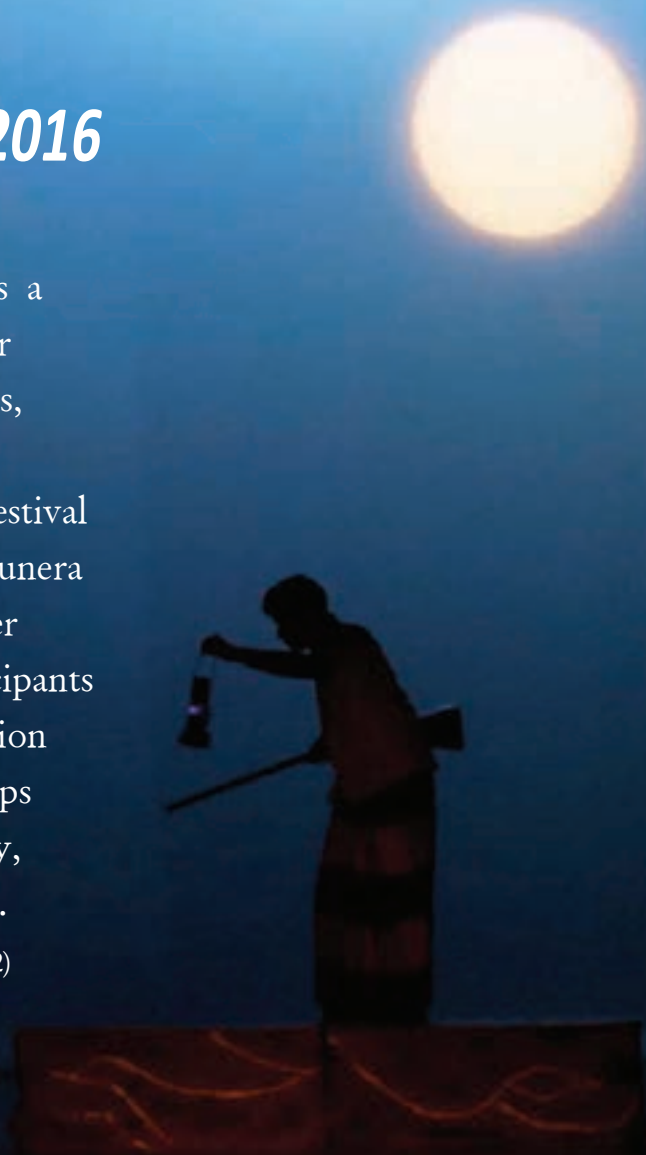


## Samanalayaya 2016

‘Samanalayaya’ or ‘A Field of Butterflies’ is a familiar name among our participants, their families, our well wishers and supporters. The drama festival is the highlight of the Sunera calendar bringing together over 1000 disabled participants from 29 Sunera Foundation performing arts workshops spread across the country, to showcase their talents.

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# Samanalayaya 2016

The journey began with each workshop rehearsing a play which is conceptualised, scripted and directed by the Sunera Trainers, six months prior to taking the stage. This led to nine regional drama festivals which were held during the months of February and March 2016, in different areas, for the local community. The unique feature of each of these theatrical pieces was that every participant in these 29 workshops played a part in their workshop performances. This brought much joy not only to the participants, but to their families who had little hope for their children, their community who witnessed their abilities, and to their trainers who saw the fruits of their commitment to enhancing the lives of these young disabled persons.

These performances were evaluated by a panel of judges and the best three plays were selected for the finals in Colombo. This year's best dramas were produced by Dehiwala, Imaduwa and Kuliapitiya workshop participants, who took the stage for the finals and shone in talent and enthusiasm. The finale of 'Samanalayaya 2016' was held on May 18th at the Lionel Wendt Memorial Theatre, Colombo.

The first play of the evening, titled '**Akuru Wepuru Hena**', was performed by the participants of the Dehiwala workshop and dealt with the current Elephant Human conflict faced by villagers of Sri Lanka. This story was set in a village in which lives a farmer and his family

who are subject to periodic attacks by elephants. The livelihood and lives of the farming community are thus at great risk. The elephants in turn are threatened by human encroachment as more jungle areas are cleared for cultivation. Meanwhile, the younger people of the community have their own difficulties and disruptions of their activities. As the story and the plot unfolded, the cast presented the message of being united through the challenges which always ends well.



