information on the project,  
as well as access to multimedia related to the performance and the collaborating companies

