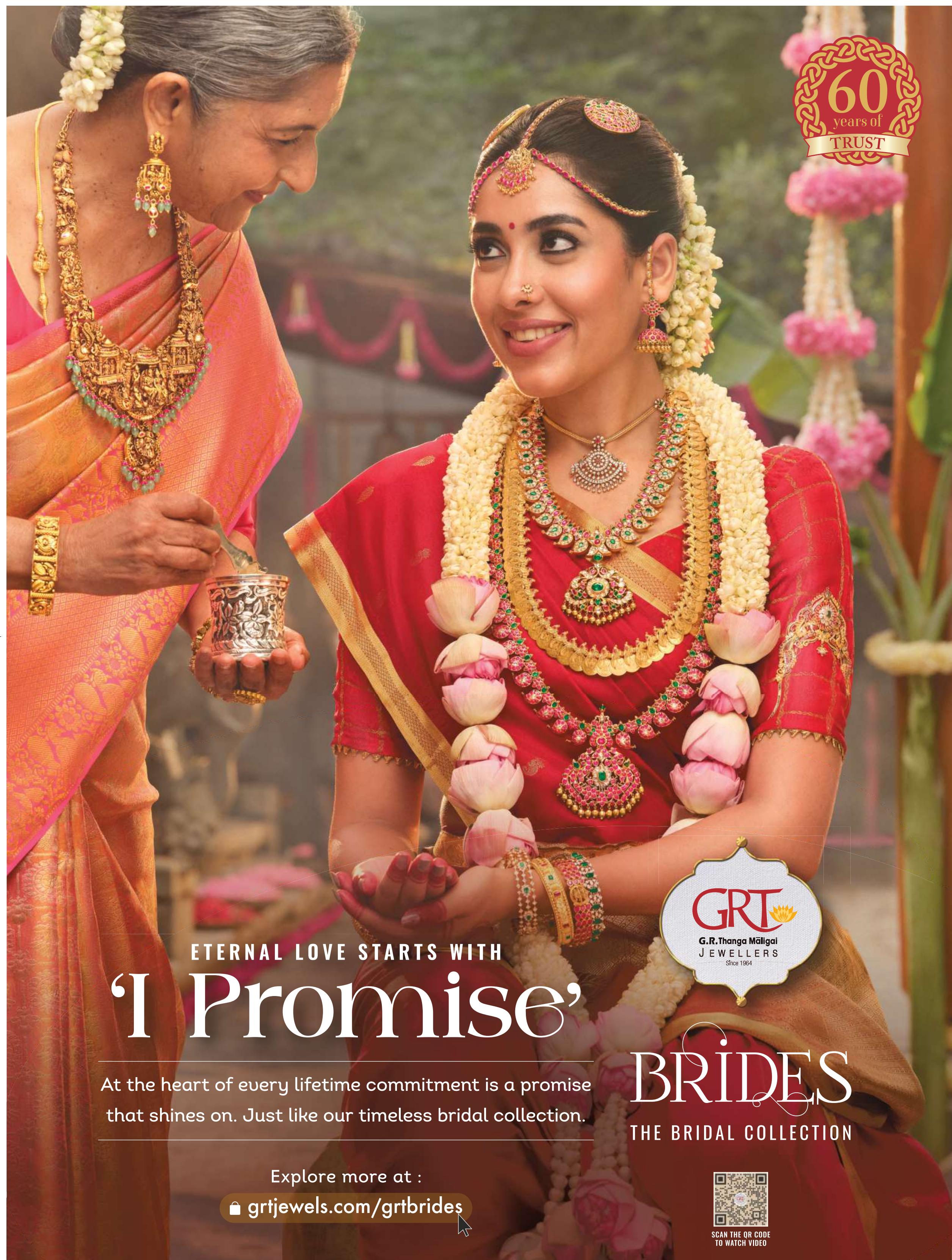


# friday Review

THE HINDU



A woman in a red sari with gold jewelry is applying tilak to the forehead of a bride who is wearing a red sari and gold jewelry. The bride is smiling. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo for G.R. Thanga Maligai Jewellers' 60th anniversary, featuring the text "60 years of TRUST". In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for "GRT JEWELLERS" with the text "G.R. Thanga Maligai JEWELLERS Since 1964".

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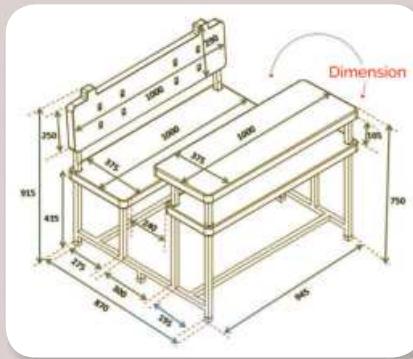


