Vision-Aid
A non-profit serving the visually disadvantaged
Proudly Presents

The Iconic Avatar
Madurai R Muralidaran's Dance Musical

July 24, 2016
Littleton High School Theater
Littleton, MA

www.visionaid.org
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Vision-Aid is profoundly grateful to our Platinum Sponsor - Harvard Pilgrim Health Care (HPHC) for generously supporting the Vision-Aid Online Academy, our flagship initiative, which will help Vision-Aid scale new heights and reach many more teachers and visually impaired students in underserved regions. Our ‘vision’ is to empower the visually impaired, helping them to live with independence and dignity. The cause is one that HPHC aligns with and we tremendously value their support to Vision-Aid in bringing light into the lives of those who suffer from blindness and low vision.
July 2016

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Karyn and I welcome you to Littleton High school for the Annual Vision-Aid Celebration.

Vision-Aid has made it its mission to empower blind and low-vision students in India with the resources to prosper and live fulfilling lives. As a result of their tremendous passion for helping others and Indian dance, Madurai R. Muralidaran and his talented performers have come together to produce “Iconic Avatar,” a story of love, courage and conflict.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all of the attendees this evening for supporting this organization and we hope you enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
The Iconic Avatar – the epic saga of Rama

Vision-Aid is delighted to present its most brilliant production yet - The Iconic Avatar - a Broadway-style mega dance production that highlights unique aspects of this timeless Indian epic, in a rich and vibrant choreography by the renowned choreographer, Madurai R Murulidaran. He has meticulously woven together the lyrics, music and entire dance sequence over a year and a half to create this breathtaking production, starring over 70 artists.

The story of Rama was popularized as Ramayana by sage Valmiki. Kamban, one of the greatest Tamil poets, authored the classic Tamil literary work known as the "Kamba Ramayana". "The Iconic Avatar” brings Kamba Ramayana to life in a magnificent choreography by Madurai R. Muralidaran. While there are many magical moments in this mesmerizing production, perhaps the most remarkable scene is the coronation of Lord Rama as the emperor – taking the audience back in time, to a remarkable setting that symbolizes the eternal truths of the universe – that with faith, effort and perseverance, good will always prevail over evil!

Scene 1: Vishwamithra visit to Dasaratha's court
The great sage, Viswamithra, enters the court of King Dasharatha and informs him that he plans to perform a Maha Yagna (Grand Ceremony) for the world good that must go on without interruption. He tells the King that he anticipates some evil force may disturb the yagna and sabotage it. So he asks the King to send his son, Rama with him to the forest as he feels Rama alone can protect them from the evil forces. Dasharatha is hesitant since Rama, his eldest son, is very dear to him and he does not want to expose him to the dangers. His ministers, other sages, and other courtiers, impress upon Dasharatha, the greatness of Rama, as a warrior and urge him to not doubt Rama’s prowess. Dasharatha relents and willingly sends Rama with Sage Vishwamithra to the forest.

Scene 2: Vishwamithra Yagnasala in the forest
Sage Vishwamithra is seen performing the yagna in the forest, when Thadakai, the demoness, enters and the entire forest reverberates in fear. She throws pieces of stinking, blood dripping meat in the holy yagna fire, then uproots the nearby trees and throws them also in the yagna fire. The yagna is threatened. Rama, who witnesses the ugly acts of this uninvited guest takes up his bow and sets off a powerful arrow that hits the target, and Thadakai falls down dead. The forest heaves a sigh of relief. The yagna comes to a harmonious end. With the blessings of the sage, the Rama, Lakshmana and Vishwamithra proceed to another place.

Scene 3: Sita Meets Rama in Mithila City
Rama, accompanied by his brother Lakshmana, and sage Vishwamithra, enter the great city of Mithila. Sita and her friends are playing a game with a ball. The ball bounces and falls at the feet of Rama. Rama and Sita look at each other, their eyes meet. Where is the need for words? Love blossoms instantly! What a beautiful and divine meet!

