

Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards gears up for milestone 20th edition with 10 incredible plays!

Selected from 367 plays from 20 Indian states in 32 languages and dialects

Indian theatre's premier awards and festival—the **Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META)**—returns from **13th to 20th March 2025**. Instituted by the Mahindra Group, META has unveiled the top 10 plays nominated across 13 categories, which will be staged in New Delhi, culminating in a glittering Awards Night. The winners will be felicitated on 20th March 2024 at Kamani Auditorium in the presence of theatre luminaries.

Known for showcasing powerful stories, META's plays have explored themes ranging from mythology, gender, and identity to rebellion, oppression, authoritarianism, personal struggles, and adventure. In its milestone year, the nominated entries continue to break barriers, presenting a dynamic blend of narratives and perspectives.

For the 2025 season, the festival received **367 entries** from **20 states** across India, along with two international submissions. The shortlist has plays from **Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, and Maharashtra**. As always, the festival has embraced inclusivity and diversity, with entries submitted in **32 Indian languages and dialects**. The final 10 nominations feature plays in **Hindi, Malayalam, Bangla, Kannada, Sanskrit, Bundeli, and English**.

The Selection Committee, in collaboration with the META Secretariat, carefully reviewed all 360 plays submitted for competition. This year, the distinguished committee included **Kuljeet Singh**, Indian film and theatre actor, director, and founder/creative director of Atelier Theatre; **Divya Seth Shah**, film and television actor; **Dilip Shankar**, renowned Indian theatre and film casting director; **Sankar Venkateswaran**, respected Indian theatre director; and **Anurupa Roy**, a prominent Indian puppeteer, puppet designer, and director of puppet theatre.

Speaking of META 2025, **Jay Shah, Vice President, Head, Cultural Outreach, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.**, said, "Nurturing META for the past two decades has been very rewarding, both for the Mahindra Group and for India's theatre community. For us, it has been a platform to demonstrate our values, and it has been a joy seeing the positive impact on this artform. It is indeed satisfying to know that META is the top most national level recognition for the practitioners of theatre in our country. The final list of the 10 nominated plays selected from over

350 entries received from all over India represents the best of Indian theatre and we are eager to present these in Delhi next month “

Sanjoy Roy, Managing Director of Teamwork Arts, said, “META is the primary theatre awards and festival that celebrates the extraordinary talent that is spread across the country . As we celebrate the 20th year of META, we reflect on the diverse themes, genres, languages, and geographies that we have represented across the years showcasing the richness and variety of theatre that keeps us energized, year after year.”

“The 20th year of META is significant because, as a festival and as a platform, META showcases the future, celebrates what has been excellent through the ages, and also brings in a very significant focus on diversity in theatre. This year there were over 350 applications. And what is fantastic is that these applications are from across India, and they are from big metros, small towns, tier two cities, very well-established theatre groups, new groups, folk theatre companies, and from those who are working from the margins under difficult circumstances,” said **Anurupa Roy**.

“In the rapidly transforming age of communication, I feel, theatre has a lot to offer: pose complex questions creatively & puncture the frozen silence on imminent issues vis-à-vis culture, language, hegemony, communities, & polity. The theatre productions at 20th META aren't just a treat to the eyes but a train of turbulent feelings woven aesthetically to proverbially calm the devastated & disturb the conformist,” said **Kuljeet Singh** about this year’s shortlist.

On the shortlisted plays contributing to the global conversation on theatre and performance art, **Divya Seth Shah** said, “I’m very confident that some of these plays have the scope to be performed at a bigger arena. The language will never be a barrier because their storytelling forms and art are so visual and movement perfect that it suffices in itself.”

“What excites me most is how this festival brings unheard stories to the forefront. It’s not just about showcasing India’s theatre landscape—it actively engages with the world, sparking conversations that transcend borders. META has always been special because it honors not just performances, but the passion, craft, and vision that make theatre excellent and truly transformative,” said Sankar **Venkateswaran**.

“Not only does the 20th META shortlist push the boundaries of traditional theatre in terms of storytelling, staging, and performance, it also challenges our ideas of performance spaces by taking us beyond the conventional proscenium. We have performances rooted in folk traditions on the one hand, and on the other hand, we have unique voices of underrepresented communities. We also have cutting-edge performances, which give us a glimpse into the possibilities for theatre in times to come. A heady mix, I would recommend catching each performance to get a true taste into the magic of Indian theatre!” said **Dilip Shankar**.