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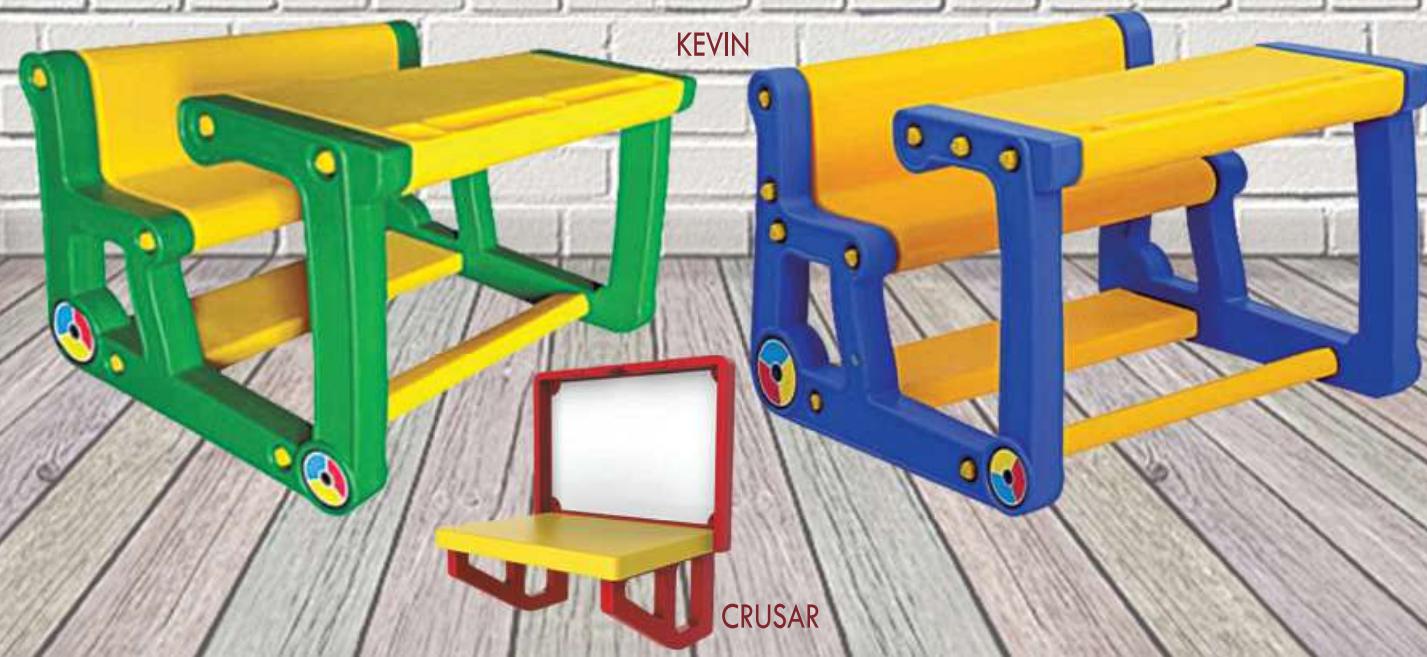
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# friday Review

THE HINDU

## A dancer to watch out for

Meera Sreenarayanan impressed with her imaginative performance p2

## Spotlight on laya

Thakita Thath Jham' was a beautiful exploration of rhythmic sounds p3



## SPRING AND ITS CONNECT WITH MUSIC

A look at ragas that evoke the colours of the season p4

Anuj Kumar

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**T**heatrewallahs throng the Mandi House crossing in New Delhi as Bharat Rang Mahotsav returns in its 25th year with the promise to celebrate the best of Indian and international theatre. Fondly called Bharangam, the flagship event of the National School of Drama (NSD) will see over 200 productions from nine countries, staged across 13 locations in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Says Chittaranjan Tripathy, director, NSD: "In our culture, theatre is not seen as an extracurricular activity. It is respected as an essential ingredient for our physical and psychological growth."

Though the festival's slogan is 'One Expression, Supreme Creation', Tripathy says Bharangam will see a confluence of different voices and traditions. It will also give space to the culture of disenfranchised communities – the festival celebrates the 150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda by showcasing the folk theatre of tribal communities. "And, we pay tribute to Habib Tanvir in his centenary year by inviting his Naya Theatre to stage *Agra Bazaar*. The festival will culminate with a Ratan Thiyam production."

As Bharangam takes wing, we speak to five eminent personalities to check the festival's pulse.

