

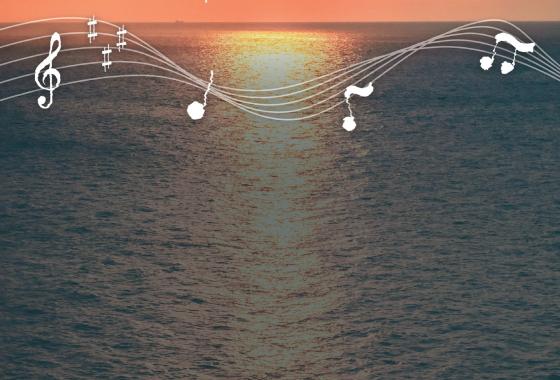
Kalaa Utsavam Indian Festival of Arts

An Esplanade Co-Production

SAMUDRA An Ocean of Musical Traditions

by SwaRhythm Singapore, featuring multi-ethnic musicians
Conducted by Dedric Wong

21 Nov 2025, Fri, 7.30pm Esplanade Concert Hall



esplanade

About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It hosts a year-round line-up of about 4,000 live performances and activities presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are free for all to enjoy.

Esplanade also brings the arts virtually to audiences in Singapore and beyond, through its diverse range of digital programmes on *Esplanade Offstage*, an all-access backstage pass to the performing arts and guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, with videos, podcasts, articles, quizzes and resources.

The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. TECL received the Charity Governance Award – Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016 and 2022, the Charity Transparency Award from 2016 – 2023, and the Charity Transparency Dedication Award in 2024. Esplanade is Singapore's first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a certified Dementia Go-To Point, as well as a guide/assistance dog friendly centre.

TECL receives funding support from Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

Visit Esplanade.com for more information.

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FESTIVAL PRODUCER'S MESSAGE

Each November, Kalaa Utsavam – Indian Festival of Arts by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay brings together artists and audiences in a spirit of celebration, discovery, and connection. As we enter the 24th edition of the festival, from 21 – 30 Nov 2025, we are reminded of its role as a home for Indian arts in Singapore. It is a space where tradition meets innovation, where stories are shared, and where communities come together.

Guided by four key objectives—to celebrate the excellence of Indian arts and culture, present a festival that balances excitement with artistic merit, foster a stronger youth presence, and develop the next generation of Singapore artists—*Kalaa Utsavam* continues to honour its roots while embracing the future. This year's festival reflects these ideals through a vibrant mix of tradition, innovation, and cross-cultural collaboration.

The festival continues to champion new creations by Singapore artists, with six new works in the line-up this year, including four Esplanade coproductions and one Esplanade commission. *Mission Malligapoo* by inventive theatre-makers **AGAMTheatre Lab** is a playful and heartwarming production, while dynamic music group **SwaRhythm** brings *Samudra*, a captivating new production inspired by the ebb and flow of the ocean. In a bold meeting of genres, trailblazing metal band **RUDRA** joins forces with the refined musicianship of **Resound Collective** for an unforgettable orchestral experience. Acclaimed Singapore poet **Pooja Nansi** explores love and belonging in the lyrical *We Make Spaces Divine ft. Dey*, and the powerful *Shikhandi* by **SIFAS Productions Ltd** blends the grace of kathak with the dynamism of bharatanatyam. The genre-bending local Latin jazz fusion band **Project RA** teams up with virtuoso vocalist **Varijashree Venugopal** to weave intricate Carnatic melodies with vibrant jazz improvisation in a performance bursting with rhythmic vitality and soulful depth.

From further afield, legendary poet and lyricist **Javed Akhtar** is set to enchant with *Main Koi Aisa Geet Gaoon*, an intimate evening of words and melodies, while beloved stand-up star **Zakir Khan** returns to Singapore with his trademark warmth, wit, and relatable humour.

Also not to be missed are the visually arresting Kintsugi by Canada's renowned **Sampradaya Dance Creations**, multi-instrumentalist **Soumik Datta's** poignant, music-driven reflection on memory and Alzheimer's

disease, *Mone Rekho*, and Malaysian hip-hop powerhouse **Rabbit Mac's** high-energy showcase with his friends. Families can delight in the charming *Circle of Life* by **Ranga Shankara's AHA! Theatre for Children**, specially created for children as young as five.

Throughout the festival, we are also delighted to offer many free programmes at Esplanade's public spaces, where audiences can enjoy live music, dance and storytelling. These free programmes not only make the arts more accessible but also allow families, friends, and curious passersby to come together and experience the joy of *Kalaa Utsavam* together.

