

THEATRE MOOSAIC



bbitf25



Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2025
Guwahati, Assam, INDIA

Theatre Mosaic



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**Bhullung-Bhuthur International
Theatre Festival**

Editors

Dr. Junmoni Gogoi

Rengani Handique



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Organised by

AANK_A Creative Line



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A Souvenir: An Annual Collection of Articles and Event Highlights
from the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival (BBITF)
2025

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**Bhullung-Bhuthur International
Theatre Festival**

3-7 September, 2025

Guwahati, Assam, INDIA

Felicitation | Performance

Theatre Workshop | Theatre Forum

Environmental Sensitization Workshop

Musical Performance | Yoga



Congratulatory Message

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to AANK-A Creative Line for inviting me to participate in the 2025 Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival. It is true that there has not been much exchange between Indian theatre and Korean theatre.

I hope that through this year's exchange, many exchanges will take place in the future, and that theatrical exchanges between the two countries will become more active and will show development of theatrical aspect of each country.

I believe that all participants will do their best and presents great performances on the stage.

Thank you..

Jinyoung Youn

Uniting Cultures through the Flow of Art & Rivers

Dear Friends and Fellow Artists,

Welcome to the 3rd Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival (BBITF) 2025. This year, as in the years before, we gather once more at the sacred cultural site of Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society, Guwahati, from September 3rd to 7th, to celebrate theatre as a profound force of harmony and human connection.

Rooted in the symbolic and spiritual essence of the Brahmaputra River, this festival continues to explore how rivers—like art—flow across borders, touch lives, and unite civilizations. Under the theme “Theatre for Harmony,” BBITF 2025 reaffirms its commitment to promoting intercultural dialogue, environmental awareness, and social transformation through the language of performance.

This year is particularly significant. We are honoured to welcome Ms. Jinyoung Youn, Chair of the International Relations Committee of the Korea Theatre Association, as our Chief Guest—a gesture that marks our ever-growing global ties. We also proudly feature 9 performances from 6 countries, immersive physical theatre workshops, insightful theatre forums, and our signature Environmental Sensitization Programme in collaboration with Aaranyak.



Despite the global uncertainties, the spirit of collaboration continues. Our international bond with Inter Act Art, Sri Lanka, and the parallel festival CITF 2025, held in Colombo this August, strengthens our shared dream of uniting voices through art. This spirit is echoed in every artist, volunteer, scholar, and supporter who brings this festival to life.

Theatre, like rivers, is not meant to be stagnant. It must flow—touching minds, stirring hearts, and shaping a world where empathy triumphs over division. Let this festival be that flowing force.

I thank each of you for being a part of this journey. May BBITF 2025 inspire new dialogues, nurture fresh dreams, and illuminate the path toward a more compassionate and connected world.

With warm regards,

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami

Festival Director, BBITF 2025

AANK_A Creative Line, Assam, India

Note from the festival Secretary

Dear Friends, Fellow Artists, and Theatre Enthusiasts,

It's a pleasure and an honour to welcome you all to the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2025—our third edition, and one that promises to be more vibrant, more diverse, and more heartfelt than ever before.

We've come a long way. From our humble beginnings, this festival has grown into a gathering that artists from around the world look forward to—a space where creativity flows as freely as the Brahmaputra River we celebrate. BBITF isn't just about performances; it's about people. It's about the conversations over tea, the quiet moments of connection between cultures, and the shared joy of storytelling.

This year, we're thrilled to welcome theatre-makers from six different countries, including some amazing new voices. Whether it's a powerful physical theatre piece or a quiet solo performance, each show brings something meaningful to our stage. Add to that our workshops, forums, and environmental initiatives, and you'll see why BBITF continues to grow—not just in scale, but in spirit.

We're also truly honoured to have Ms. Jinyoung Youn from South Korea with us as our Chief Guest. Her presence adds strength to the



growing network of international friendships and collaborations that BBITF holds dear.

