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The Theft of Sita from the Hindu Ramayana Epic

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
Presents**

The Theft of Sita
From the Hindu Ramayana Epic

A COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCE BY

University of Richmond Gamelan Raga Kusuma
led by Andrew McGraw and
Gusti Putu Sudarta

with

South Asian musicians and dancers from the
International School of Music
led by Nirmal Bajekal.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2007

7:30 p.m.

CAMP CONCERT HALL
BOOKER HALL OF MUSIC



THE RAMAYANA

It is not known exactly when the tale of prince Rama's Journey first emerged in South Asia, but by the first century AD a Sanskrit version written in poetic meter by the legendary poet Valmiki was known widely in India. By the middle of the first millennium the Hindu epic existed in all major Indian languages, as well as in Thai, Burmese, Tibetan, Laotian, Malaysian, Chinese, Cambodian, Javanese and Balinese as South Asian cultural, artistic and religious influence spread rapidly, and complexly, throughout East and Southeast Asia. Today, billions of people know the tale and the personages by heart as it is represented in countless textual and oral forms, sculpture, bas-reliefs, plays, dance-dramas, puppet plays, cartoons, paintings, movies and television shows. The Ramayana is all at once a drama, a religious and philosophical text, an historical document and a supreme work of art.

The Narrative

The demon-king Ravana has amassed great power on earth and, having gained a boon from Lord Shiva, is immune from censure by the Gods. Realizing the danger he poses to heaven and earth, Vishnu reincarnates in human form as Rama—the perfect man—as only a human can defeat Ravana. Rama is born to king Dasaratha whose intention of enthroning him as his successor is thwarted by the machinations of one of his jealous wives. Following his dharma, Rama enters the forest for 14 years in exile while a younger brother rules. Rama's beautiful wife Sita (a reincarnation of Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort) and brother Lakshmana follow him faithfully into exile.

While in the forest Sita's incomparable beauty comes to the attention of the ravenous Ravana who schemes to snatch her away from Rama. Ravana instructs his demon-uncle Mareecha to disguise himself as a beautiful golden deer. Seeing the deer, Sita demands that Rama capture it for her. When Rama captures the deer it feigns Rama's cries and Sita demands that Lakshmana help his brother in the forest. Fearing a ruse, Lakshmana draws a magic protective circle around Sita and departs. Now alone, Ravana disguises himself as an elderly priest and approaches Sita, who allows him near, thus breaking the protective charm. Ravana snatches Sita and flies into the air where he is attacked by the heroic Jatayu, king of the eagles. Ravana slays Jatayu who falls to the ground where Rama and Lakshmana discover him.

Rama and Lakshmana search for months while Sita is imprisoned in Ravana's island kingdom in Alangka with his many consorts and attendants. While in the forest Rama befriends Hanuman, the powerful king of the monkeys, who finally discovers Sita's whereabouts and sets Ravana's kingdom ablaze. Hanuman's army of monkeys use their bodies to create a bridge over the ocean over which Rama travels to fight and defeat Ravana, and to reunite with Sita.

This compressed version of the narrative contains nothing of the complex philosophical and religious conversations, extended battle and love scenes and subtle characterization as expressed by Valmiki's poetry. In practice, the Ramayana is never performed in its entirety in the performing arts of any of the Indic traditions. Instead, only small subsections are elaborated in performance. Javanese shadow puppeteers are known to expand just the meeting scene between Ravana and Sita into a six-hour, nightlong performance. This evening, we present only a highly abstracted, abbreviated version of the Theft of Sita.

Performance Synopsis

- Overture. *Lengker*.
MSEN 230 Students.
- Offering Dance. *Penyembrama*.
Gamelan Raga Kusuma. Ni Ketut Suryatini,
Ni Nyoman Wati Mastriyana, Dancers.
- Exposition in Balinese Shadow Theater form.
Sita and Rama in the forest. Sita is attracted by the Golden Deer.
MUS 125 Students.
- Exposition in Indian dramatic form.
International School of Music.
Aishwarya Sriram and Jason Sreedhar, Dancers.
- Ravana appears first in his strong form, then disguised as an old man.
Gamelan Raga Kusuma. Gusti Putu Sudarta, Dancer.
- Ravana captures Sita.
International School of Music.
Aishwarya Sriram and Jason Sreedhar, Dancers.
- Jatayu battles Ravana. Balinese Shadow Theater.
MUS 125 Students
- Ravana's nymphs dance in his kingdom in Alangka.
MUS 125 and DANCE 312 Students.
- Balinese Hanoman sets Alangka afire.
Shadow Theater, Gusti Putu Sudarta.
- Hanoman's monkey army makes a bridge to Alangka.
International School of Music Dancers.
- Resolution. Rama reunites with Sita.
Balinese Shadow Theater. MUS 125 Students.