We express our heartfelt thanks to our Principal Sponsor, **Malabar Gold & Diamonds**, and Supporting Sponsor, **High Commission of India**, for their support of *Kalaa Utsavam* 2025.

For over two decades, *Kalaa Utsavam* has been a space for connection, creativity, and cultural celebration. We invite you to join us once again to discover, to be inspired, and to celebrate the evolving spirit of Indian arts in Singapore.

V M Sai Akileshwar

Producer

The Esplanade Co Ltd







ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/LEAD COMPOSER'S MESSAGE

As a recipient of the NAC Young Artist Award (2011), I am deeply honoured and grateful to contribute to Singapore's vibrant arts landscape in this milestone year. Being part of this double celebration of Singapore's SG60 and SwaRhythm's 10th anniversary holds special meaning to me.

Over the past 25 years of my musical journey, I have had the privilege of collaborating with Singapore's diverse community of multicultural artists and ensembles, performing across the world, from China, Japan, and Korea to the USA and Australia. This year, I wanted to create something truly special: a musical tribute that mirrors Singapore's spirit—resilient, fluid, and ever-evolving, like water.

Samudra – An Ocean of Musical Traditions draws inspiration from the timeless wisdom of water, its adaptability, persistence, and grace. Just as water flows around obstacles and sustains life, music too unites and renews us from within. This production brings together three composers from different ethnic traditions—conducted by Dedric Wong—featuring an orchestra of Indian, Chinese, Malay, Western, and water percussion musicians, like a living ocean of sound and culture.

Samudra is our heartfelt offering to Singapore, a reflection of harmony, diversity, and the unending flow of creativity that binds us all.

Nawaz Mirajkar





CO-COMPOSER'S MESSAGE

Like waves that shimmer under the sun or turn grey during a thunderstorm, producing *Samudra* has been both exhilarating and challenging.

Watching an idea take shape and transform into a beautiful soundscape, and feeling the ensemble's passion, dedication and camaraderie deepen with every rehearsal, have been immensely gratifying experiences.

Even with the everyday challenges—such as gathering 15, and later 30 people in the same space at the same time—this journey has been deeply fulfilling. To be working alongside these artists from all walks of life and ethnicities, each bringing their own heritage and spirit, feels like sailing across the vast ocean of life itself, bound by a shared love for music.

To quote Barack Obama, "When we extend a hand across oceans, we discover that the same human spirit beats in every heart and when we decide that the boundaries that divide will never be stronger than the humanity that unites us, we open the door to a better world."

Renu Suresh





REPERTOIRE LIST

Pravaha

Tales of Yamuna



River Ragas

Jal Katha Composer: Avik Chari

Malhar Varshini

Bisikan Samudera Composer: Syafiqah 'Adha Sallehin

> Sky, Silk, and Sea Composer: Gu Wei

> > Confluence

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)



REPERTOIRE NOTES



Pravaha

Set in Raga Megh, *Pravaha* traces the birth of water as it emerges from the depths of the mountains and gathers life in its descent. Melodies ripple like currents, carrying the vitality of mountain springs as momentum gathers and the stream becomes the river, moving with purpose. *Pravaha* is the sound of water becoming—movement born in the mountains, journeying steadily toward the vast ocean.

Tales of Yamuna

Tales of Yamuna weaves a tapestry of longing, union, and transcendence. Beneath the moonlit sky, Yamuna flows in silent witness to Radha and Krishna's celestial romance. As Radha pines for her beloved, her love ripples through the river's depths, tender and unspoken. In the unfolding of rasleela (dance of divine love), their love moves beyond form, dissolving into timeless devotion.

River Ragas

River Ragas is a confluence of five *ragas* (melodic scales) and five sacred rivers, each with their distinct rhythmic structure.



Yamunā (Yamuna Kalyani): luminous and devotional, like a gentle current of longing and love.

Sindhu (Sindhu Bhairavi): vast and resonant, timeless and commanding, her melody echoes the wisdom of empires.

Kaveri (*Saveri* and *Kaapi*): surges with emotion, turbulent yet tender. *Saraswathy* (*Saraswathy*): flows in sacred silence, singing of truth and inward light.

Gangā (Gangeshwari): descends with majesty, her raga purifies and elevates the spirit.

Jal Katha

Jal Katha (Water Stories) is a collection of short musical tales inspired by folk traditions from South and Southeast Asia, reimagined through the lens of contemporary and video-game music. Though entirely instrumental, the piece carries a narrative thread, flowing between cultural worlds as rivers flow across borders, shifting yet continuous. Each segment of the piece reflects how shared traditions evolve and intermingle over time, uniting diverse voices into one ever-changing current.