Organizing this festival takes months of hard work, and I want to thank the entire team at AANK_A Creative Line, our supporters, partners, and every volunteer who made this possible. Most importantly, thank you—the artists, the audience, the dreamers—for showing up. Your presence is what makes this more than a festival. It makes it a celebration.

So let's celebrate. Let's share stories, exchange ideas, and build something beautiful—together.

See you at the theatre!


Warmly,

Anupam Saikia

Festival Secretary, BBITF 2025

AANK_A Creative Line, Assam, India

The Festival



AANK-A Creative Line, a distinguished Theatre group from Guwahati, Assam, India, proudly presents the 3rd Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival (BBITF 2025) under the resonant theme “Theatre for Harmony.” Scheduled to be held from 3rd to 7th September 2025 at the prestigious Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society, Guwahati, the festival continues the legacy of its impactful editions in 2023 and 2024.

BBITF emphasizes the symbolic and cultural relationship between rivers and civilizations—particularly focusing on the Brahmaputra River, locally referred to as Bhullung-Bhuthur, a life force of Assam’s identity.

The 2025 edition reaffirms BBITF’s commitment to using theatre as a medium for empathy, intercultural dialogue, and social transformation. The festival will once again bring together theatre groups, performers, scholars, and environmental advocates from across the globe to celebrate diversity and explore shared human values through the lens of performance.

This year, we are especially honoured to welcome Ms. Jinyoung Youn, Chair of the International Relations Committee, Korea Theatre Association, as the Chief Guest, marking a significant milestone in our growing international collaborations.

About the Group

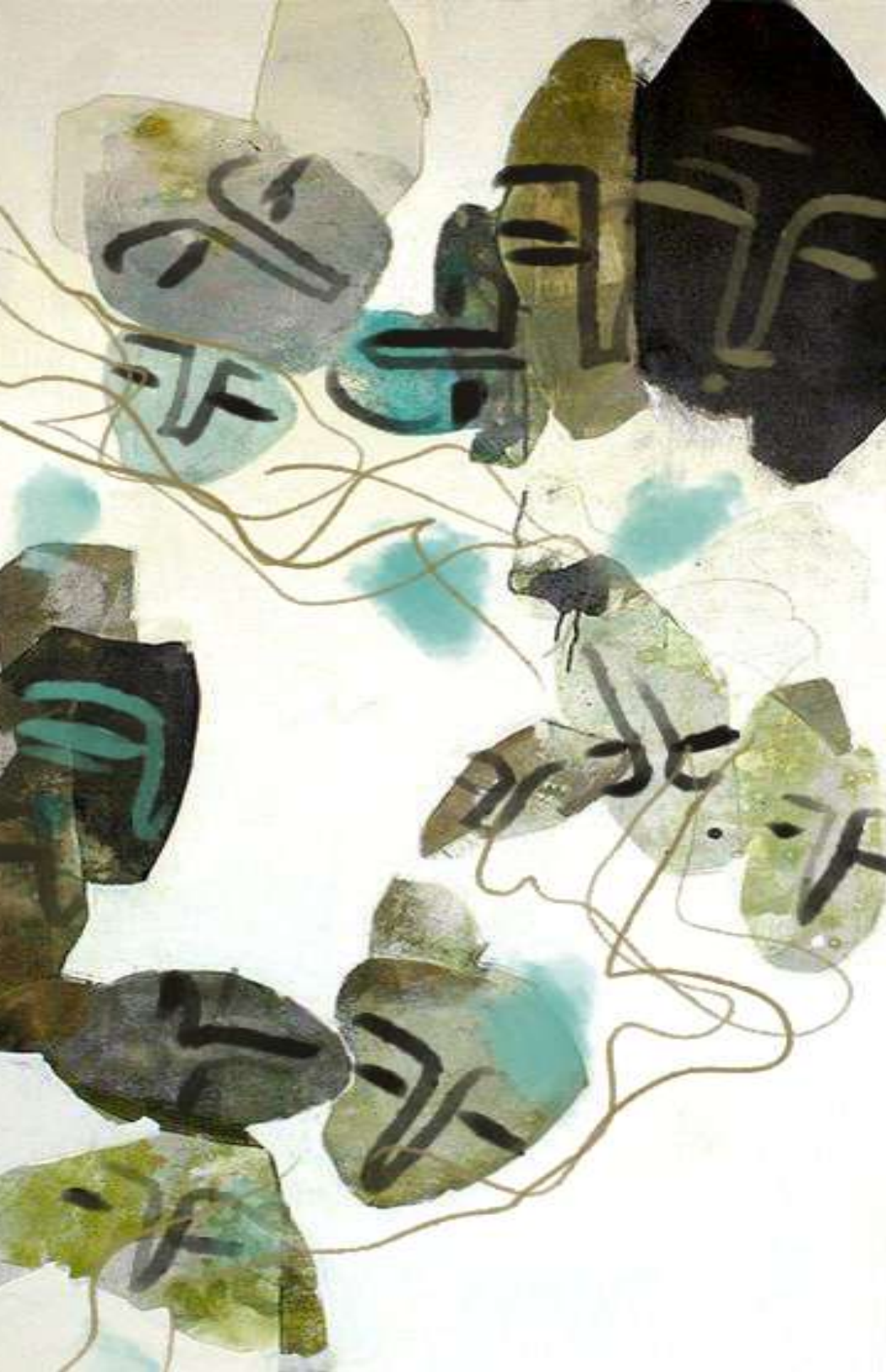
Founded with a deep commitment to Assam’s cultural heritage, AANK-A Creative Line has established itself as a trailblazing force in redefining theatre and performance since its inception in 2008. Beginning its journey with the impactful production “Xunor Xing Thoka Ghariyalar Choku,” the group has continually pushed artistic boundaries, exploring new perspectives within the realm of theatre. With a repertoire of significant plays, AANK-A Creative Line has evolved its narrative to resonate with both traditional and contemporary audiences.

