

Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) announces top 10 nominations for 18th edition

Indian theatre's annual awards and festival gala – the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) - is set to run from **23rd - 29th March, 2023**. Instituted by the Mahindra Group, the Festival announced the top 10 plays nominated across 13 categories which will be staged in the national capital followed by a glittering Red Carpet Awards Night. To celebrate the finest in Indian theatre, the winners will be felicitated on 29th March 2023 at the Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi, with luminaries from the world of theatre present at the occasion.

For the 2023 season, the Festival received **395 entries** from across India representing Maharashtra, Delhi, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Manipur, and Rajasthan. Integrating inclusivity and diversity into the Festival as always, the final 10 nominations feature plays in languages like **Assamese, English, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Marwadi** and **Tamil**, among others. The plays explore diverse themes ranging from hope, love, loss, betrayal and revenge, the ancient Lavani art form and the community it has spawned; the struggle for survival amongst Tea tribals under the British Raj; the Global Refugee Crisis, gender issues; Dalit oppression; rural politics; the politics of food, and the transgender community.

The nominated top 10 plays for META 2023 are: *Burn Out*, *Chai Garam*, *Daklakatha Devikavya*, *Hunkaro*, *Lavani ke Rang*, *Namak*, *Notion(s): In Between You & Me*, *Nooramma: Biriyani Durbar*, *The Departed Dawn*, and *Via Savargaon Khurd*.

The Selection Committee, along with the META Secretariat, viewed all the 395 plays submitted to compete. This year, the erudite committee featured playwright, author and former Editor-in-Chief of Seagull Books, **Anjum Katyal**; academic, actor, director and stage critic **Keval Arora**; award-winning actress **Neena Kulkarni**; theatre director and former artistic director of ITFOK, **Sankar Venkateswaran**; playwright and theatre critic **Vikram Phukan**.

While talking about preserving theatre as an art form in India, **Keval Arora** said, *“Various interventions were made in the late 70s ... where the question of (a) post-Independence theatre idiom came up, stating where the traditional arts had been sidelined due to the search for a new kind of a contemporary voice. I am worried about preserving theatre in its traditional form as there is a danger of turning theatre into a museum artefact. Something that can live perhaps but not breathe. There is also an issue of livelihoods associated with the future of theatre; there are families who have been working in these art forms for centuries. Does the art refashion/reinvigorate itself in terms of the contemporary – there have been multiple questions which arise with the thought of preservation of theatre in India. Some of the entries at META 2023 observe several attempts to talk about traditional grammar but with a viewpoint of the contemporary eye.”*

Speaking of the diversity of entries at META 2023, **Neena Kulkarni**, said, *“From the northern belt to the eastern belt of India, like Assam, Manipur and Odisha, I have never seen this kind of theatre until now. It's wonderful to watch these kinds of plays. Especially the fact that this year, the Festival celebrates the country's diversity and inclusivity which is just amazing! Here you will see an abstract mixture of history, mythology, the absurd and the experimental, women empowerment, comedy and many more. The theatre of India is as diverse as our country is, which is a benchmark in itself.”*

Talking about his vision for theatre in India, **Anjum Katyal** said, *“My vision for theatre in India would be for it to remain open and inclusive. A place where you get a huge variety of voices, styles, concerns and performative circumstances so that we can continue to include a wide variety of audience. An award like the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards is an invaluable contribution to the strength of the field and helps the arts to rise in excellence.”* Adding to this **Sankar Venkateswaran** said, *“The vision for theatre in India would be original works, new creations — which are socially relevant, artistically autonomous, technically adaptable and socially engaging. Having a platform like META provides a direction to Indian theatre which is quite special for the entire theatre community.”*

Decoding the selection process at META 2023, playwright and stage critic **Vikram Phukan** said, *“In the selection process, we implemented inclusiveness in the works, the different kinds of experience that are not normally foregrounded. In some of the plays, one will see some surprise packages that will be disarming in the way that these groups have risen in excellence.”*

Speaking of META 2023, **Jay Shah, Vice President, Head - Cultural Outreach, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.** said, *“META 2023 has lived up to the Mahindra Group’s annual promise of diversity and inclusion, spanning across a breadth of languages, themes and genres. We are delighted that the discerning Selection Committee, after 4 days of rigorous watching and careful consideration, has nominated ten productions that embrace and showcase excellence in stagecraft, and champion this art form that has been one of the world’s oldest and most powerful forms of artistic expression.”*

Sanjoy Roy, Managing Director of Teamwork Arts, said, *“The 2023 META Selection Committee has nominated the best productions from across India representing diverse languages such as English, Marwadi, Marathi, Malayalam, Assamese, Tamil, Kannada, and Hindustani. We look forward to hosting the Festival in its full form post pandemic from 23rd - 29th March in Delhi.”*

For the full list of nominations, please visit www.metawards.com. The entire schedule and jury for the Festival will be announced soon.

