

*Media Release*

## 14<sup>th</sup> Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards to confer Lifetime Achievement Award on Mahesh Elkunchwar

- ***META 2019 jury includes Akash Khurana, Anmol Vellani, Ila Arun, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Lynne Fernandez, Mukund Padmanabhan, Sunil Kothari, Sunit Tandon***
- ***Nominated plays to be showcased at the META Festival in Delhi from March 6-12, 2019***
- ***META partners with Drama School Mumbai (DSM) to present a series of masterclasses with META-nominated stalwarts***

**New Delhi, February 25, 2019:** The Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) and Festival 2019 today announced that the **META 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award** will be conferred on one of India's most progressive playwrights, Mahesh Elkunchwar. He is critically-acclaimed and widely-known for having experimented with a wide range of drama and is a powerful force in both Indian and Marathi theatre for over three decades.

The jury for the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the Awards was also announced and comprises renowned theatre artist, actor and screenwriter **Akash Khurana**, founder and former Executive Director of India Foundation for the Arts **Anmol Vellani**, popular Indian actress, singer and TV personality **Ila Arun**, eminent Indian actor, **Kulbhushan Kharbanda**, Managing trustee of Nrityagram and one of India's first professional female lighting designers **Lynne Fernandez**, former editor of *The Hindu* and curator of the annual thought conclave 'The Huddle' **Mukund Padmanabhan**, internationally-renowned dance historian, scholar, author and critic **Sunil Kothari**, and former Director of Yatrik, the oldest theatre group in the capital, and presently Director of the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, **Sunit Tandon**.

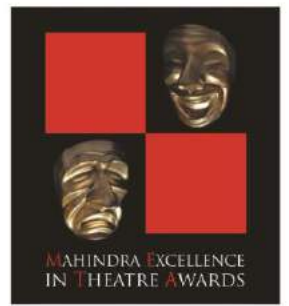
The announcements come ahead of the week-long Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) and Festival to be held from March 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at New Delhi's Kamani Auditorium and Shri Ram Centre, where META 2019's ten-shortlisted plays will be performed for an esteemed panel of jury members, as well as theatre-lovers in the capital.

Breaking previous records, over 400 entries were received this year at META, which were viewed by an eminent Selection Committee, comprising well-known theatre practitioners. This year's final nominations feature plays in Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, along with Hindi and English language scripts. The shortlisted plays, this year, will explore several themes.

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**Agarbatti** (Hindi and Bundeli) is a riveting tale of caste, gender, class, conflict and politics in the aftermath of Phoolan Devi's Behmai massacre. Two different adaptations of **Andha Yug** (in Gujarati from Vadodara and in Hindi from Imphal) are set against the backdrop of the *Mahabharata* war and its deep-seated repercussions on humanity. **Chandâla, Impure** (Tamil) is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* but set within the constructs of the Indian caste system. **Chillara Samaram** (Malayalam) chronicles a protest by common people against their town corporation which wants to replace every small shop with glitzy malls and ban the use of coins. **Kola** (Kannada) is a strongly-written family drama set in rural Vidharba which talks about relationships, aspirations, joys, sorrows and anger. **Loose Woman** (English), through dance, theatre, music and video, depicts the ways in which a woman experiences different 'spaces'. **Pulijanmam** (Malayalam) is a reinterpretation of a classic text which questions the morals of a society which has for long marginalised Dalits. And **Bhagi Hui Ladkiyan** (Hindustani) is a narrative-led performance which depicts the actors' dilemmas through startlingly innovative stage props and invites the audience on stage.