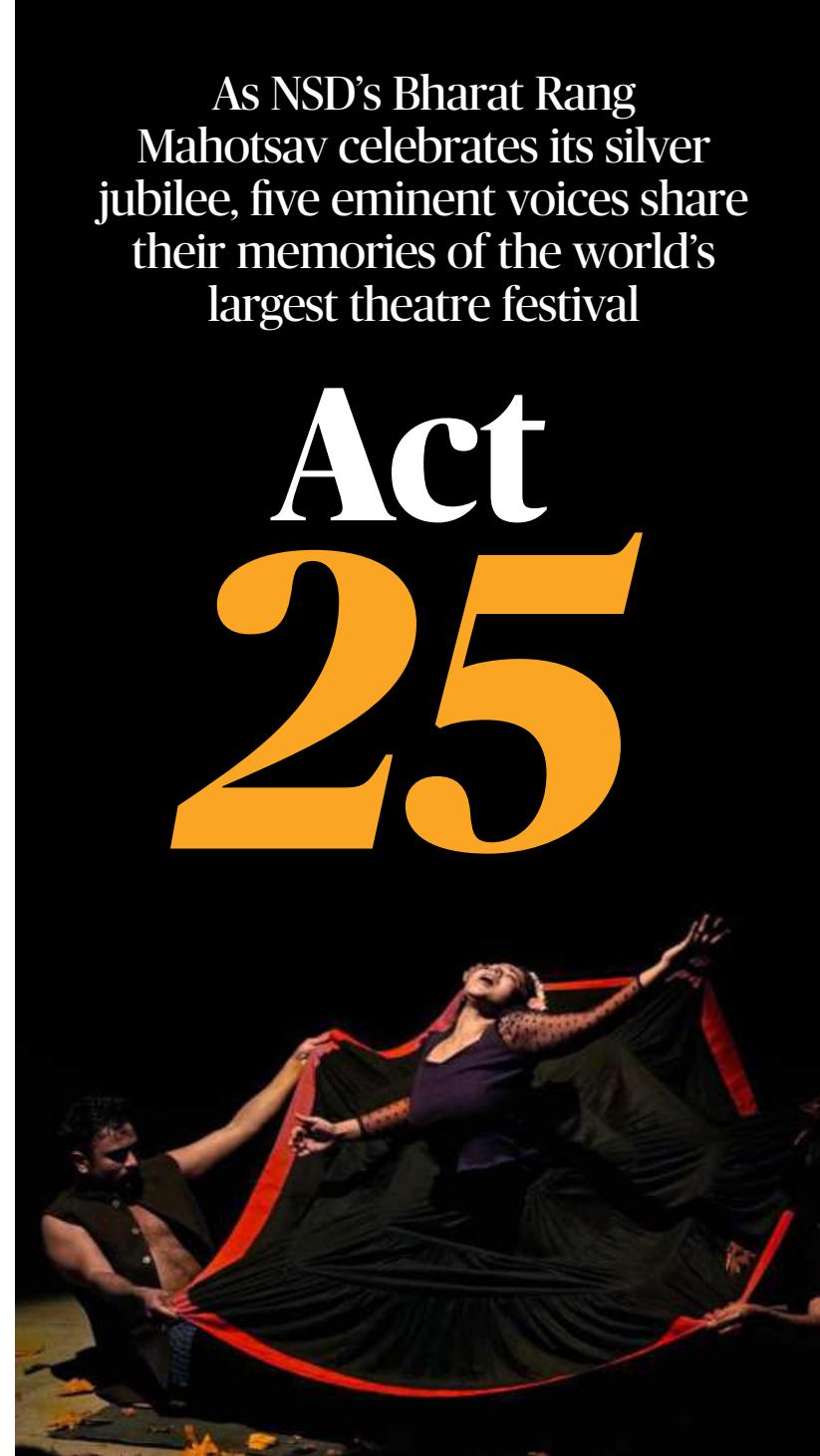
### Manto in Malayalam

Renowned theatre director Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry joins hands with Calicut University Little Theatre Group (CULT) to create *Tamasha*, an adaptation of Saadat Hasan Manto's four short stories in Malayalam. Neelam took the challenge of breaking the language barrier after senior theatre practitioner Abhilash Pillai of the School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut, nudged her. "It was a wonderful journey through signs, sounds and words. What I found amazing was the young actors' unusual energy, curiosity and capacity to take instructions."

Having picked *Bu, The Dog of*

As NSD's Bharat Rang Mahotsav celebrates its silver jubilee, five eminent voices share their memories of the world's largest theatre festival

Act  
25



*Tithwal, Hundred Watt Bulb and Paanch Din*, the veteran says some stories are so specific that they become universal. "Manto talks about human nature, sex, jealousy, power, survival instincts, all fundamental to the human experience."

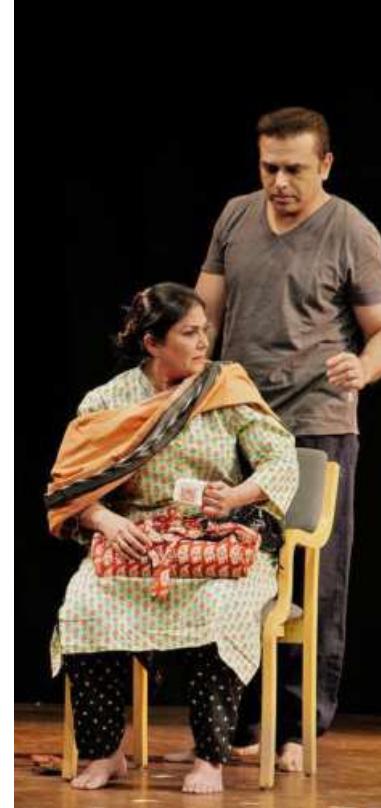
Neelam insists Manto never belonged to just Partition. "We can still see human chasms around us. As

an artiste, everything is my business. Gaza is my business."