The group has earned international acclaim for thought-provoking productions such as “Imaan Imaan Paani,” “Erikoti-Mirikoti: The Butterfly Effect,” “Bhukar Xadhu: The Myth of Hunger,” “Etheror Irika: Ethereal Epoch,” “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis,” “Alice in Assam,” “Premar Dolna (Swing of Love),” and “A River’s Tale.” These works have captivated audiences not only in India but also across the globe, showcasing Assam’s rich cultural tapestry on international stages.

AANK-A Creative Line has become a symbol of innovation in theatre, seamlessly blending Assam’s traditional essence with modern expression while fostering global artistic collaborations. The group’s emphasis on international partnerships was further highlighted through its pivotal role in organizing the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival (BBITF) and its association with the Colombo International Theatre Festival (CITF). These events underscore the group’s commitment to cross-cultural exchange, artistic innovation, and the transformative power of theatre.

The production “Swings of Love,” which will be showcased at CITF 2025, stands as a testament to AANK-A Creative Line’s visionary approach to collaborative theatre. This production exemplifies the group’s dedication to creating works that transcend borders and engage audiences in a profound exploration of human experiences.

As a leader in the global theatre scene, AANK-A Creative Line continues to shape the artistic landscape, leaving a lasting impact on both local and international stages.



Events at a Glance

1. Inauguration Ceremony

Chief Guest: **Mr. Jinyoung Youn**
Chair, International Relations
Committee, Korea Theatre
Association

- Date: 3rd September 2025
- Time: 6.00 PM
- Venue: Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium
- Highlights: Inauguration and release of the Festival Souvenir

2. Theatre Performances

- An exciting line-up of 11 performances from 7 countries will be staged at the Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium, Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society, Assam, India.
- Dates: 3rd to 7th September 2025
- Time: 6:30 PM onwards
- Venue: Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium

Title of the performances

- “THE GIRL WHO RODE A BICYCLE” By Nayan Prasad, Surya, India | Duration: 20 minutes
- “#NOTME” by Topologeanu Casandra, Tony Bulandra Theater, Romania | Duration: 50 minutes
- “AFTER” by Kim So Jung, Sangsangchangkkko, South Korea
Duration: 60 minutes
- “IT’S NOT ME, SOMEONE ELSE” by Randika Wimalasuriya, Abhiranga Theatre Production, Sri Lanka
- “A JOURNEY OF DESPAIR” by Upeksha Lankathilaka
- PALUNKO’S WIFE by Iva Peter-Dragan
Triko Cirkus Teatar, Croatia | Duration: 50 minutes

- **THE IMMIGRANTS**” by Mr. Hamedh Khalifa, Art of two banks Production, Tunisia
Duration: 60 minutes
- **“DUMMY”** by Sarathchandra Walpola, Sri Lanka
- **“UNSEEN”** by Asanka Ishan Dayapala, Sri Lanka
- **“METAMORPHOSIS OF MITRACHI GOSHTA”** by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami, AANK-A Creative Line, India
Duration: 20–25 minutes
- **QOUMA YABA (STAND UP FATHER)”**
by Kassem Istanbouli, Tiro Association for Arts, Lebanon
Duration: 50 minutes

3. Culmination

Time: 7.30 PM

- Date: 7th September 2025
- Venue: Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium
- Musical Performance by AT4 Boy’s Hall, Gauhati University
- Yoga Demonstration Programme led by Dr. Hridayananda Tamuli Phukan and his students.

4. Physical Theatre Workshop

A hands-on international workshop focused on physical expression in theatre.

- Dates: 4th to 6th September 2025 (Total 6 sessions)
- Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM
- Venue: Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society Focus Areas:
- Body Awareness and Movement
- Improvisation Techniques and Expressive Gestures
- Integration of Dance, Mime, and Physical Narratives

5. Theatre Forum

Theme 1: “Sponsorship, Sustainability, and Survival: Rethinking Theatre Funding Models”

- Date: 4th September 2025 | Time: 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM
- Moderator: Mr. Jinyoung Youn (South Korea)



6. Environmental Sensitization Workshop

- Date: 5th September 2025 | Time: 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM

Continuing its commitment to environmental advocacy, BBITF 2025 will host an Environmental Sensitization Workshop in collaboration with Aaranyak, a renowned environmental organization dedicated to conservation and sustainable development. This workshop will focus on highlighting the cultural and ecological significance of the Brahmaputra River and its vital role in the lives of the people of Assam. Key components of the workshop will include:

Interactive Lectures and Discussions:

Led by experts from Aaranyak, along with professionals from the fields of environmental science and cultural heritage, these sessions will emphasize the urgent need to preserve Assam’s natural resources and promote sustainable practices.

Creative Performances:

Featuring thought-provoking student presentations, traditional dance, and poetry that celebrate the importance of rivers in sustaining life, culture, and the environment, making the discussions more engaging and relatable to the audience. With Aaranyak joining hands in this endeavour, the workshop aims to inspire participants to become active advocates for environmental conservation, encouraging a deeper connection with the natural world and a collective responsibility toward protecting our planet’s invaluable resources. This initiative is a key part of BBITF 2025’s mission to integrate environmental awareness into its cultural programming, blending the power of art with the urgent call for ecological preservation.



Trends in Contemporary Korean Theatre

Jinyoung Youn

Modern Korean theatre is evolving in many diverse ways. Notably, performances that reinterpret traditional elements in contemporary and innovative ways and reflect various social issues have emerged. There has also been an increase in productions aimed at younger audiences, which are lighter in nature and often labeled as “romantic comedies,” especially around the Daehak-ro area in Seoul. These trends can be outlined as follows:

1. Traditional Theatre, and Recreated Diverse Forms of Theatre

Modern Korean theatre has groups that adhere to traditional forms and groups that focus on the exploration of new, experimental approaches such as audiovisual elements and media. Many theatre companies remain faithful to traditional styles-focusing on text, acting, and stagecraft, while others experiment with various new forms. Particularly, older performances are being reinterpreted in innovative ways to reinterpret their core themes from diverse perspectives. This diversity of approaches encourages viewers to see performances in new lights.