Hailing from Maharashtra's Vidharba region, Mahesh Elkunchwar has been a towering presence in contemporary Indian theatre for more than three decades. He began writing plays in the 1960s, encompassed a substantial body of work which includes screenplays, critical and theoretical writing, and he became an integral part of the Parallel Cinema Movement. Mahesh has been at the forefront of the progressive movement led by 'Rangayan', which has included stalwarts such as Vijaya Mehta, Arvind and Sulabha Deshpande, playwright Vijay Tendulkar, and actor Shreeram Lagoo. His play, *Wada Chirebandi*, has been staged in Marathi, Hindi and Bengali, and has even been filmed for television. His other famous works are *Sultan*, *Holi*, *Garbo*, *Yatanaghar* and *Atmakatha*. Several of his plays have been translated and performed in English and Hindi as well. He is a recipient of the Homi Bhabha Fellowship (1976-78), the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for playwriting (1989), the Sahitya Akademi Award (2002), the Saraswati Samman (2003), the Brittingham Fellowship of the University of Wisconsin, U.S.A. (2005), and the Janasthan Puraskar (2011).

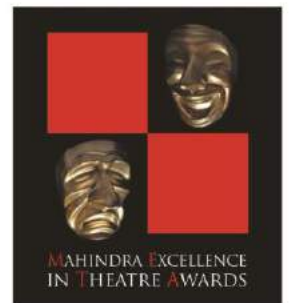
In previous years, the META Lifetime Achievement Award has been conferred on several stalwarts of Indian theatre, including Vijaya Mehta, Arun Kakade, Ratan Thiyam, Girish Karnard, Ebrahim Alkazi, the Late Heisnam Kanhailal, the Late Khaled Chowdhary, the Late Zohra Sehgal, and the Late Badal Sarkar.

Curated in association with the Drama School Mumbai (DSM), META announced that it will conduct Learning@META - a series of workshops and panel discussions which will feature theatre-practitioners and META-nominated stalwarts. The workshops are an extension of META's endeavour to nurture Indian theatre and build a community of practitioners dedicated to the craft. It is also aimed at enhancing public engagement with theatre and developing an understanding for the multitude of skills and techniques that are involved in putting together quality theatre productions. This year, the panel discussions will focus on the idea of starting up and running theatre companies.

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The media launch of the META Festival at The Taj Mahal Hotel in New Delhi hosted a panel discussion - **'Is theatre the much-needed valve on the proverbial socio-political pressure cooker of our times?'** The panel, moderated by Sanjoy K. Roy, included V.K. Sharma, Sanyukta Saha, Deepan Sivaraman, and Shilpi Marwah, and looked at theatre's role as a key outlet for the countless stress-points created within social and political ecosystems.

Promoted by the Mahindra Group as part of its cultural outreach and curated by Teamwork Arts, a pioneering entertainment company, META annually rewards and recognizes the country's best productions and performances, along with their makers and facilitators, providing encouragement to India's vast theatre industry across regions and languages, with an aim to increase not just awareness, but also appreciation of fine theatre.

**Jay Shah, Head, Cultural Outreach, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd,** said, *"The Mahindra Group is delighted to announce the 14th Annual Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards. The enthusiasm this annual event generates for theatre practitioners and audiences is in itself a validation of what we had set out to achieve. That this Award is lovingly accepted as the most definitive recognition of excellence in theatre in our country brings us even more joy and satisfaction. Here's looking forward to a week of unparalleled theatrical expression from the best our country has to offer."*

**Sanjoy K Roy, MD, Teamwork Arts & Festival Producer,** said, *"Every year META reinforces Indian theatre's diversity and excellence. META 2019 is a tribute to the finest talent we have across the country. Like last year, META's workshops and masterclasses will bring the dynamic community of theatre-practitioners closer and inspire more stories of the stage."*

META 2019 will present awards in 14 categories including the Lifetime Achievement Award as well as 13 competitive categories of Best Play, Best Director, Best Stage Design, Best Light Design, Best Innovative Sound Design, Best Costume Design, Best Actor in a Lead Role (Male), Best Actor in a Lead Role (Female), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Male), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female), Best Original Script, Best Ensemble and Best Choreographer.

For the full list and details of nominations, please visit [www.metawards.com](http://www.metawards.com). The full schedule of the 14<sup>th</sup> META Festival is as follows.