She remembers the days when Bharangam was a space for risk-taking works and had a much stronger international profile. "Queues would, sometimes, start forming late at night. Even if they were hungry, people wanted to watch theatre. I don't see that madness anymore."

Having picked *Bu, The Dog of*

The stage is set (Clockwise from left) From *Tamasha* by Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry and CULT; Nadira Babbar's *Farida*; Lubna Salim and Harsh Chhaya in *Hum Safar*. PHOTOS COURTESY: NSD



### Revisiting Parsi theatre

Seasoned theatre practitioner Hema Singh is revisiting Parsi theatre with students of NSD to create a scene work of Agha Hashr Kashmiri's *Khwab-e-Hasti*. Over the years, Hema has envisioned the larger-than-life space of Parsi theatre with a contemporary lens and has imbued it with a feminine gaze by tweaking the

text. She sees Parsi theatre as a combination of "Sanskrit, folk and Victorian theatre." Agha Hashr drew from Shakespeare to create the complex emotional tapestry in his plays, and *Khwab-e-Hasti* carries the conscience of Macbeth.

From Rajpal Yadav, the festival ambassador this year, to Pankaj Tripathi, Hema has trained a generation of actors. She remembers the days when she would play a 16-year-old during the day and, as an ageing woman in the evening, rub shoulders with Zora Sehgal. "I miss that commitment and control over language and emotions in the young actors, but then every generation is different."

### Urban alienation

Salim Arif, a name for all seasons, brings *Hum Safar*, a sharp take on contemporary relationships and growing urban alienation among children of fractured homes.

Written by Javed Siddiqui and starring Lubna Salim and Harsh Chhaya, the play follows the repercussions of divorce on children. The NSD alumnus participated in the first Bharangam as a designer on Naseeruddin Shah's *Ismat Aapa Ke Naam* and, two years later, brought his ambitious production *Kharashein*, a collage of scars of communal riots, written by Gulzar. He recalls how sniffer dogs suddenly took the stage as former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral invited himself to watch the production.

### A Kashmir love story

Nadira Babbar, one of the doyennes of Indian theatre, returns to Bharangam with *Farida*, a contemporary love story set in Kashmir that she has written. Nadira says if falling in love was not easy for a woman yesterday, it is not easy today either. The play follows the poignant tale of Farida and Haider. Abandoned by her husband Sadia, she finds companionship in her brother-in-law Mahmuud. Life again takes a turn when Haider, a wounded soldier, gets besotted by Farida's resilience. As their bond deepens, Mahmuud becomes the third angle of the story. Nadira fondly remembers the generous applause that *Begum Jaan*, where she portrayed the title role of the legendary classical singer, received when it was staged in an earlier edition. Similarly, she recalls the excitement when *Dayashankar Ki Diary*, the first play she wrote, was staged. "It always provides a *lajawab* (excellent) experience. Since the festival attracts the best from across the country, the love and respect you get at the festival is gratifying."

### Critic's notes

Diwan Singh Bajeli, seasoned theatre critic and a constant presence in the selection committee, says Bharangam started during the tenure of NSD director Ram Gopal Bajaj, as a platform for the institute's students to express themselves. But, it has become a significant event in the international theatre calendar and provides a platform to voices from the remotest parts of the country.

"Theatre can't survive if it surrenders its anti-establishment tone," says Diwan Singh. "This space is shrinking but Bharangam is steadfast in not providing space to propaganda, obscenity, and communally coloured narratives."

While the festival promotes folk theatre, he says some folk traditions have not been given their due. Though its global footprint is spreading, and Diwan Singh talks highly of Polish productions, he spares a thought for the absence of plays from Pakistan and Bangladesh from the line up. He fondly remembers a Karachi production's contemporary adaptation of *Shakuntala*. "Cultural ties should endure," he muses.

### Achuthan T.K.

**E**rnest Hemingway's Nobel Prize-winning *The Old Man and the Sea* will soon get a Kathakali version. Shakespearean plays and, more recently, the Spanish classic *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, have been adapted into the art form, but this is possibly the first time a modern popular fiction is being given the Kathakali makeover.

Actor Kalamandalam Neeraj, who is directing and choreographing the play, says: "Kathakali is popular among sections of theatre lovers all over the world, but we would like to pitch it to a new audience interested in modern fiction. What we are trying to do is to translate the novel into the language of Kathakali. There won't be any compromises – the structure, costumes and dance movements called kalasams will strictly adhere to Kathakali syntax."