Scene 4: Sita Swayamvaram
Janaka, the king of Mithila, is arranging a swayamvara, a marriage by choice after a contest, for his daughter, Sita. Princes from various cities assemble to participate in the contest, in the hopes of marrying Sita. Marrying Sita is no easy task since there is a contest to be won. The contestant must break the great bow of Shiva, the Shiva-Dhanush. Even mighty warriors like Ravana, king of Lanka, are unable to lift the bow, let alone break it. Rama, the prince of warriors, lifts the bow, as though it were a feather, and breaks it in a flash of a moment. The court & the assembled princes are astonished and loud cheers reign the air. Rama wins Sita’s hand, Sita wins Rama’s heart. Rama & Sita meet for a second time, this time holding garlands in their hands. The whole universe reverberates with happiness at heavenly wedding of Rama & Sita.

Scene 6: Insult to Soorpanakai
Watch how destiny unfolds in the forest! In another strange twist. Ravana’s sister meets Rama and is infatuated by him. Rama bluntly tells her he is married, and he cannot think beyond his wife, Sita. Soorpanakai is very disappointed. Just to play a practical joke on her, he suggests Soorpanakai visit Lakshmana, his brother. Soorpanakai takes Rama’s suggestion seriously and confronts Lakshmana, attempting to charm him! When she refuses to take no for an answer, Lakshmana cuts off her nose to drive her away. Overcome with shame, anger, and agony, Soorpanakai swears, curses and flees. Lakshmana heaves a sigh of relief. However, this is really the starting point of their woes.

Scene 7: In the Court of Ravana in Lanka
The fearsome and powerful King Ravana of Lanka, is the brother of Soorpanakai. She enters with a bleeding nose and complains about the inhuman behavior of Lakshmana. “Is this the way to respond to a love call? What a shame!” she protests. Ravana becomes very angry about the dishonor of his sister and swears to avenge this dishonor brought to his sister and his family.
Scene 8: Abduction of Sita
Furious at the treatment of his sister, Ravana plots to abduct Sita to punish the brothers in exile. After all, it was Rama who suggested that Soorpanaka to meet Lakshmana. Ravana conspires with his uncle Maricha. Maricha takes the form of a beautiful deer and goes to the forest where the royal family lives and helps Ravana abduct Sita.

Scene 9: Rama's meeting with Hanuman & Sugriva
Rama is grief-stricken. Hanuman, who belongs to the monkey clan, voluntarily comes forward to help Rama and introduces him to his King Sugreeva. Hanuman goes on to raise a force of Vanaras (monkeys) to help Rama rescue Sita. Hanuman discovers and realizes his own power when Sugreeva speaks admiringly of Hanuman’s powers to Rama. Hanuman chants the name of Rama vigorously and assumes the macrocosmic form, Vishwaroopam and swears that he will rescue Sita.

Scene 10: Hanuman finds Sita in Lanka
Hanuman finds Sita in Lanka. Sita does not trust Hanuman, maybe another trick of Ravana? Hanuman shows her Rama’s ring. Sita is overjoyed to see her husband’s ring and gives him the jewel she wears on her head to hand over to her Rama as proof that he met her.

Scene 11: Hanuman returns to Rama & the War Scene
Hanuman returns and informs Rama about Sita’s whereabouts, as a prisoner in Lanka. The vanara forces get to work. and build a dam to cross the sea. Rama reaches Lanka, wages a righteous war against Ravana. Ravana dies in the battle, Rama triumphs, everyone is overjoyed.