*Approximate Total Performance time:
1 hour, fifteen minutes.*

MUSIC AND DANCE OF INDONESIA AND INDIA

'Gamelan' refers to the large traditional percussion orchestras of Java and Bali within the Indonesian archipelago. The music typically accompanies theater and dance performance or serves as an acoustic offering within Balinese Hindu temple ceremonies. Above all, gamelan is about community. Ensembles are often owned by community organizations and performers are drawn from the community at large. Gamelan began to be studied in university and community settings within North America in the late 1950s. Today there are over 200 ensembles within America and Canada. The University of Richmond's gamelan was made by the renowned gong-smith Pande Sukerta who's team of craftsmen spent five months forging the instruments and carving the cases before the set was placed on a cargo ship for the three month journey to New York harbor.

Indian cultural influence was known in Bali by at least the seventh century A.D. where it combined with local religious, artistic and cultural practices. Many of the musical practices known in India today developed long after Indic culture first spread to East and Southeast Asia. The gamelan tradition has virtually nothing in common with contemporary music from South Asia, although the sanskrit Kawi language and poetic meters used by Balinese shadow puppeteers exhibit a close cultural connection to ancient Indian poetry.

Indian music has two distinct classical styles - Hindustani (North Indian) and Carnatic (South Indian). The compositions performed today are from the Hindustani style, which allows for extensive improvisation and creativity within the framework of a *Raga* (the melody).

The first composition is based on the Raga Malkauns and is a type of composition called *Tarana*. A Tarana has non-semantic words which enables a greater degree of improvisation. The second piece is a blended combination of Raga Jaunpuri, Raga Jajiwanti and Raga Bahar in two *Talas* (rhythmic arrangements). This combination allows the performer to express different emotions and moods. The third piece is a folksy composition based on Raga Bilawal. The two primary dancers have been trained in classical Indian dance traditions of Bharat Natyam and Kuchipudi. Both these dance forms originated in south India and typically use Carnatic music as accompaniment. These pieces have challenged both the singers and dancers to fuse the distinct styles into a unique presentation.



PERFORMERS

Students from MUS 125, Music and Theater from Indonesia:

Maria Avanesova, Thao Dao, Kyra Doolan, Jordan Fisher, Ella Fratantuono, Deyllen Harrington, William Hawthorne, Sarah Jackson, Kelly Landers, Anne Parke, Brett Waikart

Students from MSEN 230, Global Music Ensemble:

Ari Corson, Edgars Safronovs, Krishna Ramachandran, Carly Vendegna-Ramires, Max Vanderheyden, Daniel Smither, Ni Nyoman Wati Mastriyana, I Gede Vidyaprajna Mastriyana

Students from DANC 312, Beginning Balinese Dance:

Kyndra Brown, Mallory Moats, Kathleen Porter, Chenelle Rollins, Mierka Ross, Jason Tseng

Members of the Community Gamelan Raga Kusuma:

Cindy Beausang, Naomi Benoit, Taylor Burton, Pinson Chanselle, Paul Fleisher, Fabiana Franco, Andrea Hague, Andy Jenkins, Daniel Karras, Brian Larson, Joe Lattuada, Jonathan Leibovic, Austin Looney, Noni Hartanto Ledford, John MacDonald, I Wayan Mastriyana, Ni Nyoman Wati Mastriyana, I Gede Vidyaprajna Mastriyana, Nate Matthews, Andrew McGraw, Becky Nelson, Audrey Short, Julie Sidharta, Jessica Zike

Musicians and Dancers from the International School of Music:

Singers: Palak Shah and Rishabh Bajekal

Chorus: Bhushan Apte, Nabanita Majumdar, Abhinav Thirunagari, Nirmal Bajekal

Keyboard: Jayant Shekhar

Veena: Lalitha Balsubramanyam

Violin: Viswanath Vinnakota

Percussion: Bhushan Apte, Rishabh Bajekal, Abhinav Thirunagari

Dancers: Aishwarya Sriram (Sita) Bharat Natyam style, Jason Sreedhar (Rama / Ravana) Kuchipudi style, Rishabh Bajekal (Lakshmana).

Vikram Ramnarain, Apollo Jain, Shreyas Bhalke, Akrit and Prakrit Shukla, Parth Taparia, Isha Kelkar, Tanisha Agarwala (monkeys).

Choreographers: Mrs. Veena Ramnarain, Aishwarya Sriram, Jason Sreedhar.

GUEST ARTISTS

John Macdonald has been studying and performing Balinese and Javanese gamelan since the 1980s. He is a student of I Nyoman Suadin.

Ni Ketut Suryatini is a composer and performer specializing in Balinese vocal styles and gamelan gender wayang. She is a permanent faculty member in the music department at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts in Denpasar Bali and is currently serving a three month term as a cultural attaché at the Indonesian embassy in DC. Her primary gender wayang teacher is her father, I Wayan Konolan.

DIRECTORS

Andrew Clay McGraw is an assistant professor of music and ethnomusicology at the University of Richmond. He has studied traditional and experimental music in Bali and Java during several years of residence in Indonesia. He completed his Ph.D. on experimental music in Indonesia at Wesleyan University in 2005. His primary gender wayang teachers include I Wayan Loceng and I Wayan Konolan.

