

The University Musical Society

of
The University of Michigan



Presents

Thovil

(The Ritual Chanting, Dance, and Drumming of Exorcism)
from Sri Lanka

SICILLE KOTELAWALA, *Artistic Director*

SOMAPALA	<i>Exorcist-dancer</i>	WIMALASIRI	<i>Exorcist-drummer</i>
ELARIS	<i>Exorcist-dancer</i>	DHARMADASA	<i>Exorcist-drummer</i>
ARNOLIS	<i>Exorcist-dancer</i>	GUPTASENA	<i>Chief Exorcist</i>

WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1978, AT 8:30
RACKHAM AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

The thovil ceremony of Sri Lanka, whose origin lies in the Ramayana and Kuveni legends, is peculiar to the Southern Maritime Province of the island, where people today still practice their age-old rituals and ceremonies. It involves all the rituals connected with exorcism and the cult of devils and spirits, since gods and demons are considered to be beings who can be brought under control by the shamans or priests, whose knowledge of ritualistic practices has been handed down by their ancestors.

Among the Sinhalese villagers, a disease which cannot be traced to a natural cause and which does not respond to the treatment of herbs and remedies prescribed by a native doctor, is believed to be caused by one or more of the eighteen principal demons. These devils have to be appeased, humored, and cajoled into leaving a patient, and different kinds of offerings must be made to them. This is done by performing a thovil ceremony. It begins at nightfall and is supposed to be completed before dawn, but often continues until mid-day, depending on how elaborate the ritual is. When a thovil is over, the altars are cut down and set on fire. The remains of the demolished altar are collected in a sack and thrown into the sea or other flowing water. The demons are then said to have taken flight, and the patient will soon show signs of recovery if the thovil has been successful. The chief shaman then sprinkles sanctified root water (saffron water) in the house of the patient where any of the demons may have hidden, and then silently returns home.

Many consider the thovil ceremony, with all its elaborate preparations, the beginning of the performing arts in Sri Lanka. It involves dancing, drumming, drama, mime, chanting of sacred liturgies, building of altars and offering-stands, mask making, painting, and sculpture of planetary deities.

OPENING CEREMONIAL

The lighting of lamps, the blowing of the conch-shell to invoke the blessings of the Buddha and the gods, and ceremonial drumming mark the beginning of the thovil (exorcist ritual). A bamboo flute summons the devils to the ceremony. The chief exorcist is dressed in white and represents King Vesamuni (ruler of the demons).

GUPTASENA *Chief Exorcist*
WIMALASIRI *Drummer*
DHARMADASA *Drummer*

LICHCHIVI PELAPALIYA

(Procession)

This dance represents the introduction of King Vesamuni's demons.

ELARIS ARNOLIS

VADIGA PATUNA

(Teaching from Vadiga)

A comic enactment of a legend concerning a learned Indian Brahmin from Vadiga, India, who was invited to Sri Lanka to cure the ailing Queen Manikpala. The lack of a common language results in humorous dialogue and mime between the Brahmin and the exorcist.

SOMAPALA

PANDAM NETUMA

(Torch Dance)

Dancing with torches, the exorcists illuminate the path along which demons have access to the thovil arena.

ELARIS ARNOLIS

LIME CUTTING CEREMONY

Customarily, seven lotus blossoms are placed at regular intervals on the floor, where the figure of a cobra, with its head pointing towards the altar and its tail towards the patient, has been drawn with holy ash. Cutting unripe limes, the exorcist recites *manthrams* (spells). The belief in the therapeutic importance of limes lies in legend. The purpose of the lime cutting ceremony is to dispel the malevolent influence of the evil eye, the evil mouth, and the deadly "evil charms."

GUPTASENA

MAHASOHON SAMAYAMA

(The Cemetery Demon)

Offerings to the Cemetery Demon are generally prepared in a human skull. If not appeased, this demon wanders about cemeteries waiting for people to bury their dead. Sometimes the exorcist, representing the demon, lies in a trance on a fresh grave where a fireplace is constructed across his body and eggs are sacrificed to him. Once he is pleased with the sacrifice, he is revived and is brought back to the ceremony by attendants. The dance you will see occurs when the demon returns from the cemetery.