Malhar Varshini

Malhar Varshini traces the contrasting moods of the monsoon, from tender rains that awaken the earth, to bursts of thunder and lightning that command the sky. Drawing on Raga Miaki ki Malhar for soft showers and Raga Amrithavarshini for intense storms, Malhar Varshini captures the dual nature of rain—gentle and untamed, nurturing and wild—converging in a musical portrait of its dance between grace and power.

Bisikan Samudera

Bisikan Samudera (Whispers of the Sea) is a sonic remembrance of the Orang Laut, seafaring nomads whose lives were once deeply connected to the tides of the Malay Archipelago. Navigators, traders, and keepers of maritime wisdom, these sentinels of the sea were entwined with the ocean's rhythms. Through waves of melody, the orchestra evokes their memory and reimagines their lost voices—echoes of resilience and displacement that drift through the postcolonial currents of a changing region.

Sky, Silk, and Sea

Sky, Silk, and Sea traces the life of a river from its sacred beginnings to its union with the world. Inspired by the Silk Road, the work reflects how waterways carried not only trade but also stories and traditions across civilisations. As the river journeys from mountains through settlements to bustling coastal ports of South-East Asia, it becomes both lifeblood and memory, a living thread that unites land, people, and spirit.

Confluence

Confluence pays tribute to the meeting of the world's great rivers and seas, a musical reflection on unity beyond borders. It celebrates how diverse waters, like humanity itself, merge and flow together regardless of language or origin. The work expresses a timeless truth: though our traditions may differ, we are all part of a shared ocean of humanity.



ABOUT SWARHYTHM



Founded by Nawaz Mirajkar in Singapore, SwaRhythm is a distinguished Indian classical music ensemble that unites accomplished local musicians to explore the intricacies of Indian classical rhythms. The ensemble is noted for innovative collaborations that seamlessly blend Indian musical elements with Malay, Chinese, and Spanish influences.

SwaRhythm has performed at numerous prestigious festivals, concert halls, and cultural events, both locally and internationally. In 2024, the ensemble received recognition from Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Singapore Chinese Orchestra's fundraising concert. Its work has also been covered by prominent media outlets across Singapore and India.

Supported by the National Arts Council and various cultural institutions, SwaRhythm remains committed to artistic innovation while preserving tradition. Over the past decade, it has presented several critically acclaimed productions, including *Dhamaru* (2009), *Taal Express* (2006, 2013), and *Bhumi Pranaam* (2021).



ARTISTIC TEAM

Artistic Direction, Concept and Lead Composer: Nawaz Mirajkar

Co-Composer: Renu Suresh

Guest Composers: Avik Chari, Gu Wei and

Syafiqah 'Adha Bte Md Sallehin **Guest Conductor**: Dedric Wong

PERFORMERS

Principal Ensemble

Anand Viswanathan Indian Violin
Ashwin Seetharaman Digital Keyboard
Kumar Karthigesu Sitar

Kumar Karthigesu Sitar Madhavan K. Veena

Mahesh Parameshwaran Mridangam and other Percussions

Nawaz Mirajkar Tabla
Nirdesh Raja Bharadwaj Male Vocal
Niranjan Rao Male Vocal
Renu Suresh Piano

Sachin Anant Bhide Tabla, Pakhwaj Sandhya Ramachandran Female Vocal Sanjay Chakrabarthy Sarod

Foo Sek Sheng Water Percussionist and Soundscape

Shantanu Bharat Modak
Stephanie Stacey Khoo
Sunil Avachat
Sveta Kilpady
Digital Keyboard
Sand Artist
Bansuri
Female Vocal

Uma Gowri Ramanathan Veena







Malay Ensemble

Azrin Bin Abdullah Oud
Fadly Mardina Flute
Syafiqah 'Adha Sallehin Accordion

Chinese Ensemble

Chan Hong Wei Erhu
Soh Swee Kiat Sheng
Tan Jie Qing Yangqin
Wong Wai Kit Ruan

Western Ensemble

Chee Jun Hong
Lee Jit Seng
Western Drums
Ng Wei Ping
Violin
Saran Charoennit
Thantakorn Lakanasirorat
Zhou Christina Xinxue

Voulle Bass
Violin
Violin



TECHNICAL TEAM

Sound Engineer: Steven Cheong

Production Manager: Athena Roxanne Tan (The Presenting Company)

