

# **Indian Ensemble**

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**Annual Round-up**

**The year that was 2018**

## Indian Ensemble

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As we enter 2019, we take immense pleasure in sharing with you the creative journeys we made in 2018 and our plans for their continuation in the New Year.

Firstly, we made the transition from a partnership company to a Trust. Secondly, in another transition, the founders - Abhishek Majumdar and Sandeep Shikhar - stepped down to hand over the Artistic Director-ship to Chanakya Vyas, previously the Associate Artistic director for three years.

These were huge steps, and integral to our long term goal of the organisation becoming more goal-centric than people-centric; of the organisation being a caretaker of the principles of excellence and empathy in the journey towards possibly different, but still quality theatre.



## A SUMMARY OF 2018

### PERFORMANCES

- *Muktidham*, after a long hiatus, had an exciting tour of Uttar Pradesh in February. We journeyed across six cities - Bareilly, Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Delhi and Agra - taking the play to its roots. This was in addition to Festival shows in Pune, Goa and Bareilly earlier. The response in U.P. was overwhelming; it was an unforgettable experience to watch an audience engage with the issues. Their taking of sides in the debate the play evokes was visceral yet cultured; firm yet understanding; grounded yet aware. It was a tick off of our bucket list, and only served to cement our aim to take our theatre to the non-metros, something we tend to forget, being urban-dwellers. The tour (and the play itself) was supported by [India Foundation for the Arts](#), under its Arts Practice Programme. There will be a closing run of the play in Bangalore under the banner of Bhasha Centre.
- *Gasha* completed its final run of shows at Prithvi Theatre in March.
- *Kaumudi* will continue to run and have further shows in 2019 under the banner of Bhasha Centre.
- *Algorithms*, our new play written and directed by Chanakya Vyas premiered in October at Ranga Shankara. The play completed three shows in the first run and will now travel to different cities and towns in 2019.
- Indian Ensemble was also invited to the Indian Institute of Human Settlements on 22nd October, 2018 & to 'Interlude' - a festival on the theme of Privacy by Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Tech on 13th Dec, 2018, for a dramatized reading of sections of the play *Algorithms* followed by a conversation with Padmini Ray Murray and Aditi Surie. More details can be found [here](#).

Click [here](#) to check out the showreel of the play.  
And [here](#) to check out the photos from the play.

Photographs by Richa Bhavanam  
Showreel video created by Sudharshan Krishna and Sundareswaran S

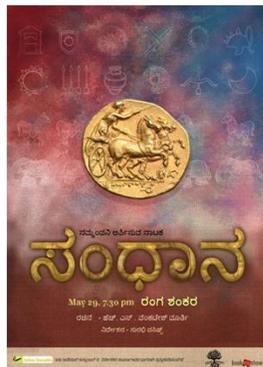
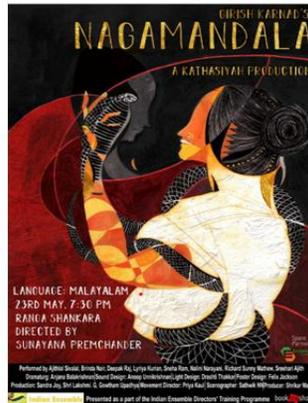
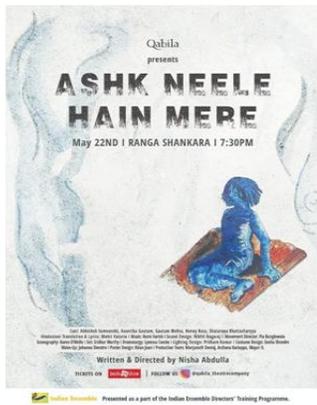
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## TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Our year-long Directors' Training Programme drew to a close. Starting in June 2017, seven Directors-in-Training were taken through classes on the principles of direction, art history and scenography with assignments and showcased three productions where they could apply their learnings. Field trips to Bhim Bhetka, Ajanta-Ellora, Hampi, the Ninasam Culture Course, the International Theatre Festival of Kerala and the Ranga Shankara Arts Appreciation Course gave them access to more history, insights, people and ideas.