I Gusti Putu Sudarta was born into a family of artists in Bedulu village and has been playing gamelan since he was six years old. He is a permanent faculty member in the theater department at Indonesian Institute of the Arts and is currently completing his masters degree in theater at the National Institute of Arts in Solo, Java. He regularly performs various forms of traditional Balinese music, (mask) dance and wayang kulit in ceremonial contexts and has taken part in several international tours and inter-cultural experimental music and theater collaborations. Mr. Sudarta is currently an artist-in-residence at the University of Richmond, Virginia.

Nirmal Bajekal is the director of the International School of Music in Richmond, VA. The school is affiliated with the renowned Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva University in India. Nirmal has a masters degree in music and has extensive experience in teaching music at Lewis and Clark College and Reed College in Portland, OR. She is a gifted singer and has performed for various cultural organizations the world over. In Richmond, she has accompanied the legendary Pandit Ravi Shankar in UR's Modlin Center performance.

UPCOMING INDONESIAN PERFORMANCES

Friday, December 7th. 7pm. Theater IV, 114 West Broad Street, Richmond. Free.

Gusti Putu Sudarta presents an evening of traditional Balinese shadow theater as part of the Richmond First Friday Series. Great for kids. Live traditional gamelan accompaniment.

PLAY GAMELAN!

Spaces are open in Richmond's own community-based Balinese gamelan ensemble, Raga Kusuma. The large orchestra of hand-made gongs, chimes, drums, flutes and fiddles is designed to accommodate a wide range of musical abilities and interests. Beginners welcome; no previous musical experience necessary. *Free and open to the public.*

Rehearsals are Thursday evenings from 7-9 PM in BB117 in Booker Hall, University of Richmond. UR students can study gamelan for credit in MSEN 230, times flexible, no prior musical experience necessary.

*For more information call 287-1807
or email amcgraw@richmond.edu.*



THANK YOU...

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Program notes by Andrew McGraw and Nirmal Bajekal

Fall 2007—Spring 2008
Department of Music Free Events
Camp Concert Hall, unless otherwise noted

Anne Guthmiller, *soprano*
Dmitri Shteinberg, *piano*
Sunday, September 16—3p

Geoffrey Haydon, *piano*
Wednesday, September 19—7:30p

Family Weekend Concert
Friday, September 28—7:30p

Paul Hanson, *piano*
Sunday, September 30—3:00p

David Esleck Trio
Wednesday, October 3—7:30p

Balinese Wayang Kulit (Shadow Theater)
Gusti Putu Sudarta, *Puppeteer*
Sunday, October 7—3:00p
Cousins Studio Theater (Modlin)

Third Practice
Electroacoustic Music Festival
Friday, October 19 through
Saturday, October 20

Duo Piano Recital
Doris Wylee-Becker, *piano*
Richard Becker, *piano*
Sunday, November 4—3:00p

University Choir and Schola Cantorum
Sunday, November 11—3:00p

University Wind Ensemble
Sunday, November 18—7:30p

UR Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Combo
Monday, November 19—7:30p

Bruce Stevens, *organ*
Monday, November 26—7:30p
Cannon Memorial Chapel

Barry Salwen, *piano*
Wednesday, November 28—7:30p

Cuba Documentary Premiere and UR Jazz
Combo: "Cuba: Rhythm in Motion"
Friday, November 30—7:30p

University Chamber Music
Ensembles—
Monday, December 3—7:30p
University Orchestra
Wednesday, December 5—7:30p

University Balinese Gamelan & Dance
Thursday, December 6—7:30p

Annual Christmas Candlelight Concert
Sunday, December 9: 5 & 8:00p
Cannon Memorial Chapel



Spring 2008

Jeffrey Riehl, *tenor*
Kenneth Merrill, *piano*
Assisted by Jennifer Cable, *soprano*
Monday, January 14—7:30p

Richard Becker, *piano*
Sunday, February 3—3:00p

An Evening of Music by Béla Bartók
Matt Albert, *violin*
Matthew Duvall, *percussion*
Jennifer Cable, *soprano*
Paul Hanson, *piano*
Joanne Kong, *piano*
Ray Breakall, *percussion*
Monday, February 4—7:30p

Jeremy McEntire, *flute*
Sunday, February 24—3:00p

eighth blackbird
"The Only Moving Thing"
Wednesday, March 26—7:30p

Jazz and Brazilian Combo Concert
Wednesday, April 2—7:30p

University Choir & Schola Cantorum
Sunday, April 6—3:00p

University Balinese Gamelan and
Dance
Monday, April 7—7:30p

University Orchestra
Wednesday, April 9—7:30p

UR Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Combo
Monday, April 14—7:30p

University Wind Ensemble
Wednesday, April 16—7:30p

University Chamber Music Ensembles
Monday, April 21—7:30p