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:

- ***Be-Loved: Theatre, Music, Queerness, and Ishq!*** directed by Sapan Saran and produced by Tamaasha Theatre [Mumbai, 1 hour, 20 minutes, Hindi / English]
- ***Bob Marley from Kodihalli*** directed by Lakshman K.P and produced by Jangama Collective [Bangalore (Karnataka), 1 hour, 30 minutes, Kannada]
- ***Chandaa Bedni*** directed by Anirudh Sarkar and produced by Rangakarmee [Bhopal, 1 hour, 40 minutes, Hindi]
- ***Dashanana Swapnasiddhi*** directed by Manju Kodagu and produced by Bhalire Vichithram [Heggodu (Karnataka), 1 hour, 15 minutes, Kannada]
- ***Jeevantey Maalakha*** directed by O.T. Shajahan and produced by Athlete Kayika Nadakavedhi [Palakkad (Kerala), 1 hour, 40 minutes, Malayalam]
- ***Kando Ningal Ente Kuttiye Kando (Have You Seen My Son?)*** directed by Kannan Palakkad and produced by Navarang Palakkad [Pallakad (Kerala), 1 hour, Malayalam]
- ***Mattiah 22:39*** directed by Arun Laal and produced by Astitva Mangaluru [Mangaluru (Karnataka), 1 hour, 30 minutes, Kannada]
- ***Nihshango Ishwar*** directed by Suman Saha and produced by Bengal Repertory [Kolkata (Bengal), 1 hour, 22 minutes, Bangla & Sanskrit]
- ***Portal Waiting*** directed by Abhi Tambe produced by Abhi Tambe [Bangalore (Karnataka), 1 hour, 14 minutes, English]

- ***Swang - Jas ki Tas* directed by Akshay Singh Thakur and produced by Rangabharan Cultural and Social Welfare Society [Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), 1 hour, 25 minutes, Hindi and Bundeli]**

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Mahindra:

Founded in 1945, the Mahindra Group is one of the largest and most admired multinational federations 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. The arts of India are unrivalled in their depth, diversity and mystery, and showcasing India to global audiences requires a deep understanding of her culture, an acute sense of relevance in programming, an unflinching attention to detail, and above all, love and respect for the artist. Our expertise spans the sphere of entertainment and knowledge and includes making documentary and feature films, conceptualising and developing visual, performing arts, and literary festivals around the world which embody both a classical and contemporary India, and nurturing new talent across all art forms.

Every year, we produce over 33 festivals in 72 cities and 26 countries in the fields of performing & visual arts and literature; our venues include Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the UK, and the USA, as well as many eclectic festivals across India. We produce the world's largest literary gathering: the annual Jaipur Literature Festival; JLF international travels to the US, UK, and Europe.

We produce acclaimed festivals across India, such as the Ishara International Puppet Festival, the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META), festivals of magical music—the Mahindra Kabira in Varanasi, the Sacred in Pushkar and Amritsar, The Jazz India Circuit in Goa and the National Capital Region, the Jaipur Music Stage in Jaipur, and the Under the Banyan Tree, which happens on a Full Moon night in Delhi.

Our international festivals include India by the Nile in Egypt, India by the Bay in Hong Kong, Confluence—A Festival of India in Australia, India in the Sunshine City in Zimbabwe, India by the Bosphorus in Turkey and many more. Our musical extravaganza, *Bollywood Love Story: A Musical*, continues to tour the world with sold-out shows everywhere it is held.

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 and brought together the world's leading commentators and writers. Amidst the pandemic, Teamwork Arts also created Art Matters, an initiative empowering artistes across India to collaborate by commissioning them to create new works. It has since then raised awareness, actioned change, developed support channels and inspired the community to contribute to the cause in various direct and indirect ways. 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. Three on-ground editions of 'Be Inspired - Fast-Tracking the Future' have been in India already. In 2024, Teamwork Arts collaborated with the Royal Family of Jaipur to produce the first edition of the Jaigarh Heritage Festival, presented by Vedanta. **Website:** www.teamworkarts.com

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