2. Use of New Technology

One characteristic of contemporary theatre is the increased integration of new technology, particularly video. Many modern productions substitute physical set pieces with projections or use video as a tool to help explain the play. Another emerging trend is the integration of AI in theatre, with AI being used in design, composition, sound production, and playwriting. While this is contributing to efficiency, there are concerns that these technological advancements may distance traditional theatre professionals from their craft, indicating that not all technological progress is necessarily beneficial.

3. Fusion of Eastern and Western Theatre

One key feature of modern Korean theatre is the blending of traditional Korean theatre with Western theatre styles to create new forms. For example, elements of Korean pansori (traditional narrative singing) and Western musicals are combined, preserving Korean emotional sensibilities while incorporating audiovisual elements that can better appeal to modern audiences. Moreover, many works reinterpret Western plays through a Korean lens, adapting them to fit local cultural norms. This fusion of East and West has become an exciting aspect for audiences, introducing new possibilities in theatrical expression.

4. Increase in International Exchange

Another notable trend is the growing international presence of Korean theatre. Although exact statistics are unavailable, the global rise of K-culture, increasing interest in Korean culture overall, and the increase in available support for international collaborations have allowed Korean productions to be performed abroad. The Korea Theatre Association

has been actively involved in co-productions with international partners, such as joint productions with the Tony Bulandra Theatre of Romania in 2023, Greece in 2024, and North Macedonia in 2025. Furthermore, the association has been facilitating overseas performances of top Korean theatre companies. For instance, the “Bae So-goji” production by Seoul’s IDA Theatre was performed in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt in 2023, and “Peace” by Daegu’s Baekchi Theatre was performed in the Ancient Theatre of Stobi in North Macedonia in 2024. Award-winning Korean performances are continuing international tours in 2025-with plans for a performance in Egypt to commemorate 30 years of diplomatic relations. Even further, Korean theatre groups are participating in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, the BABEL Festival and more-contributing to the globalization of Korean theatre.

5. Increase in Theatre Reflecting Social and Political Issues

One of the significant social functions of theatre is its educational role. In authoritarian regimes, theatre is often used as a policy tool for control and education. In democratic countries, theatre plays a critical role in reflecting on environmental, gender, LGBTQ+, human rights, youth, and inequality issues, encouraging audiences to engage with societal contradictions and raise awareness. In Korea, many plays have emerged since the 1990s that focus on the conflicts surrounding Korean society post-democratization, reflecting the country’s political evolution.

6. Development of Romantic Comedies and Large-Scale Musicals

The most active theatre district in Korea today is Daehak-ro area in Seoul. However, most productions in this area are romantic comedies targeted at young audiences, emphasizing entertainment over deep philosophical or intellectual engagement. These lighthearted shows have become a consistent draw for young people. Similar trends are seen outside of Seoul, where audiences generally prefer lighter, more accessible shows over traditional theatre pieces.

Another trend is the growing popularity of large-scale musicals. These musicals often have commercial appeal and are widely promoted to the public. While they may sometimes draw audiences away from traditional theatre, it’s important to note that the fan bases for musicals and traditional theatre often differ, so this trend may not necessarily pose a problem insofar as diverting audiences.

7. The Theatre Arts Instructor Programme

The Theatre Arts Instructor Programme sends professional actors and directors to schools and social welfare organizations to teach theatre to students and the general public. The primary goal is not to train professional theatre artists but to cultivate a potential future audience for the theatrical arts. Conversely, it can be assumed that people who have never had any exposure to theatre in their lives are far less likely to have any interest in theatre. Thus, introducing young people to theatre at an earlier age not only fosters creativity and makes it more likely that they will continue to engage with theatre throughout their lives. This Programme plays a significant role in ensuring the continued growth of theatre in Korea and aligns with broader policy goals of the Korean government.