Dehiwala Workshop in action



**‘Okkoma Minissu’**, performed by the participants of the Imaduwa workshop took the stage second with a clear message on reconciliation. This story focused on conflicts between and among human beings the world over, which inevitably lead to hostility, alienation, destruction and death. The story set in an orphanage situated in a war zone, showed that despite superficial differences, all of us share a common humanity, when they bravely housed a wounded soldier and a rebel, standing up to recognize and respect this reality.



*‘Okkoma Minissu’* taking the stage

The third drama of the evening was presented by the participants of the Kuliypitiya workshop, and was a comedy titled '**Kema Rahai**'. The story was set in a restaurant in a small town where the cooks and waiters are busy taking orders from the customers and preparing food. Everything seems to go smoothly until some customers begin feeling unwell and stumble out of the restaurant. The laughter from the audience escalated when the inspectors came to check the restaurant and the staff had to get their act together with little time and plenty of rats and cockroaches! Again, a team effort from the waiters, cooks and the owner himself, got the restaurant up and running again, in good order.



Action packed '*Kema Rahai*'



The two lively dance items presented by the Dehiwala, Maharagama, Thirippane, Anuradhapura Palugaswewa and Kekirawa workshops had the audience applauding and cheering!



A noteworthy performance was given by the mothers of the Negombo workshop when they took the stage with an entertaining dance item which was appreciated by all. Samanalayaya 2016 saw the dedicated involvement of the parents' committees in supporting the performances not only off stage with logistics but also on stage where many of them acted alongside their children in some of the performances.





Samanalayaya 2016 was yet again a success! While raising awareness about our work with the disabled, using the performing arts as a therapeutic tool, this drama festival instills self-confidence in our participants and facilitates the integration of the biggest minority group in Sri Lanka, into main stream society.



Some Moments from the Regional Performances



Panadura



Puttalam



Thirappane



Wattala



Anamaduwa



Anuradhapura





Chilaw



Galle



Homagama



Akuressa



Horagolla



Horana



Horombawa



Kamburupitiya



Kandy



Katugastota





Kekirawa



Kobeigane



Kurunegala



Maharagama



Matara



Mawanella



Negombo



Palugaswewa



Weligama



Aluthgama



## We are now in Mannar!

Our 37th workshop opened in Mannar in May 2016!

The inauguration of the Sunera Foundation workshop took place on the 27th of April 2016 at MARDAP (MN/Association for Rehabilitation of Differently Able People), Mannar. Our Field Manager Dhammika Gamage spoke on the work of Sunera to the audience. The parents were happy to hear about what their children would be doing at the workshop and how they would develop.

Senior trainers from Sunera trained two trainers and a helper from MARDAP before starting the workshop. They were trained on the disability arts methodology used in our workshops and how to care for disabled participants during the workshop sessions.

When the workshop commenced, there were some children who were reluctant to participate. Gradually, after giving them time and showing them love, they began to participate in the workshop activities with enthusiasm. The teachers at MARDAP say they are seeing positive changes in the children's behaviour, attitudes and even their self-confidence. They feel the children are being empowered both physically and mentally. Parents too have expressed their happiness in seeing positive changes in their children.



# A Magnificent Tribute

'A Tribute to Mary Billimoria', a concert of classical music, was performed at the Lionel Wendt Memorial Theatre, Colombo on the 18th of June 2016. Four magnificent pianists, the internationally acclaimed Rohan De Silva and Sujeeva Hapugalle, along with Soundarie David Rodrigo and Ramya De Livera Perera, came together to pay tribute to their teacher Mary Billimoria who gave them the musical foundation and taught them the skills needed to excel in the field of music as they have done today. They were accompanied by Lakshman Joseph de Saram and the principal players of the Chamber Music Society of Colombo, Cynthia Fernando and Avanti Perera on the violin, along with Dushy Perera on the cello.

Famous pieces such as Beethoven's Piano Trio Op.1 no.3 in C minor, Allegro con brio, Frederic Chopin's Ballade No 3 in A Flat Major, Franz Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No 2, Johannes Brahms's Two Hungarian Dances and Antonin Dvorak's Piano Quintet no. 2 in A major were some of the pieces played with versatility and precision in beautiful harmony.

It was a full house, and indeed a memorable night for the audience who gave the musicians a standing ovation. A huge thank you to the musicians for believing in our cause and for all their efforts, to our sponsors and advertisers, and all those who helped us in so many ways to make the concert a great success. The premier sponsor of the event was Fairway Holdings.







