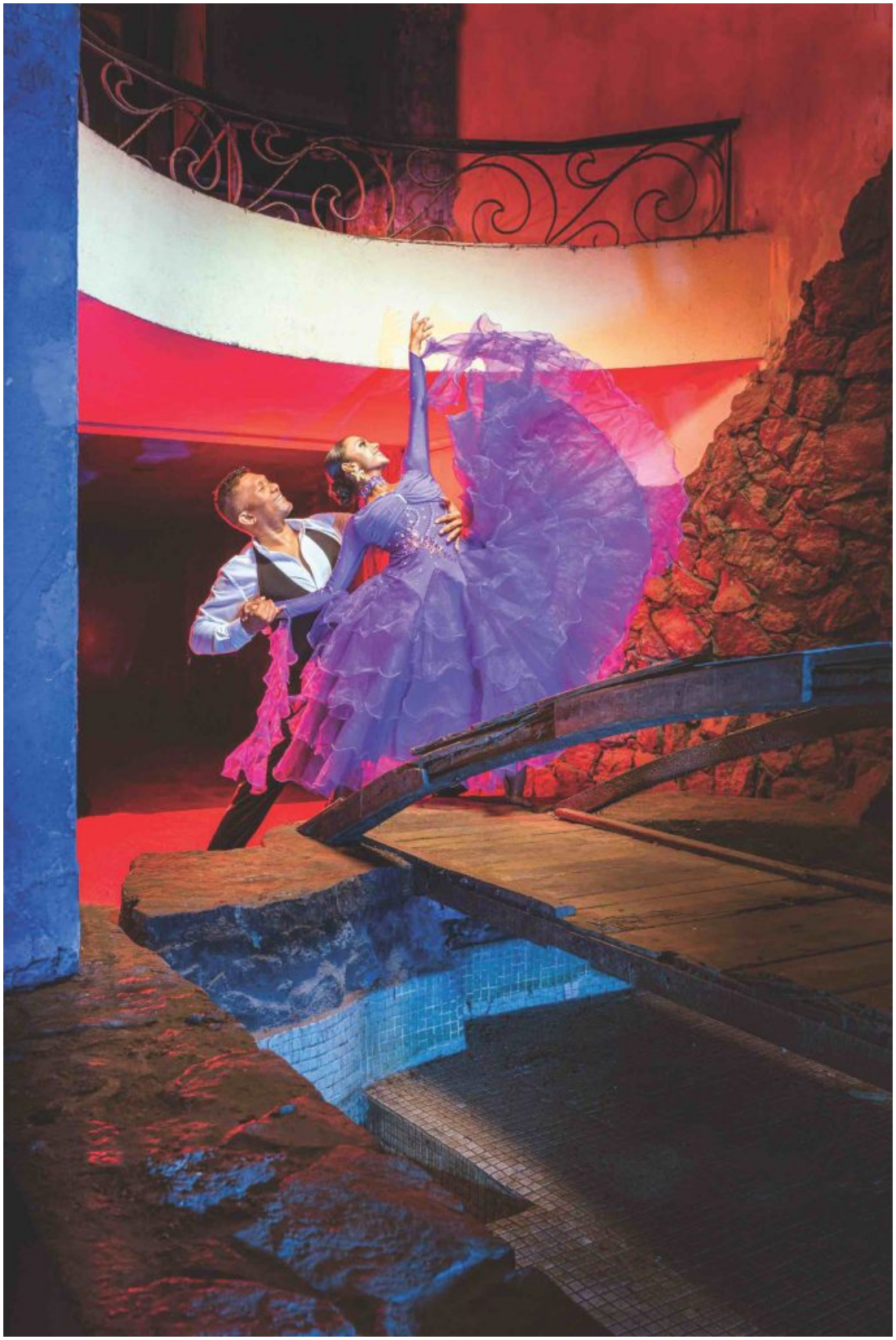
Enjoy each step with Epic Black

Posted on

Dancer and choreographer Naomi Rajaratnam’s Epic Black: A Tribute to Resilience and the Power of Dance will be performed on August 9, 10, and 11, 2024, at the Bishop’s College Auditorium.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.



Kushan Seneviratne and Deliya Senanayake.

If feet could speak, they would do so in dance. And that’s what Epic Black promises, an ensemble of throbbing and exciting performances that will talk to the audiences in the most uplifting of ways. The Latin American, ballroom, contemporary, and fusion performances will come alive with gusto, a confluence of happy feet and music, an embodiment of creativity, and the pure joy of letting your body speak. Epic Black, presented by Naomi Rajaratnam and her dance production house, With My Feet, will set the stage alight as dancers weave beautiful movements with their hands and feet, unfurling an evening of energy and expression.