NOMINATED PRODUCTIONS:

- **Burn Out** directed by Barnali Medhi and produced by Pardam Trust (Delhi, 1 hour, Assamese)
- **Chai Garam** directed by Sahidul Haque and produced by Orchid Theatre (Nagaon [Assam], 1 hour 20 mins, Assamese/Baganiya/Gibberish)
- **Daklakatha Devikavya** directed by Lakshmana K P and produced by Jangama Collective (Bengaluru [Karnataka], 1 hour 40 mins, Kannada)
- **Hunkaro** directed by Mohit Takalkar and produced by Ujaagar Dramatic Association (Jaipur [Rajasthan], 1 hour 30 mins, Marwadi/Hindi/Awadhi/Hari Yanwi)

- **Lavani ke Rang** directed by Bhushan Korgaonkar produced by B Spot Production (Mumbai [Maharashtra], 1 hour 30 mins, Hindi/Marathi)
- **Namak** directed by Srinivas Beesetty produced by Rangashankara (Bangalore [Karnataka] 30 mins, Hindi)
- **Notion(s):** In Between You & Me directed by Savita Rani and produced by Serendipity Arts Foundation & Savita Rani (Delhi, 1 hour, English)
- **Nooramma:** Biryani Durbar directed by Srijith Sundaram and produced by Kattiyakkari / Srijith Sundaram (Chennai [Tamil Nadu], 1 hour, Tamil)
- **The Departed Dawn** directed by Victor Thoudam and Bimal Subedi and produced by Ashoka Theatre / Serendipity Arts (Imphal [Manipur], 58 mins, Non-Verbal)
- **Via Savargaon Khurd** directed by Suyog Deshpande produced by Aasakta Kalamanch (Pune [Maharashtra], 1 hour 36 mins, Marathi)

~~ ENDS ~~

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Mahindra

Founded in 1945, the Mahindra Group is one of the largest and most admired multinational federation of companies with 2,60,000 employees in over 100 countries. It enjoys a leadership position in farm equipment, utility vehicles, information technology and financial services in India and is the world's largest tractor company by volume. It has a strong presence in renewable energy, agriculture, logistics, hospitality and real estate.

The Mahindra Group has a clear focus on leading ESG globally, enabling rural prosperity and enhancing urban living, with a goal to drive positive change in the lives of communities and stakeholders to enable them to Rise.

Learn more about Mahindra on www.mahindra.com / Twitter and Facebook: @MahindraRise/ For updates subscribe to <https://www.mahindra.com/news-room>

About Teamwork Arts:

Teamwork Arts is a highly versatile production company with roots in the performing arts, social action and the corporate world. For over 30 years, Teamwork Arts has taken India to the world and brought the world to India, presenting the finest of Indian performers, writers, change makers and visual artistes in the knowledge and arts space in India and abroad. Every year, we produce over 33 festivals in 42 cities and 17 countries in the fields of performing & visual arts and literature. We produce the world's largest literary gathering: the annual Jaipur Literature

Festival; JLF international now travels to the US, UK, Canada, Australia and the Maldives and soon in Europe.

Even amidst the upheaval and unsettling times of 2020 and through 2021, Teamwork Arts successfully launched the digital series, 'JLF Brave New World' and 'Words Are Bridges', which were viewed by over 4.8 million people in their first season. Through its digital avatar, the Jaipur Literature Festival reached over 27 million viewers in January 2021. Our initiative 'Art Matters' empowers artistes across India to collaborate across genres by commissioning them to create new works thereby effecting change & raising awareness. The digital series 'Be Inspired' was launched in 2021 – a series that crystal-gazes into the future with conversations on science, technology, innovation, environment and more.

Website: www.teamworkarts.com

For more information, please contact:

Teamwork Arts:

Manash Pratim Deka

Associate Vice President – Public Relations & Corporate Communications

M: +91 9953970829 | E: manash@teamworkarts.com

Srishti Tiwari

Associate – Public Relations & Corporate Communications

M: +91 9205383124 | E: pr@teamworkarts.com

Zimisha Communications:

Imtiaz Alam

M: +919810227818 | E: imtiaz@zimisha.com

Santosh Kumar

M: +919990937676 | E: santosh@zimisha.com