According to Peesappilly Rajeevan, a Kathakali actor, who plays the part of the Sea: "I believe one major difference between Indian and western theatre and dance is the aesthetic approach. Indian art forms give more importance to the face and the eyes whereas in the West, it's mostly



## Hooked on Hemingway

After Shakespearean plays and the Spanish classic *Don Quixote*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* will be adapted into Kathakali

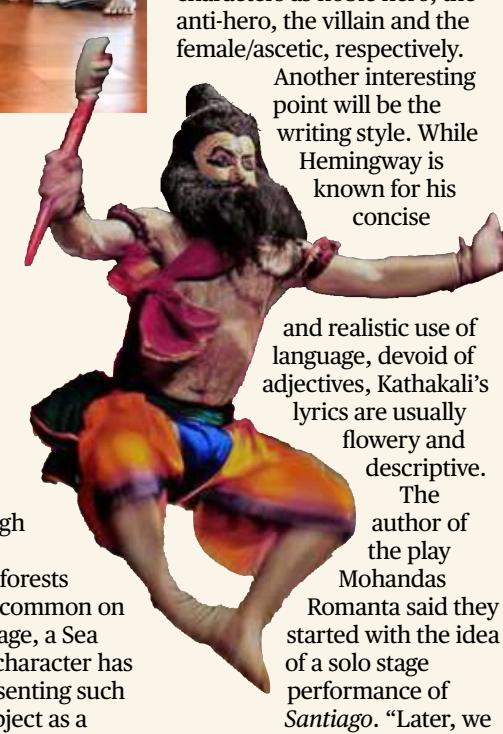
dialogues and physical body movements. We want to project the sathvik abhinaya aspect of Kathakali to a new younger international audience."

Neeraj also wants to challenge or examine the notion that Kathakali is a "perfect" art form and should not be meddled with.

"Kathakali emerged from elements of Kooyattam, Padayani, and the like, but it seems to be stuck in its so-called perfection. We want to explore how the abstract ideas of a modern literary work can be expressed through the idiom of a classical artform such as Kathakali," he explains.

"We see Kathakali as theatre and believe the viewer experience can be enhanced by using features unavailable when Kathakali was conceived of. Lighting, for example, has a lot of potential. We know how it enhances the experience in modern theatre, and want to explore that," adds Neeraj. However, there are

challenges that may need innovative solutions. Though descriptions of mountains and forests and oceans are common on the Kathakali stage, a Sea appearing as a character has no parallel. Presenting such an inanimate object as a



Novel adaptation (Left) The team rehearsing for the production. (Below) Mario Barzaghi as Parasurama in an earlier production. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

character will need imagination and deciding on a costume will need innovation. Because, in Kathakali, the costume and make up are dictated by the nature of the character – pacha, kathi, thadi and minukku classify characters as noble hero, the anti-hero, the villain and the female/ascetic, respectively.

Another interesting point will be the writing style. While Hemingway is known for his concise

and realistic use of language, devoid of adjectives, Kathakali's lyrics are usually flowery and descriptive.

The author of the play Mohandas Romanta said they started with the idea of a solo stage performance of Santiago. "Later, we

felt the whole play could fit into the technical or grammatical aspects of Kathakali. So, we added characters to establish the richness of the sea. We added four killer sharks too."

*The Old Man and the Sea* has just four major characters – Santiago the old man, the boy Manolin, the Sea and a giant marlin. While Mario Barzaghi from Italy will play Santiago, Peesappilly Rajeevan will play the Sea. Students from Kerala Kalamandalam will take up other supporting roles. Including vocals and percussion, the production may feature 20 artistes.

Mario, actor and director of Teatro dell' Albero in Milan, has learnt Kathakali from various gurus at the Kerala Kalamandalam and had his debut performance in 1985. Mario has worked in several projects aimed at fostering artistic dialogue between the East and the West.

Rajeevan is known for innovative interpretations even in the epic characters of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. He also dabbles in contemporary theatre. Neeraj, who is the choreographer, is a lecturer at Kerala Kalamandalam. His earlier production was *Koormapuram*, an adaptation of the fable of the rabbit and the hare.

Meera Sreenarayanan lent a unique touch to her recital with nuanced sancharis

## On an imaginative streak

**High on aesthetics**  
Meera Sreenarayanan  
PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI



V.V. Ramani

The understanding between the singer and the dancer, where both respond and resonate to each other's manodharma, results in a performance high on aesthetics. Meera Sreenarayanan's recital at The Music Academy's dance festival was one such.

From the first piece, the viruttam addressed to Ganesha and Hanuman, to the final thillana, Meera kept up the momentum through well-choreographed, graceful and sharp movements and finely nuanced expressions.

The Ramayana sambadham, composed by Jayakrishna Unni, brought out the essence of the epic through brief depictions of important segments. The absence of melodrama made it more enjoyable.

'Sardijakdhu', the beautiful Thanjavur Quartet Kalyani raga varnam composed by Sivanandam, speaks about the nayika pining for Rajagopalaswamy. Some of Meera's sancharis were captivating, particularly the churning of butter, where by gradually increasing the speed, the entire process was visualised in vivid detail. Be it the draping of the pitambara vastram on the idol, awakening from a dream state to witness the raas in all its splendour, and the grandeur of the temple gopurams,

the attention to detail was delightful. Her theermanams were precise.