Epic Black is Naomi Rajaratnam’s tenth production under the banner of With My Feet. Since setting up her dance production house in 2000, Naomi has built a reputation for creating memorable performances that speak of her dedication to perfection and the power of dance. And so her latest production, Epic Black, is a celebration and a tribute to the resilience and the power of dance, which will also honor the memory of her later husband Trevor Rajaratnam, who, as she describes, was the driving force of her enterprise, which she continues to grow in keeping with his belief that “the show must go on,” a maxim that Naomi is committed to realizing with her latest production. This production will complement Trevor’s spirit and Naomi’s determination to not just shake a leg but perform an outstanding rendition by a talented group of women and men who will dance with love and joy.

Naomi, paying tribute to her late husband, said that his passion for dance and life had helped her to find light in the darkest of times, an ethos she hopes to bring to her latest production, an evening of performance that will bring light and hope to the audiences. Probably, the passing of her partner taught her life’s transient nature, which may have inspired Epic Black, which she says revolves around the concept of ‘from darkness to light,’ symbolizing life’s journey and transitions, a personal transition that she is celebrating through dance, a poignant message of staying the course and not let the light within each one diminish no matter the circumstances.



Naomi Rajaratnam.



Epic Black – Embracing the transformative power of dance.



Tharupa Senanayake and Ashen Vanninayake weaving magic under Naomi’s direction and choreography.

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movements with their hands and feet, unfurling an evening of energy and expression.

With My Feet stands for creating opportunities and uplifting talented individuals. If Western dance forms were once confined to a particular class, it is no longer so, and Naomi has used her platform to help gifted dancers hone their skills and enjoy the limelight through her dance production house. She believes that the only way to uplift dance in Sri Lanka is to identify promising talent and give them opportunities to shine and showcase their skills, no matter their background, whether from urban or rural backgrounds. Naomi is dedicated to taking the best Sri Lankan dancers from the local to the international stage, complemented by her ability to bring out the best in everyone, regardless of their dance experience. Central to her motivation is the belief that she has identified the best. And, so, the line-up of dancers for Epic Black corresponds with Naomi’s ethos. These individuals have a passion for the craft; some had stepped into dancing randomly but discovered the potential to grow in the art and have done so in various dance forms. They are versatile; Leakhani Jayasinghe has studied Kandyan, Kathak, and hip-hop besides Latin American and has taken part in international dance festivals; award-winning duo Tharupa and Deliya Senanayake are trained in hip-hop, Latin American, and Bharatanatyam. Tharupa is also studying traditional dance. Latin American dancers Kushan Seneviratne and Bharatha de Silva have competed locally and internationally. The National Dance Champion in 2013, Kessie Lara’s foray into Latin American dancing was to lose weight. As she excelled, her teacher, Kevin Nugera, took her under his tutelage, and since she has become a winning dancer. From tap, modern/jazz, and ballet dancing as a child in the United Kingdom, Dylis Dias moved into the ballroom and Latin American, participating in pro-am competitions in the UK. She was part of Naomi’s 2017 production – With My Feet Cast in Resurrection.



Deliya Senanayake, Bharatha De Silva, Kushan Seneviratne, Kessie Lara, Anuka Liyanage and Tharupa Senanayake – versatile ensemble of dancers.



Tharupa Senanayake, Anuka Liyanage and Ashen Vanninayake.

Epic Black will also feature an international ensemble of professional dancers, ensuring a great evening of heightened entertainment. The UK's five-time undefeated National Champion, Gunnar Gunnarsson, will grace the stage. UK-based Manuja Hughes, Blackpool Open Smooth Champion, who had her training under Myrtle de Almeida, Antonio Fernandez, and Naomi Rajaratnam, had the privilege of learning under professional Latin American dancers Gunnar Gunnarsson and Marika Doshoris. Professional Ballroom European Champions and Professional World Champions Roman Sukhomlyn and Jackie Stevenson will also perform. Their passion, techniques, and exceptional abilities are expected to deliver outstanding performances. Part of the proceeds from the show will go to the Dev Siri Sevana Elders Home in Welisara, which offers free admission and care for senior citizens. Under Naomi's direction, Epic Black will be an enchanting display of movements that surrender to the music and express lively emotions through dance.

Venue: Bishops College Auditorium, Colombo 2. Time: 7.30pm onwards. Tickets:

Rs.5,000, Rs.4,500, Rs.3,500, Rs.1,500 (withmyfeet.com)