Stage Manager: Lim Ying Xuan (The Presenting Company) **Assistant Stage Manager**: Sarah Ng (The Presenting Company)



- Record Collector

ACROSS THE OCEANS TOUR 2026

OBA

WITH TARO UMEBAYASHI AND MUSICIANS

22 FEB 2026, SUN, 5PM **ESPLANADE THEATRE**

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(2hrs, including 20min intermission)

FROM \$50*

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2, 9, 16 & 23 Nov, Sun 1.30pm – 3pm or 3.15pm – 4.45pm \$23 per pair (max. 4 pairs per session)



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22 & 23 Nov, Sat & Sun 1pm - 2pm \$20 per parentchild(ren) group

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15 & 16 Nov, Sat & Sun 10am – 11.15am \$35 per pair Grandeur voucher PIP's PLAYbox

Give thanks, share joy!

Pen your thank you notes on our virtual or physical Gratitude Tree from 1 Nov - 31 Dec 2025! Tag us on IG @esplanadesingapore and #WonderHere to stand a chance to win some special gifts from us!



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to our Esplanade partner, arts benefactor, donors and sponsors for believing in our vision to be a performing arts centre for everyone. They made all these possible!^



4.3K

activities took place at Esplanade.



70% Free



30% Paid



people attended our live and online activities.



93% of surveyed audiences were satisfied

with their Esplanade experience.

66%

reported a positive impact on quality of life and wellbeing.

*Figures for Esplanade's activities from Apr 2024 to Mar 2025.



believe that everyone should be able to experience the joy of the arts, including children, youth, seniors, migrant workers and individuals with special needs. Our community engagement activities bring the arts to those in need.



Your contribution* will make a difference.

On behalf of the communities we serve, thank you! Find out how you too can make a difference through the arts at Esplanade.

Donate at www.esplanade.com/donate

To find out more, email us at donations@esplanade.com or speak with us at 6828 8321.

Esplanade is a charity and an Institution of a Public Character. Your donation to us is matched dollar-for-dollar by the Cultural Matching Fund. Please note that the prevailing tax exemption scheme for donors and sponsors of Arts-Related Businesses will depend on the qualifying criteria imposed by IRAS.

With Gratitude

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is a charity, a not-for-profit organisation and Singapore's national performing arts centre.

We seek to entertain, engage, educate and inspire through the arts. We thank everyone who has helped us bring positive impact to Singaporeans by supporting the arts and Esplanade.

David Liao

Janet Ana

Our heartfelt appreciation goes especially to our Donors and Sponsors, for their steadfast belief in our mission and for their generous contributions.

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Imagination, empathy, creativity—the arts both embody and inspire these human qualities that help us make a better society.

Your donation opens up opportunities for the young to experience and be inspired by the arts. It also supports the aspirations of emerging Singapore artists to create and express their vision for the future.



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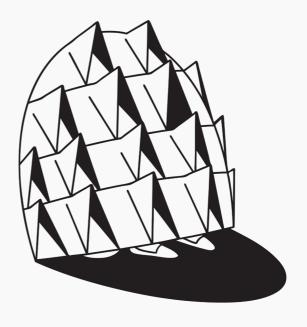


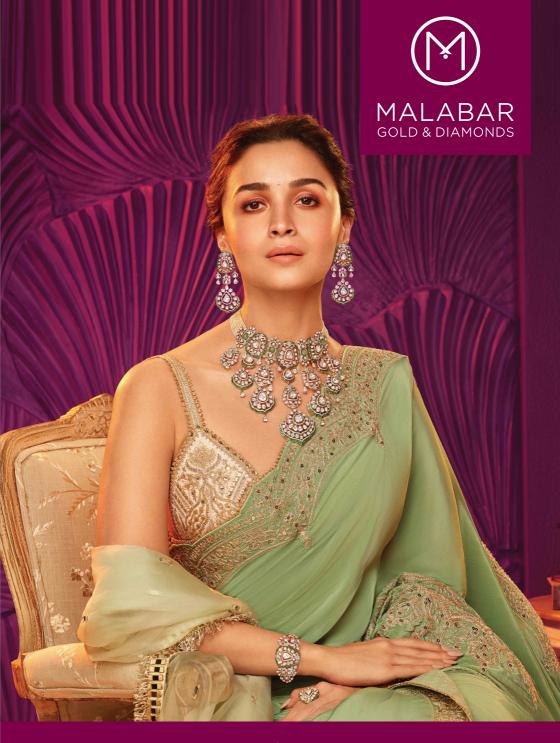


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Totally Anonymous Person (who is not related to esplanade.com/offstage)





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