Photo Credits : Waruna Wanniarachi

“

*Great concert! Selection of music was perfect. Enjoyed it hugely. Well done and thank you*  
– Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga

*Was an outstandingly memorable and classy musical evening. Probably among the top events we've had in this city* – Arun Dias Bandaranaike

*The concert was wonderful* – Shyam Selvadurai

*Congratulations on a fantastic show* – Nimalka Morahela

*You pulled off an amazing show* – Sivaaji De Zoysa

*Super evening* – Rohan Ponniah

*Thank you for a wonderful concert! Music was so good* – Sharadha De Saram

*A brief word of thanks for that evening of exquisite pleasure* – Dhaneshan Casiechetty

*Fabulous Concert. Bravo, bravo* – Anoma Wijewardena

*The choice of performers and the music with the variety provided with duets, two pianos, solos and quartets made the evening out of the ordinary* – Shirin Amerasinghe

# Fundraising on the stage.....

## ***Rukshan Perera in Concert***

Rukshan Perera, a renowned Sri Lankan musician, who has been performing original music for many years, performed his 6th concert, “Rukshan Perera, Live in Concert VI”, in aid of Sunera Foundation. The concert was held on the 7th of February 2016 at the Bishop’s College Auditorium. Rukshan Perera is a songwriter, record producer and a multi-instrumentalist, who has been a member of some well known bands such as the ‘Super Golden Chimes’ over the years. Rukshan kept the audience entertained with a mix of lively, emotional and dramatic performances which was enjoyed by all. We are very thankful to Rukshan for organizing this concert and choosing our cause to support through it. The event was sponsored by South Asia Gateway Terminals (Pvt) Ltd (SAGT).





### A great start to 2016 with Alison Skillbeck Scalchi

The year started off very well for our trainers and participants with the visit of Alison Skillbeck Scalchi, our Trustee from Friends of Sunera Foundation, U.K. Alison braved the heat and tirelessly travelled across the country to visit and engage in the FSF funded workshops in Horagolla, Wattala, Kampburupitiya, Negombo, Homagama, Jaffna and Mannar. Her expertise and guidance were of immense value to our trainers and the love she showed the participants gave them some memorable moments with her.



### Partnering with Graeae, U.K.

Sunera believes in working with cutting edge therapeutic tools to develop the disabled young persons in our care. For this, we are partnering with Graeae Theatre Company, which is one of the leading disability arts organizations in the U.K who will conduct a two week training programme for our trainers.

Graeae personnel visited Sunera in January this year, for a recci, and were extremely pleased to join hands with us to empower our trainers.

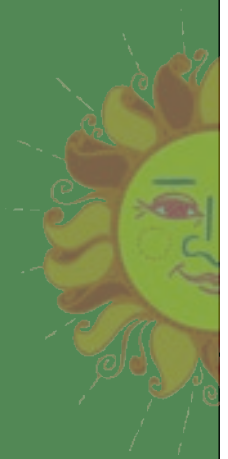
*Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre, breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing disabled artists centre stage.*

*Graeae champions accessibility and provides a platform for new generations of deaf and disabled talent, through the creation of trail-blazing theatre, at home and internationally.*



### Avurudu in Dehiwala

At Sunera, traditions are always valued. The participants of our Dehiwala workshop celebrated the Sinhala and Tamil New Year with the traditional festivities.



# Speech Therapy Project comes to an End

Our Speech and Language therapy project has been a part of our curriculum since January 2014 in some workshops, depending on the availability of funds. This project comes to a close in July 2016. Dehiwala, Maharagama, Mawanella, Kamburupitiya, Panadura and Horagolla were the workshops which had the speech therapy sessions weekly. The criteria for choosing these workshops for the therapy sessions was mainly the poor economic conditions which made professional speech therapy unaffordable and the age group of the participants where productive teaching is possible only for young children.

The therapists were graduates from Language and Speech Therapy Department of the University of Kelaniya.

## Some stories ....

### Pasindu de Silva

The main improvement in Pasindu is in his ability to pronounce some words with less difficulty. His mother, Mrs. Hemamali Fernando, says that though he used to agitate when speaking, after speech therapy sessions for six months, that condition had significantly reduced.

Being very enthusiastic about speech therapy, his mother says that on a 0-10 yardstick, she would give 7 for the improvement she saw in her son.

In addition to speech and language improvements, Pasindu has gradually learnt to be less nervous and more tranquil during the speech therapy sessions, his mother observed. Further, Mrs. Fernando says that she appreciates the skills taught during the speech therapy sessions.