Modern Korean theatre is diverse: while some groups stick to traditional forms, others are incorporating social messages or experimenting with new forms and expressions. As theatre companies develop new and creative works, they continue to bridge traditional and modern styles, and commercial and artistic approaches. International exchanges contribute to the growing presence of Korean theatre abroad, while the development of local theatrical expressions continues. This evolution promises further growth and diversification in Korean theatre in the years to come.

Jinyoung Youn is a distinguished theatre artist and the Chair of the International Relations Committee of the Korea Theatre Association. With a rich background in theatrical practice and a deep commitment to international collaboration, he has played a significant role in fostering global cultural exchange through theatre. As part of his responsibilities, he actively builds bridges between Korean theatre and the international stage, participating in major festivals and forums around the world. His work reflects a strong dedication to cultural diplomacy, artistic innovation, and the global promotion of Korean performing arts.

Lebanese Culture and Art: Theatres of Resilience

Kassem Istanbuli

Introduction: A Nation on Stage

Theatre in Lebanon transcends the boundaries of artistic performance; it represents a dynamic form of cultural survival, political commentary, and collective memory-making. Situated at the crossroads of civilizations, Lebanon has long been a melting pot of languages, religions, and ideologies. In this complex and often volatile landscape, theatre has evolved into a powerful civic practice—an act of resistance against erasure, a ritual of remembrance for the forgotten, and a tool of reconstruction in the face of destruction.

Lebanon's history is punctuated by conflict and resilience. From the Phoenician city-states that once staged ritual dramas to honour deities, to the French Mandate era when Western theatrical forms were introduced, the country has seen the constant adaptation and reinvention of its performative traditions. The modern Lebanese stage has absorbed and rearticulated these historical legacies, giving rise to a theatre that is at once deeply rooted in mythic and oral traditions and acutely responsive to the realities of political oppression, civil strife, and sectarian fragmentation.



During the golden age of Lebanese theatre in the 1960s and 70s, artists like the Rahbani Brothers, Fairuz, and contemporary playwrights created works that fused folklore, music, and political metaphor, celebrating national identity and voicing collective aspirations. However, the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) disrupted this artistic flourishing, reducing cultural infrastructure to ruins and scattering artistic communities. Yet, even amidst the shelling, underground theatre groups continued to perform in bomb shelters and basements, using the stage to articulate the anguish of war and the hope for peace.

In the post-war period and into the 21st century, Lebanese theatre has reclaimed its role as a mirror to society. It confronts issues ranging from corruption and censorship to displacement, gender inequality, and the politics of memory. It does so not merely through text but through performance that engages the senses, mobilizes communities, and reimagines space—transforming ruined cinemas, refugee camps, and public squares into temporary theatres of expression and resistance.

In this evolving narrative, theatre has become a sanctuary for cultural

continuity, especially in regions and communities that are often excluded from mainstream national discourse. It is where oral history becomes embodied memory, where trauma is not hidden but staged, and where identity is not fixed but performed.

As Lebanon continues to grapple with economic collapse, political paralysis, and migration crises, its theatre practitioners remain critical agents of dialogue, dissent, and hope. Their work reaffirms that theatre in Lebanon is not only an aesthetic practice but a social and political lifeline, where storytelling becomes survival and performance becomes protest.

Historical Foundations: Between East and West

The history of theatre in Lebanon is a story of convergence—where local oral traditions and ritualistic practices intersect with Western dramaturgical structures to produce a hybrid, expressive, and politically resonant art form. The formal roots of modern Lebanese theatre are often traced back to the pioneering work of Maroun Naccache in the mid-19th century. A Christian priest and playwright from Beirut, Naccache is credited with establishing one of the first Arabic-language theatres in the region. His adaptation of Molière's *L'Avare* into Arabic and its public staging in 1848 marked a turning point: the beginning of a conscious

theatrical movement that sought to bridge Arab cultural identity with Western literary forms.

This movement gained momentum in the 20th century, particularly in Beirut, which emerged as the cultural capital of the Arab world. During the 1960s and 70s, Lebanese theatre entered what many scholars and critics call its “golden age.” The era was defined by the creative genius of the Rahbani Brothers and their collaborations with Fairuz, Lebanon's most iconic singer and performer. Their musical dramas—often staged in open-air festivals such as the Baalbeck International Festival—combined traditional Lebanese music, nationalist sentiment, and poetic dramaturgy, creating a form of theatre that resonated deeply with pan-Arab identity and regional pride.