Guest lectures on stage and lighting design, creative processes, working with actors, puppetry and company making and ethics rounded off the final term and they presented their end-of-year productions at Ranga Shankara from **May 22 to June 1**. To know more about the programme in detail, click [here](#)

### Posters of their final-term plays:



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## OUTREACH

*Exploring Exciting Texts*, our reading programme, continues to go from strength to strength. We have found an ideal venue partner in the [British Council](#) and every month sees interested faces - newcomers and old-timers - gather to read, explore and share. In December 2018, we completed our 15th edition and we have no intention of stopping anytime soon.

Over the year, we saw a diverse set of speakers who presented their readings and thoughts on varied topics which always led to stimulating discussions, often much longer than the readings themselves. Huge thanks to all the actors, readers and our audiences who have embraced and supported this program by engaging with it.

Below are the details of the reading-discussions in 2018.

January: **Chanakya Vyas** directed a reading of Satish Alekar's *Begum Barve*.

February: **Aruna Ganesh Ram** directed a reading of Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information*.

March: **M.D. Pallavi** and **Bindhumalini** presented their new work titled *Threshold* which looks at the musical journey of texts ranging across time, cultures and geographies exploring the question of gender from birth to liberation. This was presented in support collaboration with the British Council, as part of their [International Women's Day](#) celebration.

April: **Anuja Ghosalkar** brought *Drama Queen's Reading Room*, a dramatic reading of letters collected by Anuja Ghosalkar, from the various *Reading Rooms* hosted across India.

May: **Chanakya Vyas** directed a Hindi translation of Chinu Modi's play *Swapna Duswapna* followed by texts collated from writings of Carl Jung, Susanne K. Langer and Sigmund Freud.

June: **Mayura Baweja** directed a reading of Mahashweta Devi's *Bayen* along with excerpts from Deepika Arwind's *The Playwright is Dead*, followed by a discussion on the dearth of women playwrights in India.

July: **Spatika Ramanujam** and **Daya Sakrepatna** directed a reading of excerpts from *The Lesbian Pillow Book* accompanied by a short performance of the play *Shiva*, directed by Daya Sakrepatna. This was followed by a discussion looking at lesbian identity from inside out.

August: **Sathwik N.N.** directed a reading of excerpts from Devanur Mahadev's *Edege Bidda Akshara* and *Riddles in Hinduism* by B.R. Ambedkar followed by a discussion on the role that caste plays in the day-to-day understanding of our social fabric and how it manifests in different forms of social, political and cultural control. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Hulikunte Murthy.

September: **Prof. Sundar Sarukkai** presented a talk on the nature of philosophy using a section of Nagarjuna's *Mūlamādhymakakārikā*.

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October/November: **Kafeel Jafri** performed *Dastangoi*. He narrated the *dastaan* of Amar Aiyar fighting the Villain, Afraasiyab, who keeps sending his magicians to capture and kill Hamza. But Amar being a trickster, succeeds in defeating them one after the other. Every *daastan* is a narration of one or more of these confrontations and vivid descriptions of the place, characters and events.

December: **Prof. Rashmi Devi Sawhney, Aditya Sondhi and Sultana Zena** lead a session on how censorship plays out across different media, regions, historical periods and legal regimes, drawing upon texts ranging from film clips, play scripts, lists of cuts demanded by CBFC, public accounts of protagonists to excerpts from court judgements and legal Acts.

### Upcoming:

January 19<sup>th</sup>: **Anjuman- a Hindi-Urdu literary club** will explore the theme of *Politics of Hindi as a National Language* using texts ranging from various sources in literature, films, archives, interviews etc.

February 16<sup>th</sup>: A lec-dem on understanding translation from vernacular to vernacular and from vernacular to English. More details soon.