Scene 12: Rama- Sita Reunion & Rama Pattabishekam
Sita and Rama reunite after a long separation. The Pattabishekam, the coronation takes place. Ayodhya is beaming with joy. It is a great time of celebration for the world. Courage, Truth and Faith have prevailed! Rama is a great symbol personifying truth, courage, compassion, love and peace. May these qualities arise in each of us! Shri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram!
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Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
(Vision-Aid programs started 2004)
Vision Aid Charitable Services Society (VACS) in Vizag is the flagship partner for Vision-Aid USA. It operates a center in Dwarkanagar, Visakhapatnam, offering 4 comprehensive courses in Computer Applications for the visually impaired. The Vizag team also offers training camps in surrounding blind schools and delivers online classes that are streamed to several remote locations over the internet through the Vision-Aid Online Academy (VOA), in collaboration with www.Gyaanmantra.com

Kolkata, West Bengal
(Vision-Aid programs started 2012)
Susrut Eye Foundation & Research Center, located in Salt Lake area of Kolkata, is a leading eye care provider in the city. Susrut offers state of the art services at an affordable cost to all sections of society and partners with Vision-Aid to offer free low vision screening and vision rehabilitation services in its base hospital as well as thorough its rural outreach program.

Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh
(Vision-Aid programs started 2015)
The Ahmadi School for the Blind in Aligarh is one of India’s oldest blind schools, being established in 1927. The school already has a computer training lab. In 2015, Vision-Aid established a partnership to setup a Vision-Aid Online Academy Station (VOS) to allow students at the school to participate in Vision-Aid courses. Vision-Aid also provides free laptops to the blind students in the school.

Mangalore, Karnataka
(Vision-Aid programs started 2013)
Seva Bharathi, a non-profit volunteer-driven service organization was set up in 1991 to help people in distress. Vision-Aid works with Seva Bharathi’s Roman & Catherine Lobo School for the Blind to offer computer training to school students as well as other local visually impaired residents in the area.

Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu
(Vision-Aid programs started 2015)
CADRE-India is a volunteer driven organization working in partnership with the rural poor of India in the southern tip of India – Kanyakumari. Established in 1993, Cadre has a proven track record of service to the disabled and poor. Starting in 2015, Vision-Aid began delivering online classes through the Vision-Aid Online Academy to students at CADRE.

Berhampur, Odisha
(Vision-Aid programs started 2015)
Milton Charitable Foundation for The Visually Handicapped is a volunteer-driven, non-profit working for the welfare of the poor and down trodden, visually handicapped children and adults. Their center is located at Berhampur of Ganjam district Odisha, South India. Starting in 2015, Vision-Aid began delivering online classes through the Vision-Aid Online Academy to students at Milton School.
Best Compliments

from \textit{Shilpa Offshore, Inc.} to \textit{Vision-Aid}
on their exciting new initiative to help the
visually impaired!

\textit{Vissa Rammohan}
President, Shilpa Offshore Inc
3122 Hollow Creek Drive
Houston, TX 77082
Phone: (281) 531-9552
Through our existing rehabilitation programs, Vision-Aid already empowers blind and low vision students with optical devices, technology and a variety of skills to help them live their lives with independence and dignity, including a comprehensive computer education curriculum specially designed for our visually impaired students with the use of assistive technologies.

To succeed in finding better employment prospects or higher education skills, Vision-Aid students need to speak and understand English. Mainstream education is geared for the sighted, relying on large classes, printed books, and visual cues which leave the visually impaired struggling to learn English.

In January 2016, Vision-Aid already concluded a successful pilot program training 10 visually impaired students and two teachers in the basics of spoken English. We are now poised to expand this Spoken English in three levels – Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced, to multiple locations. Training will be delivered in small classroom settings with individual attention. Teaching is delivered through both online technology (via the Vision-Aid Online Academy) and in-class teaching and instruction at Vision-Aid program locations.
Aarohi Darisi, a disciple of Smt. Neha Parikh at the Chidambaram Nritya Kala Academy. She has been learning Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music since she was 5 years old. A lover of visual arts, she has performed in many cultural events.