This was also a time when Arabic theatre underwent significant experimentation, with playwrights like Issam Mahfouz and Roger Assaf pushing boundaries of language and form, advocating for the use of vernacular Arabic and tackling themes such as social justice, urban alienation, and colonial memory. Theatre became not only entertainment but also a civic forum, where questions of nationhood, identity, and modernity were debated and performed.

However, the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 brought this



cultural flourishing to an abrupt halt. Theatres were bombed, playhouses closed, and many artists were forced into exile or silence. Yet even in such conditions, Lebanese theatre did not vanish—it adapted. Performances continued in bomb shelters, abandoned schools, and private homes. Plays during this era were marked by urgency and testimony, confronting themes of displacement, memory, fear, and fragmented identity. Theatre became a medium of survival and resistance, bearing witness to loss while envisioning alternative futures.

Contemporary Lebanese Theatre: Navigating Crisis and Creation

Today, the Lebanese theatre scene operates in a state of precarious vibrancy. It is fragmented yet fertile, censored yet subversive, driven largely by independent artists, activists, and cultural workers. The structural challenges are formidable: chronic underfunding, decaying infrastructure, lack of national theatre policies, and strict state censorship continue to shape the limits of what can be said and where it can be said. The Ministry of Culture, founded in 1993, provides only modest support, and many historic theatres remain closed or repurposed due to economic decline.

Censorship remains a major obstacle. All theatrical productions are subject to the approval of the General Security Office under Decree 2/1977, which allows authorities to ban or alter plays they deem politically sensitive, morally offensive, or threatening to national security. This has forced many artists to adopt coded language, symbolic imagery, and non-linear narratives as tools of resistance and storytelling.

And yet, paradoxically, this climate of restriction has also spurred creative innovation. Theatre-makers have turned to alternative spaces—like renovated cinemas, university halls, street corners, and even rooftops—to stage performances. Companies such as Zoukak Theatre Company, Collective for Research and Training on Development—Action (CRTDA), and festivals like the Beirut International Platform of Dance provide vital platforms for emerging voices, women, queer artists, and marginalized communities.

Lebanese theatre today is deeply political. It confronts issues such as sectarianism, corruption, gender violence, and the memory of war. Performances are often documentary in tone, drawing from oral histories, testimonies, and archival fragments. Directors like Sahar Assaf use site-specific theatre to dramatize real events, such as the 1975 Ain El Remmaneh bus massacre, engaging audiences in acts of public memory

and reckoning.

Additionally, digital technology has opened new avenues. Many performances are now streamed online, enabling the Lebanese diaspora to reconnect with cultural discourse and expanding the reach of local theatre to global stages.

Together, the historical and contemporary developments of Lebanese theatre illustrate a tradition that is resilient, dialogic, and deeply attuned to the socio-political fabric of its environment. From colonial encounter to civil war, from golden ages to grassroots revival, Lebanese theatre remains a powerful tool for cultural survival, critical thought, and collective healing.

Art as Resistance: Political Theatre and Social Memory

In Lebanon, theatre is not merely a cultural activity—it is a political gesture, a form of resistance, and an act of collective remembering. Political theatre in Lebanon engages with the unresolved wounds of the past, the daily injustices of the present, and the imaginative possibilities of the future. It often operates within a framework of memory activism, challenging audiences to confront histories that have been suppressed, fragmented, or co-opted by dominant political narratives.

A key theme in contemporary Lebanese performance is post-war amnesia. While the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) formally ended decades ago, its psychological and social ramifications continue to haunt the nation. Many state-led efforts have encouraged “forgetting in the name of national unity,” resulting in a silence that theatre artists are determined to break. Practitioners such as Sahar Assaf have developed documentary theatre works based on oral testimonies of war survivors, giving voice to those whose experiences have been ignored or erased. Her site-specific projects not only stage memory but create rituals of mourning and truth-telling.