'Kuniye kunu', an abhinaya piece based on a Malayalam Samvada Paatu, spoke about the interesting banter between Lakshmi and Parvathy, ridiculing each other's husbands. Finally, after their reconciliation, they return to their abodes in their vahanas. The piece was beautifully visualised.

Bijeesh Krishna's soulful vocal support enhanced the impact of the performance. Indira Kadambi (Meera's guru) conducted the recital with flourish, aided by Charudutt on the mridangam, Eswar Ramakrishnan on the violin and Ananthanarayanan on the veena.



Promising Shreya Murthy performing at Krishna Gana Sabha. PHOTO: S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

## Best foot forward

**Shreya Murthy's performance was backed by good choreography and music**

Manasa Vijaylakshme C

Shreya Murthy, a disciple of Priyadarshini Govind, recently performed for the Ilamai Thiramaai series at Krishna Gana Sabha mini hall.

The opening piece, Oothukadu Venkata Subbaiyer's 'Sri Vignarajam bhaje', raga Gambhirai Nattai, tala Khanda Chapu, was musically arranged by Rajkumar Bharathi.

The centerpiece of the evening's recital was the varnam 'Sumasayaka', a composition by Swati Tirunal. Shreya brought the sakhi to life, pleading with Lord Padmanabha to visit her friend, tormented by love. Through intricate expressions, she conveyed the sakhi's urgency, her friend's longing, and the intensity of unfulfilled desire. Set in raga Karnataka Kapi and tala Rupakam, the jathi was composed by senior mridangist G. Vijayaraghavan. The jathi portion stood out for its choreography, characterised by sharp hand movements.

The abhinaya piece, titled 'Hey heramba kimamba', depicted a playful conversation between Parvathi and her sons Ganesha and Muruga. Parvathi hears Ganesha sobbing. He complains that Muruga pulled his ears, prompting Parvathi to scold Muruga. Defending himself, Muruga accuses Ganesha of counting his eyes, to which Ganesha counters that Muruga measured his trunk. Amused by this quarrel, Parvathi laughs and lovingly resolves the dispute. Set in Ragamalika and Talamalika, the music was by Rajkumar Bharathi.

Shreya's abhinaya conveyed Parvathi's concern and Ganesha's and Muruga's innocence. Through precise nritta, she captured the playful quarrel.

In the padam 'Choodare', set in raga Sahana and Misra Chapu tala, Shreya highlighted the nayika's boldness, despite the societal judgment she faces.

The artiste concluded the evening's recital with a thillana by Lalgudi G Jayaraman, set in raga Desh and Adi tala.

The performance featured Krithika Aravind on vocals, Sivaprasad on the mridangam, Nandini Sai Giridhar on the violin and Shwetha Prachande on the nattuvangam.

All the pieces were choreographed by Priyadarshini Govind, Shreya's guru.

## How Kathak came about

Laxminarayan Jena revisited Kathak's history through carefully chosen pieces during his recital

V.V. Ramani

Kathak is often perceived by the uninitiated viewer as a combination of vibrant footwork and chakkars. A recent performance by Laxminarayan Jena for the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan's Natya Vizha threw light on the evolution of Kathak from its Kathavacha tradition to its present-day avatar. The lucid information on each item, shared with felicity by his guru Mysore Nagaraj, and the sincere presentation by the dancer made this performance interesting.

'Damaru hara kara baaje' an ode to Shiva, was a dynamic composition set in Dhrupad style in raag Gunakali. The powerful movements of Shiva were interspersed with brief depictions of two episodes – Shiva drinking poison and the emergence of the Panchabhootas. Laxminarayan's footwork was marked by clarity while the movements were energetic.

Next came the Bhav Paksh. 'Radha bhava anubhava' spoke

about Radha's emotional distress as she awaits Krishna's arrival and when he fails to understand her feelings. She says, "You will understand my feelings only when you become Radha". Krishna adorns himself in her garb, understands her feelings and goes in search of her. The dancer transitioned from man to woman with ease, and the use of a dupatta to communicate the role reversal was visualised beautifully.

Present-day Kathak performances take up a taal and explore its many nuances. Here, the dancer chose a Prabhandh – a well-knit, structured composition, giving no leeway for expansion, for the Nritya paksh segment. Revived by Maya Rao from the Shambhu Maharaj tradition, this Prabhandh was in raag Khamaj.

'Aaj jaane ki zid na kar', the soulful ghazal immortalised by Farida Khanum, was taken up to show how the dance style can accommodate diverse poetic expressions. Laxminarayan chose to portray the emotions of a couple in love but his visualisation did not capture the

beauty of the lyrics. Slower pace and intense expression would have helped.

Tarana in raag Jhinjhoti was marked by synchrony between footwork and tabla bols. And, guru Mysore Nagaraj shared a

Laxminarayan Jena threw light on the evolution of Kathak from Kathavacha tradition to its present avatar

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trivia about when Amir Khusro was asked to compose something similar to a Prabhandh, the Tarana was the result of a musical composition that emerged from a compilation of the names of Allah.

Laxminarayan Jena.