SOMAPALA

DEVOL NETUMA

(Devol God Dance)

This dance invokes the blessings of the Devol God (a planetary deity) who can cure the patient and, therefore, must be appeased. He is the most feared of the deities and, if antagonized, can cause epidemics and plagues on whole villages. The exorcists wear the costume of the Devol God.

ELARIS ARNOLIS

GINI SISILA
(Subduing the Fire)

Here the exorcist with his powerful spells can cure the patient by subduing the fire which he rubs on himself and swallows. The fire purifies the evil influence within the patient.

SOMAPALA

I N T E R M I S S I O N

NAGA RAKSHA NETUMA
(Snake Demon's Dance)

The Snake Demon has received permission from the highest deity (Sakra) and the Buddha to afflict people with disease, but only on condition that they be cured when offerings are made at a thovil ceremony.

ELARIS

DEKONA VILLAKKU
(Double-Headed Torch Dance)

The demon portrayed here is known to go about very early in the morning, frightening humans into a state of hysteria and unconsciousness, resulting in illness and sometimes death.

ARNOLIS

PANDAM PALIYA
(Torch Ritual)

With the power of the torches given him by the Demon Ginikurumbara, the exorcist cures the patient.

KALUYAKA NETUMA
(Black Demon's Dance)

The Black Demon can cause miscarriages, abdominal pains, consumption, and paralysis. He is known to cause headaches, hysteria, and fever, and must be appeased with blood from a fowl and alcoholic brews.

ELARIS

DRUMMING

The devil drums introduce each demon with a particular rhythmic pattern. Often, the drummers demonstrate their talent in a display of competitive drumming of complicated rhythms between dances.

WIMALASIRI

DHARMADASA

MARUSANNI YAKA
(The Demon of Death)

The Demon of Death is known to haunt cemeteries and is the demon of insanity. Therefore, he behaves like a madman. He argues with the exorcist about the virtues of the Buddha and asks many questions about the symptoms of the illness. The exorcist replies on behalf of the patient and induces him to leave the patient's body.

ARNOLIS

SALU PALIYA
(The Shawl Ritual)

Here a humorous devil cures illnesses by waving Goddess Pattini's shawl over the patient's head. This devil endeavors to divert the patient with his hilarious sayings and mimicry, and laughs incessantly at the patient and the ceremony itself.

SOMAPALA

About the Artists

GUPTASENA, *chief exorcist*—Well-known teacher of all aspects of exorcist rites, hails from Wellawatte which is a center of mask-making and folk rituals.

SOMAPALA, *exorcist-dancer*—A practicing exorcist from Galle, he is well-known for his *manthrams* (incantations) and ability to swallow and “subdue” fire.

DHARMADASA—Somapala’s chief drummer, is also well-versed in the art of creative decorative work with *gok-kola* (young coconut leaf), essential for the construction of altars in a thovil ceremony.

ELARIS, ARNOLIS, *exorcist-dancers*, and WIMALASIRI, *exorcist-drummer* are brothers from a family of renowned witch-doctors from the south of Sri Lanka. Elaris has specialized in mask dance, Arnolis in acrobatic dance, and Wimalasiri in drumming.

SICILLE KOTELAWALA—A well-known dancer, lecturer, teacher and writer, who has performed Kandyan (classical) dance in Sri Lanka and Europe. She toured the United States in the Heen Baba Dance and Drum Ensemble which performed in Ann Arbor in 1974.

Important Notice

Qawwali Music from Pakistan replaces the Okinawan Dancers on the same date, March 28, Rackham Auditorium at 8:30

After a highly successful tour of the United States in 1975, which included a performance in Ann Arbor, this eleven-member troupe returns to give a new program of Qawwali music—vocal music with origins in religious practices which has become a popular form of music in Islamic countries.

All tickets for the Okinawan Dancers will be honored on March 28 for Qawwali Music. Additional tickets are available at \$3.50, \$5, and \$6.50.

Philippe Entremont, Pianist

(replacing Lazar Berman, originally scheduled last November)

Saturday, April 1, at 8:30 in Hill Auditorium

BACH: Partita No. 1 in B-flat major

BEETHOVEN: Sonata in D major, Op. 28 (“Pastorale”)

CHOPIN: Nocturne in D-flat, Op. 27, No. 2; Scherzo No. 2

RAVEL: Sonatine; Gaspard de la nuit

All tickets for the Berman recital will be honored on April 1;
additional tickets are available from \$4 to \$10.

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