Adhithi Venkatesan, a rising 8th grader and disciple of Guru Sujatha Meyyappan, has been learning Bharatanatyam for past 5 years. She has participated in numerous dance performances at the temple and won at IANH and NEMA competitions.

Anandini Chandrasekhar, the daughter and disciple of “Bharata Kala Shreshtha” Guru Smt. Sudha Chandrasekhar, has also trained with the illustrious Sri Rajarajeshwari Bharata Natya Kalamandir family. She has been teaching at Nritya Sudha’s Hindu Temple Rhythms & the Vidyanjali Dance Troupe since 1994 and currently teaches BharataNatya in Newton, MA. She is also a singer/ keyboardist with popular local Bollywood band ‘Din Check’.

Ananya Anand, has been learning Bharatanatyam for over 2 years from Guru Smt. Sujatha Meyyappan. She has participated and performed in various classical and non-classical cultural activities.

Ananya Gurjar, a rising 10th grader at the Burlington High School, has been learning Bharatanatyam from Smt. Ranjani Saigal. She is passionate about dance and participates in various cultural events. She also loves to read, travel, and volunteer for causes.

Ananya Vel has been dancing under the teaching of Smt. Sapna Krishnan. She has participated in solo dance competitions in the past and won prizes. She hopes to continue learning and perfecting Indian Classical Dance in the years to come.

Ananya Venkatesan, a rising Junior at Nashua School South, has been learning bharatanatyam from Ms. Neha Parikh of Nirthyakala Dance Academy for over 8 years. A youth group secretary of IANH and TMM, she has won several dance competitions.

Ananadevi Govindaraj, a rising 8th grader at Academy for Science and Design, has been learning Bharatanatyam for 8 years from Guru Sheethal Dwarka of Sowparnika School of Dance. She also learns Carnatic music, Violin and enjoys performing.

Archanaa Ganapathy has been learning Bharatanatyam from Guru Sujatha Meyyappan. She has prior training in this wonderful art in her school years. This is her first time performing for a Vision-Aid production and is delighted to perform for such a great cause.

Arya Gor has been learning Bharatanatyam for 9 years from Ms. Neha Parikh at the Chidambaram Nritya Kala Academy. She loves performing in cultural events and group dances. Arya will be a freshman at Nashua High School South this fall.

Chetna Ayyagari, a rising sophomore, has been learning bharatanatyam for many years under Guru Sujatha Meyyappan at Kolam Academy of Dance. She has performed in many cultural events and won many competitions in New England area.

Devika Nair, has been learning Bharatanatyam from Guru Sheethal Dwarka at Sowparnika School of Dance for over 9 years and is now learning Mohiniyattam. She also learns Carnatic music. Devika will be starting high school in Nashua South in fall.

Divya Vijayakumar, a 4th grader, is a Bharatanatym student of Guru Sujatha Meyyappan of Kolam Academy of Dance. She likes reading fiction, swimming & outdoor activities.

Gauri Potdukhe, a 6th grader, is a disciple of Guru Smt. Ranjani Saigal at dance school Eastern Rhythms. She has participated in many dance performances and also loves to read and swim.

Hema Gopala, a Senior IT Engineer, has been a student of Dr. Chandramohan of Malaysia since 1988. A huge fan of a Bharathanatyam, this is her 2nd Vision-Aid performance. This is her dedication to her beloved Mother Padmaja Gopalakrishnan.

Kartikeyan Ramu, an Engineer, is keenly interested in Tamil language, Literature, Arts and Culture. He founded “Tamil Makkal Mandram, Inc.” a non-profit to promote Tamil Heritage and Culture in NE area to support the charity causes. An enthusiastic dancer, he has participated in several cultural events.

Kaviya Vijayakumar, a rising Freshman, has been learning Bharatanatyam for the past 8 years under the guidance of Guru Sujatha Meyyappan of Kolam Academy of Dance. She likes participating in dance competitions and loves music and art.

