

Dancing for the Gods

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE

Chitrasena Dance Company, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's oldest and most prestigious dance ensemble makes its first Australian visit since 1972, bringing to the Sydney stage an artform 2,500 years in the making



Photo: Dancing for the Gods © Lukshmanan Nadaraja

"...beautifully structured... it was conceptually brave." **Ground Views**

"...the excellence of the drummers and dancers and their sheer enjoyment, took both performers and audience to a plane beyond the auditorium." **Sunday Times (Sri Lanka)**

Sri Lanka's most prestigious dancers, the **Chitrasena Dance Company** brings a fresh perspective to a 2,500 year dance tradition when it tours to Sydney for the first time in 40 years.

From a demon dancer driven by pulsating drumbeats, to a homage to Ganesha, to a reflection on the Buddha, *Dancing for the Gods* charts the evolution of the ancient Kandyan dance tradition and transports it boldly into the present.

Propelled by singing and drumming, time-honoured classical movements unite with modern choreography and theatre craft in these 2,500 year old Sri Lankan rituals.

With its origins based on offerings to a pantheon of gods, deities and demons, *Dancing for the Gods* is a gift – one of the world's oldest continuous dance forms unveiled to a new generation of Sydney theatre-goers.

The Chitrasena Dance Company, Sri Lanka's internationally acclaimed traditional dance ensemble, was established in 1943. Born in 1921, **Chitrasena** (born **Amaratunga Arachige Maurice Dias**) was a pioneering dancer on the world stage, internationally known for establishing a modern Sri Lankan tradition of dance and popularising it worldwide. The Chitrasena Dance School was the centre of new forms of arts and culture from the 1940s to the 70s and became a cultural haven to leading artists of that period who travelled from across the globe, including film stars, performers and dancers including **Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, Nurtan** and **Ravi Shankar**.

Chitrasena was the first Asian dance company to visit Australia in 1963. It toured again to Australia in 1972, but has not returned for more than four decades. Now the third generation of the Chitrasena family brings its explosive dance styles again to Sydney, with choreography by **Heshna Wignaraja**, the grand-daughter of the school's visionary founder. *Dancing for the Gods* is anchored to rigour of strict tradition and discipline. But it is not held hostage to ancient rituals. The work's creators have added technical mastery, precision and sensuality to captures contemporary imaginations. Expect to be transported to a different time and place.

MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FESTIVAL 2015

8-26 JAN

Where	York Theatre, Seymour Centre
When	8-11 January at 7.30pm
Price	Premium \$65 A Reserve \$55/\$50
Duration	80minutes no interval
Bookings	Sydney Festival 1300 856 876 Seymour Centre 02 9351 7940 sydneyfestival.org.au/dancing

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