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## PROJECTS, AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Indian Ensemble regulars who worked on interesting projects and were recognised for their contribution to theatre in 2018:

- Abhishek Majumdar won the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards for Best Original Script for *Muktidham*.
- Kumud Mishra won the Best Supporting Actor (Male) for *Muktidham*.
- Vivek Madan was the Festival Director for the [Ranga Shankara Theatre Festival 2018](#), on the theme of 'dissent' and 'censorship'.
- *Pah La*, a play written by Abhishek Majumdar and commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre will premiere in April 2019 at the Royal Court, London.
- Abhishek Majumdar also conducted a master class at the Lincoln Centre Directors Lab
- Abhishek Majumdar received two new writing commissions - one from the National Theatre, London to develop a new play titled *Baatin*; the other, to develop a site specific performance text for the International Dramaturgy Festival in Buenos Aires.
- As part of the [Naya/Nove](#), the first Indian Playwrights' Festival held as part of *Specific 2018* organised by Feste Theatre, Prague, three plays were shortlisted to be translated to Czech followed by a public reading in Feb 2019. Abhishek Majumdar's *Dialectical Materialism and Other Extinct Animals* and Chanakya Vyas' *Algorithms* are two of the plays in the final list. The festival is curated by Jiří Honzík & Amitesh Grover (with Sarah Mariam & Kristýna Břečková).
- Pallavi Arun adapted and directed Arthur Miller's *Crucible* for the Rangayana Repertory, Dharwad and composed music for *Tathagat*, a street play written and directed by Abhishek Majumdar with Jana Natya Manch, New Delhi.

## PRESS

- *Muktidham* reviewed at the [META festival](#) – Blog & in the [Scroll](#) by Malini Nair.
- [Death by a Thousand Rides](#): A story on *Algorithms* in the Economic Times Prime by Manu Toms.

## INDIAN ENSEMBLE ALUMNI

Every year, Indian Ensemble plays a key role in the furthering of careers of young theatre practitioners through its Directors' and Playwrights' training programmes. We are proud to share their journeys and pleased to report their successes here.

- **Karen D'Mello** received the Charles Wallace India Trust Award to study MA in Performance Making at Goldsmiths University, London.
- **Sathwik NN** received the Inlaks Theatre Award to study MA in Dramaturgy & Writing for Performance at Goldsmiths University, London.
- **Tanvi Shah** received a scholarship from Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to study MA in Classical and Contemporary Texts (Directing).

## **WHAT'S COMING IN 2019**

We are gearing up this year with more exciting collaborations and thought provoking performances:

- *Algorithms* will travel to Mumbai, Kolkata and will have another longer run of shows in the latter half of 2019.
- Our new training program is scheduled to commence in May 2019 - modelled on the idea of a research and idea development lab for performance makers. The Call for Applications will be announced in late January, so stay tuned.
- Our outreach program *Exploring Exciting Texts* will continue with a fresh approach, while maintaining its imperative for the furthering of discourse and discussion.
- We are in the process of working on our new performance piece revolving around the theme of '*Urban Commons*'. Work on this will commence by September and we plan to premiere it in Oct/Nov. More details to follow soon!

## **HOW YOU CAN BE INVOLVED**

Indian Ensemble works as a cooperative of artists and scholars from around the country and abroad, and everyone receives an equal share of the earnings from our shows. Our training programs are imparted absolutely free of cost.

In order to continue the work we do in training and performance, we are looking for patrons, organizations and individual contributions which will enable us to grow, create and make the right impact through our work.

At this point, we would like to extend our thanks to our patrons last year: Arun Ramakrishnan, Bharat Krishna, Meghana Mundkur, Lakshmi Huttada, Rajiv Prakash, Ravi Bhat, Shyamala Raman and Suresh Venkat. Thank you. Our work simply would not have been possible without you.

If you would like to support us or just know more about our programs and our processes or even just say hello, please free to write to us at [indianensemble@gmail.com](mailto:indianensemble@gmail.com).

**\*Indian Ensemble is registered as a Trust.**

Signing off with good wishes for a fantastic 2019 to all! See you in the theatre!

VISIT: [OUR WEBSITE](#)  
[OUR FACEBOOK PAGE](#)