Mari Shakti Muthuswamy, is the artistic director of the Bharatanatyam school, Anvita Natyalaya in Newton, MA. She received training in Bharatanatyam from Guru Sri Kalaimamani S.K.Kameswaran & Natya Tilakam Smt. Saroja Kameshwaran and has performed in many fundraisers, and temple festivals.

Meghna Kanthan, a rising Senior at Nashua South High School, has been training under the guidance of Guru Sujatha Meyyappan of Kolam Academy of Dance. Her third time participating in a dance ballet benefiting Vision-Aid, she loves the experience.

Meyya Muthu completed her Arangetram in September 2013 under the tutelage of Guru Smt. Thenu Raajan. She has performed in three prior Vision-Aid productions. She is majoring in Biomedical Science at University of Waterloo in Ontario.
Mihika Tiwari is learning Bharatnatyam from Guru Sujatha Meyyappan. She is also learning Carnatic music. She was a Maharashtra State level Silver medalist in Ice Skating in India.

Mullai Jeyakumar has loved dancing all her life but her interest in learning the art form came to fruition only 4 years ago. She has been an avid learner and is keen on pursuing the Bharatnatyam artform for years to come.

Neha Pillai completed her Arangetram under the guidance of Guru Jeyanthi Ghattraju in 2012. This will be her fourth year participating in Vision-Aid productions. She is attending the University of Connecticut majoring in Biomedical Engineering.

Nikita Minocha completed her Arangetram in Aug. 2013, under the tutelage of Guru Ranjani Saigal. She has participated in several Vision-Aid fundraisers and other cultural events to benefit the community. She is a rising sophomore at Boston University.

Niranjana Anandakumar is passionate about dance and rekindled her interest in classical dancing with Guru Sujatha Meyyappan. Her ambition is to do a stage performance together with her daughter. This is being realized through the Vision-Aid 2016 event.

Nithya Arun, a rising 7th grade in Nashua Middle School, learnt dance from Guru Neha Parikh. She is now learning from Guru Sujatha Meyyappan and is excited to participate in Vision-Aid’s mega production and support its noble cause.

Oviya Inian, a 4th grader, is learning Bharathanatyam for over 2 years from Guru Smt. Sujatha Meyyappan at Kolam Academy of Dance. She is excited to participate in a Vision-Aid production.

Poorva Bagchee, an 8th grader at Ashland Middle School, has been learning from Sripriya Natarajan Moorthy at Abhinaya Natya Sala since last year. She has also learned from Parvatha Chidambaram for 6 years. She enjoys playing piano and track.
Preetha Menon, an Engineer by Profession, has been learning dance from Smt. Sapna Krishnan since last 6 months. She has prior training in Bharatnatyam and is very excited to participate in her first classical dance performance after a gap of 10 years.

Rianna Mukherjee, a freshman at Algonquin Regional High School, currently learns dance from Smt.Sripriya Natarajan Moorthy at Abhinaya Natya Sala. She is excited to combine her passion for dance & worthy causes by participating in a Vision-Aid production.

Rishika Sai Makkena, a rising sophomore at North Andover High School, has been a student of the Guru Jeyanthi Ghatraju since the age of 6. She has performed in numerous charity events. She enjoys karate, playing the saxophone, and dancing in her free time.

Sangeetha Prasanna, an alumnus of Kalakshetra in Chennai, has performed all over India, USA & Canada. A Government of India performing arts scholarship holder, she has also acted in the documentary "Aarupadai Veedu" produced by Films Division of India. She trains students in Kalakshetra style through her institution Natya Rasika School of Dance in Acton, MA.

Sanjana Puri, a rising junior at Lexington High School, has been a student of Smt.Ranjani Saigal for over 8 years and completed her Arangetram in April 2015. She has participated in many cultural events and is passionate about dance, writing and creative endeavors.