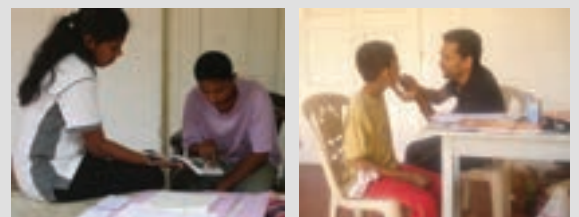


### Sadun Thivanka

Sadun could speak but due to his disability he was very nervous and had no self confidence to speak to people. After the therapy sessions, he has improved considerably. He enjoys the sessions and talks much more. He even looks at pictures and describes it to others.

### Amanda Harshani

Amanda used to speak in a rush. Her words were unclear and used to come out garbled. The therapist gave her specific exercises for this difficulty. Her mother states that she helps Amanda to do the exercises at home, and she now sees an improvement in her. Amanda enjoys the therapy sessions and is keen to do the exercises.



### Sandmali Wathsala

Mrs. Shriyani Ashoka, mother of Sunera participant Sandamali Wathsala said that after the introduction of speech therapy at Maharagama workshop, Sandamali seems more encouraged to formulate words properly when she is trying to talk at home.



Ms. Shriyani says that she is enthusiastic about doing the homework given by the speech therapists, which is an improvement, because normally she tries her best not to engage in any work but to idle at home. Sandamali acted in the workshop performance at Samanalayaya 2016 and was able to play her speaking part very well.





## What keeps us going.....

“My daughter has developed so much since she joined the workshop. Even her personality has changed for the better. She is now able to identify what is right and wrong and does not behave in a negative way. The trainers have shown her so much love that she wants to make them happy. Tuesday is her favourite day because of the workshop. I am so happy to see her happy and so are all the other parents at the workshop. We are grateful to Sunera for doing such good work.”

– **D.M. Biso Menike**

*Mother – Palugaswewa Workshop*

“My son has a short time left to attend school. I used to be fearful about what will happen to him after he finishes his schooling. My fears were relieved by the Sunera workshop. Through the workshop our children are able to continue to learn, grow and develop themselves, instead of being at home with nothing to do. At the workshop, they are given an opportunity to learn to share, care and become good people too.”

– **R. Premawathie**

*Mother and Special Needs Teacher – Kurunegala Workshop*

“My daughter has developed to a great extent after attending the Gauravila workshop. She could not do much by herself, but now is able to take care of herself on her own. As parents, we are so relieved and happy. My daughter is what she is today because of the Sunera trainers who have helped her to be so.”

– **Mr. Weeramuththu**

*Father – Gauravila Workshop*

“Our participants have progressed very well. They have developed not only physically and mentally but also in other areas such as singing and dancing. The parents have stated their immense satisfaction with the workshop and the progress of their children. The positive change that they see in their children has made them spread the word about the workshop within their village. The Divisional Secretariat is very supportive of our work, and has stated that it is the first time that such work has been carried out in Kamburupitya.”

– **Menaka Priyadharshana**

*Trainer – Kamburupitiya Workshop*

“When my son joined the Sunera workshop he could not walk or talk. It used to be only one word answers when he was asked a question. His life has changed over the years. He can communicate better and is physically able to achieve much more than before. We are indeed grateful to Sunera for the positive role they have played in my son’s life.”

– **Raja Gnanaseelan**

*Father – Yullifield Workshop*

“Sunera is fulfilling a great need in society. The participants feel accepted and loved by the trainers. There is love, friendship and caring in the workshop, which makes it a very conducive environment for the participants to grow and develop. Using the performing arts, the trainers not only develop the participants creatively, but they also help to develop their minds, which improve their quality of life.”

– **Sagarika Wimalaratne**

*Dance Teacher – Riyenci Alagiyawatta School for Special Needs –Anuradhapura*



# Sunera Workshops

## Colombo District

1. Dehiwala
2. Maharagama
3. Homagama

## Gampaha District

4. Horagolla
5. Negombo
6. Wattala

## Kalutara District

7. Horana
8. Panadura
9. Aluthgama

## Puttalam District

10. Puttalam
11. Anamaduwa
12. Chilaw

## Kurunegala District

13. Kurunegala
14. Kobeigane
15. Kuliyapitiya
16. Narammala

## Anuradhapura District

17. Anuradhapura
18. Thirappane
19. Kekirawa
20. Palugaswewa

## Matara District

21. Matara
22. Kamburupitiya
23. Akuressa
24. Weligama

## Galle District

25. Galle
26. Imaduwa

## Kandy District

27. Kandy
28. Katugastota

## Kegalle District

29. Mawanella

## Jaffna District

30. Jaffna

## Batticaloa District

31. Batticaloa

## Nuwara Eliya District

- 32-36. Plantation Workshops

## Mannar District

37. Mannar