PHOTO: M. SRINATH

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# Setting the rhythm

Thakita Thath Jham explored diverse hues of laya in art and the universe



## Srividya

As part of the dance festival conducted by Brahma Gana Sabha at the Dakshinamurthy Auditorium, the students of Kripa's Centre for Fine Arts presented Thakita Thath Jham, a thematic presentation on layam, which took the audience through a journey into the joys of

rhythmic sounds found in every aspect of the universe.

The idea was conceived by Saikrupa Prasanna, and the research was by G. V. Guru Bharadwaj, who also helped give form to the concept. The music by Rajkumar Bharathi ensured that each musical composition aligned perfectly with the choreographer's vision. The lyrics were taken from the

Upanishads, Kuthanool and Pancha Marabu.

A series of six different categories of layam was depicted by way of elaborating the concept. Starting from the bountiful beauty of nature, Prakruthi Layam portrayed the seasons, rivers, the joyous sounds of rain, the frightening sounds of thunder, and more.

The simple mechanical sounds

that humans make in their everyday life was shown in Nitya Jeevan Layam... the intrinsic rhythm created by supposedly mundane movements such as threshing grains, cutting a log with a manual saw, and washing clothes were shown with creativity.

Since time immemorial, humans have exhibited a deep sense of layam through their folk art forms.

**Synchrony and sound** Students of Kripa's Centre for Fine Arts.  
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

With their vibrant costumes, rhythmic movements and the use of traditional musical instruments, folk dancers play a significant role in preserving and celebrating a country's diverse cultural heritage. Thevarattam from Tamil Nadu and another tribal dance were performed to depict Loka Kala Layam.

Using the same tala, various permutations that emanate from several percussion instruments brought out the inherent harmony within each one of them in Sthara Layam.

To sustain the onlooker's attention and break the monotony of abstraction, a humorous interpretation of the sounds in human relationships Bandava Layam was presented.

In conclusion, rasikas were taken into the workings of the various dimensions of the mind in Mano Layam. This was portrayed through a Ragam, Tanam, Pallavi in the powerful Hindolam.

Ragam, which implies colour, was depicted through the flowing and graceful movements of drapes. Metaphors to showcase the mind – flowers, monkeys and bees – were portrayed in the tanam. The pallavi was shown through a vibrant morah korvai. The beautiful lyrics by Rajkumar Bharathi 'Manam alaindu' said it evocatively.

The costumes were simple and effective. The basic colour dominant throughout the presentation was black and gold tempered with green, red, orange, pink and blue – this enabled the artistes to showcase changing emotions well.

# Of bhakti and bhava

Manasa Sriram's engaging portrayal



PHOTO: S.RAGHUNATHAN

**Manasa Vijayalakshme C**

Manasa Sriram, a disciple of Mahalakshmi Ashwin, began her recital at Krishna Gana Sabha's Pongal Dance Festival 2025 with the invocatory hymn from the Thirumanthiram, 'Ainthu karathanai', in praise of Ganesh. She then moved to a Ganesh alarippu set to Tirsa Nadai Adi tala, showcasing the essence of Bharatanatyam's rhythmic foundation. Her movements were crisp and sharp. Following this, she performed a jatiswaram in raga Rasikapriya (Adi tala), a composition by Lalgudi Jayaraman.

For the varnam, Manasa chose 'Swamiyai azhaithu vadi' by the Thanjavur Quartet in raga Khamas. In the pallavi, the nayika takes along her friend to witness the procession of Sundareswarar during the Chithirai vizha.

Manasa captured the anticipation of the nayika moving through the procession, even as the sakhi questions her if the lord in the procession is the one from the pancha sabhas. The sanchari portrayed the heroine's longing and devotion. Manasa chose a unique keerthanai, a visual exposition of the Dasa Mahavidya of Durga. In 'Sri jagadeeswari', composed by Lalgudi Jayaraman in raga Aahir Bhairav, the dancer showcased fierce emotions, and the transition from intense passion to serenity was seamless. The red-and-orange-hued lighting enhanced the performance's appeal.

Manasa concluded her recital with 'Gangai', a mangalam. The orchestra featured Mahalakshmi Ashwin on the nattuvangam, Nagai P. Sriram (who also composed the jathis) on the mridangam, Srikanth Gopalakrishnan on the vocals, Anantha Krishnan on the violin and Sruthi Sagar on the flute.

# A personal quest

Adithya's recital saw him relate to the gods in his own way

## Rupa Srikanth

**A**dithya PV is a well-honed Bharatanatyam dancer, who has studied under Latha Edavalath and Sandhya and Kiran. He also takes guidance from veteran dancer Sudharani Raghupathy. He is artistic director, Upadhye School of Dance. Adithya has clear lines, great agility and a precise style to his adavus. There is also a notable subtlety in his abhinaya.

In the opening salutation during his performance at The

Music Academy dance festival, Adithya cautions Ganesha to not eat too much. In 'Siddhi vinayakam' (Mohana Kalyani, Adi, Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavtar) and other offerings, he related to the gods on a personal note, as he beseeched Ganesha to take care of him.