Saranya Harikrishnan, a Chemical Engineer, trained in dance under Padmashri Adyar K.Lakshman & Shri Murugesh Subbiah. She now trains under Guru Sangeetha Prasanna, of Natya Rasika School of Dance. A trained Carnatic vocalist, she hosts a weekly radio show “Indian Raaga” on Party934 Radio, featuring off-beat Indian musicians and bands.

Shefali Bakre, a 10 year old, learns Bharathanatyam under Guru Smt. Ranjani Saigal of Eastern Rhythms. She has performed dance in many cultural and charitable events.

Shilpa Narayanan completed her arangetram in Aug. 2013 under Guru Jeyanthi Ghatraju. She continues to learn from Guru Sujatha Meyyappan. Additionally, she has been learning Carnatic music from Guru Tara Anand and attends the University of Connecticut.

Shirin Bakre completed her Arangetram in 2015 under the tutelage of Guru Smt. Ranjani Saigal. Apart from her passion for dance, Shirin is also Miss Teen India New England 2013. She is a Junior in High School.

Shravani Balaji completed her Arangetram under the tutelage of Ms. Neha Parikh in 2012. She has performed in many cultural programs and won various dance competitions in the New England area. She will be a freshman at Worcester Polytechnic Institute this fall.

Shriya Joag is a trained Bharatanatyam dancer who completed her Arangetram in 2003. She has participated in her guru’s dance productions in India and has choreographed and performed in solo and group dance recitals in Pittsburgh and Boston areas. She currently teaches and tutors Bharatanatyam students in the greater Boston area.

Shriyaa Anandakumar learns Bharatanatyam from Guru Smt. Sujatha Meyyappan and Carnatic Music from Guru Gayathri Shashikumar. She loves to draw, read, swim, outdoor sports.

Solai Alagappan, a rising 7th grader at Doherty Middle school, has been learning Bharatnatyam for past 7 years from Guru Smt.Sujatha Meyyappan. She loves to dance and is interested in drawing and swimming. This will be her fourth year participating in Vision-Aid productions.

Sruthi Ramesh, a rising 7th grader from Academy of Science and Design, learns Bharatanatyam from Guru Smt. Sujatha Meyyappan. She has won many competitions. She enjoys reading, drawing, soccer, skiing, and participating in track events.

Swetha Saravanakumar, a rising 8th grader from J. Henry Higgins Middle School in Peabody, learns Bharatanatyam under the guidance of Guru Smt. Ranjani Saigal. Swetha loves performing, apart from swimming, reading, and participating track and cross events.

Thenu Raajan is the creative director, choreographer and instructor of Apsaras Academy of Arts in Bellingham, MA. She has performed in many countries and received accolades in India and Singapore. She performs frequently with fellow artist for various fund raisers, in the greater Boston area. In 2011, Thenu Raajan received the Excellence award from Lokvani e-magazine for being a dedicated dancer in the New England area.

Vaidehi Moorthy, a rising 5th grader, has been pursuing Bharatha Natyam for 6 years under the guidance of Smt. Sripriya Natarajan Moorthy. She is excited to be involved with her third Vision-Aid production.

Varshini Arumugam, a high honors 7th grader at Quincy Catholic Academy, performed her Bharatanatyam Arangetram at the age of 12 under the tutelage of Smt. Veena Teli in Sharon, MA. She feels blessed to take part in the Vision-Aid production for the first time.

Best Compliments
To all Dancers of Vision-Aid’s 2016 Annual Event “The Iconic Avatar”
Dr. Saritha Venkatesh, Venkatachalam Arumugam and Family
The festival of Holi is celebrated with color, with music and with dancing all day long. As the celebration winds down, the people go to homes and halls to feast on savory and sweet flavors that rival the colors and sounds and emotions of the festival.

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Royal Indian Bistro is a family owned restaurant and bar in the heart of Massachusetts serving authentic Indian cuisine in a pleasant, upbeat environment. We take great pride in delivering only the freshest ingredients and quality spices as would be done in a traditional Indian home.

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