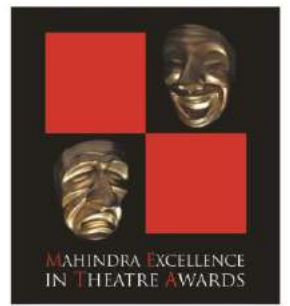
#### **FESTIVAL SCHEDULE -**

Tickets priced at Rs.100/- and Rs.200/- are available on [www.metawards.com](http://www.metawards.com) or [www.bookmyshow.com](http://www.bookmyshow.com)

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Date	Play	Language	Time	Venue	Duration
06.03.2019	Loose Woman	English	8:00 PM	SHRI RAM CENTRE	1 Hr
07.03.2019	Andha Yug (Gujarati Adaptation)	Gujarati	6:00 PM	SHRI RAM CENTRE	1 Hr 35 Min
07.03.2019	Bhagi Hui Ladkiyan	Hindustani	8:00 PM	KAMANI AUDITORIUM	1 Hr
08.03.2019	Chillara Samaram	Malayalam	6:00 PM	SHRI RAM CENTRE	1 Hr 5 Min
08.03.2019	Agarbatti	Hindi and Bundeli	8:00 PM	KAMANI AUDITORIUM	1 Hr 20 Min
09.03.2019	Pulijanmam	Malayalam	6:00 PM	SHRI RAM CENTRE	1 Hr 5 Min
10.03.2019	Kola	Kannada	5:30 PM	SHRI RAM CENTRE	2 Hr 15 Min (10 min interval)
10.03.2019	Andha Yug (Hindi Adaptation)	Hindi	8:00 PM	KAMANI AUDITORIUM	1 Hr 10 Min
11.03.2019	Chandâla, Impure	Tamil	6:00 PM	SHRI RAM CENTRE	3 Hr (20 min interval)

~ ENDS ~

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About Mahindra

The Mahindra Group is a USD 20.7 billion federation of companies that enables people to rise through innovative mobility solutions, driving rural prosperity, enhancing urban living, nurturing new businesses and fostering communities. It has a leadership position in utility vehicles, information technology, financial services and vacation ownership in India and is the world's largest tractor company, by volume. It also enjoys a strong presence in agribusiness, components, commercial vehicles, speedboats, consulting services, energy, industrial equipment, logistics, real estate, steel, aerospace, defence and two wheelers. Headquartered in India, Mahindra employs over 240,000 people across 100 countries.

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### **About Teamwork Arts**

For over 25 years, Teamwork Arts has taken India to the world and brought the world to India. In countries such as Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Israel, Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, UK and USA, Teamwork produces over 25 highly acclaimed performing arts, visual arts and literary festivals across more than 40 cities. Teamwork Arts produces one of the world's largest free literary gatherings, the annual ZEE Jaipur Literature Festival, the Ishara International Puppet Festival and the annual Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) and Festival in New Delhi, international festivals Shared History in South Africa, Eye on India in the United States of America, India by the Bay in Hong Kong, Confluence - Festival of India in Australia, India@70 2017: Year of Culture in the United Kingdom, and many more.

Website: [www.teamworkarts.com](http://www.teamworkarts.com)

### **About The Taj Mahal Hotel**

The Taj Mahal Hotel on Number One Mansingh Road, New Delhi is one of the most distinguished addresses in the national capital. Its proximity to the seat of government, the city's diplomatic corps and business district has furthered Taj Mahal's reputation as the epicentre of the Delhi. Graceful architecture blends aesthetically with guest facilities that include all rooms offering unmatched views of the Capital and stellar culinary experiences. Taj Mahal, New Delhi is indeed a tribute to hospitality and service, complementing the broad boulevards and leafy splendour of Delhi's chief architect, Edwin Lutyens.

For more information, please visit [www.tajhotels.com](http://www.tajhotels.com)

**For complete media kit, please visit the media page on the festival website [www.metawards.com](http://www.metawards.com).**

**For media queries and interview requests, please contact:**

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