Adithya had the support of a strong orchestra, with Srikanth Gopalakrishnan's melodious vocals, Anjani Srinivasan's participative veena and Parshwanath Upadhye's nattuvangam along with Mahesh Swami's flute and Harsha Samaga's mridangam.



**Impressive** Adithya PV.  
PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

Adithya continued with 'Saamini ramanave sakhiyaro' in an enjoyable Khamas, Adi by the Thanjavur Quartet's Ponniyah Pillai. It is a poem of bhakti-sringara, admiration, viraha and longing towards Brihadeeswara, in which the nayika tells her sakhi about her feelings. There was no exaggeration, just good abhinaya.

Adithya was in control in the nritta portions as well – perfect timing, good araimandi and kudichi mettu adavus, but was let down by the azhutham. It got better in the second half, the stamping and the well-anchored steps. Finally the sakhi sets out, with the nayika observing her every step.

In Gopalakrishna Bharathi's 'Nandanar Charitham', the underprivileged devotee is not able to see Shiva in Thirupungur. He cries when he sees Nandhi blocking his path of vision, 'Vazhi maraithirukkude'. Moved, the lord asks Nandhi to move in 'Satre vilagi' (Purvikalyani, Rupakam). The conversation between Shiva and the sulking bull was captured effectively; the rest could have had more depth.

Adithya finished with a Pahadi thillana (Misra Chapu, Lalgudi Jayaraman) in which the attentive rhythm-keepers kept up with the change in pace, showcasing the dancer's timing and agility. The footwork was good, the music superlative. Everything came together well as Adithya's last jump into a muzhu mandi gave him a picture-perfect finish.

# A slice of Benaras

Vishal Krishna conveyed the flavour of the gharana



## Rupa Srikanth

In the opening Ananda Tandav (Bairagi, teentaal, Tulsidas), Vishal as Shiva had a delicately shaking palm, depicting the shifting snake around the neck. Grace in the wrists is important, but it felt like the elegance went right up to his fingertips.

The footwork was also subtle and minutely accurate, the sounds primarily coming from the

movement of the heels. From afar, one could think he was not doing any tatkar. He is also not accustomed to doing it in front of the mike, and the sound is sometimes lost at the back of the stage. With the mike, the perfect timing is apparent. The chakkars – with one leg lift as he turns around – were there for all to see.

In the 16-beat Teentaal in vilambit and drut lay, Vishal performed in slow and fast speeds, including that in vilambita and tihais in different

matras. The repetitive lehra in a haunting Yaman was poetic. There was ghat bhav, where the dancer mimics people and animals with minimal gestures, but this was shown more elaborately in the subsequent drut lay paramparik Kathak, which presented different walks and gat nikas in Teentaal.

We do not see this much nowadays – a shy woman with a ghoonghat, Krishna, Radha and the peacock in gat bhav without lyrics, showing the lighting, drops of water and the peacock opening its plumes, all flowing so beautifully with the lehra and the movement. This subtlety is the essence of Kathak.

The abhinay piece 'Bhoogat shyam kaun tu gori' (Surdas) was a delightful shringer piece when Krishna and Radha first see each other by the Yamuna. Composed by Pt. Mukul Shivputra and Pt. Madhup Mudgal in Misra Pilu and visualised by Madhavi Mudgal, it captured the delicacy of the moment and the quiet promise of their relationship. Vishal shone in it.

Interestingly, Vishal danced on a brass plate – subtly emphasising the sharp tap to the softer beat. This was an addition to the Benares repertoire by his grand-aunt Alakananda Devi.

Recorded music, especially for an interactive dance form such as Kathak, is not a great idea. But the music here was of such high order, it did not matter.

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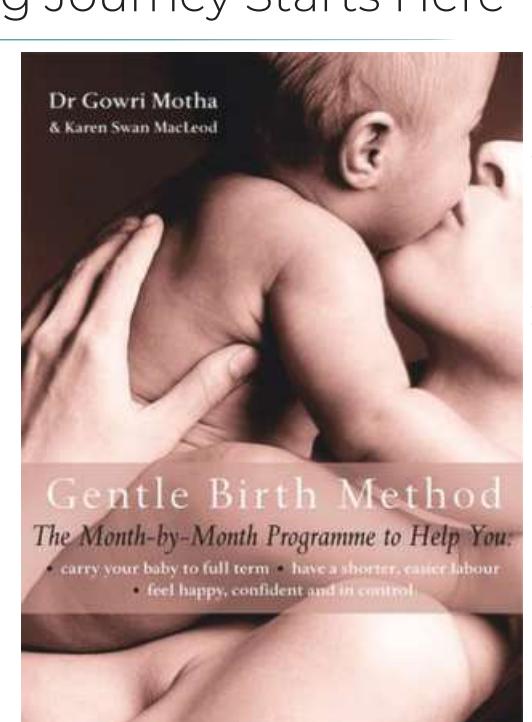
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