Similarly, playwrights like Issam Mahfouz and Roger Assaf have pushed for the use of colloquial Arabic (*āmmiyya*) on stage, rejecting classical Arabic as overly formal and disconnected from lived experience. Their work emphasizes theatre’s capacity to speak in the language of the people, rendering it both accessible and politically resonant. In doing so, they assert that linguistic inclusivity is a radical act, one that dismantles elitist gatekeeping and empowers ordinary voices.

Within this landscape, Kassem Istanbouli’s theatre is radical not only in what it performs, but in where and how it is performed. His model—reviving cinemas and theatres in overlooked cities such as Tyre, Nabatieh, and Tripoli—reclaims physical space for artistic assembly. In regions

often absent from national cultural programming, Istanbuli has created alternative publics where art is both a right and a resource. His insistence on free, open-access cultural participation disrupts entrenched class hierarchies and challenges Beirut-centric cultural policies.

In essence, Istanbuli's theatre is performative citizenship: it asserts the right of people to gather, to imagine, to remember, and to resist through the collective act of witnessing. It is not simply theatre about politics; it is theatre as politics.

Digital and Diasporic Reach

As Lebanon grapples with recurring political and economic crises, many artists have turned to digital platforms to sustain their work and expand their audiences. This digital migration has given Lebanese theatre a new dimension—an afterlife online, where performances are archived, shared, and discussed long after the curtain falls.

The Tiro Association for Arts, under Kassem Istanbuli's leadership, has embraced digital media as a tool of both preservation and outreach. Performances, festivals, workshops, and interviews are documented and uploaded to platforms such as YouTube and social media. These online archives allow for continuous access to cultural content, particularly for those who are geographically distant or politically displaced.

For the Lebanese diaspora—spread across Europe, the Gulf, the Americas, and beyond—this digital accessibility is deeply significant. Theatre becomes not just a record of home, but a reconnection to homeland identity, especially for second- and third-generation immigrants who seek cultural touchstones in hybrid lives. Through subtitles, visual storytelling, and accessible formats, these performances transcend linguistic and national boundaries, building transnational cultural bridges.

Moreover, by participating in international theatre festivals, the Tiro Association positions Lebanese grassroots performance on global stages, engaging in intercultural dialogue and expanding the reach of local narratives. These digital and international circuits amplify stories from underrepresented communities and invite solidarity with broader struggles for cultural equity and creative freedom.

In this way, digital theatre does not dilute the intimacy of live performance—it extends its impact, giving Lebanese theatre a global echo, and reaffirming that culture, when liberated from its traditional confines, can circulate freely across borders and communities.

Conclusion: Theatre as a Bridge Between Past and Future

In Lebanon—a nation where history is contested, memory is selective, and the future is repeatedly deferred—theatre emerges as a courageous and necessary act. It is a bridge that spans the silence of trauma and the noise of dissent, the heritage of ancient rituals and the pulse of contemporary struggles, the grief of a fractured past and the fragile hope of an unwritten tomorrow. In its most transformative moments, Lebanese theatre becomes a space where people can gather not only to witness performance but to reclaim voice, visibility, and belonging.

Amid the rubble of collapsed infrastructure and political disillusionment, artists like Kassem Istanbuli and institutions like the Tiro Association for Arts remind us that resistance does not always roar—sometimes, it sings, dances, remembers, and reimagines. Their efforts reveal that grassroots cultural work is not secondary to development; it is development. It is not an escape from politics, but an alternative way of doing politics—through art, inclusion, and imagination.

By reviving abandoned theatres, offering platforms for marginalized voices, and making art accessible to communities long excluded from national narratives, Istanbuli's model stands as a counter-history to the dominant stories of neglect. It tells a different story—one where culture is not centralized in the capital, where youth from Tyre or Nabatieh are not mere spectators but storytellers, where a child's first experience of theatre is not a privilege but a promise.

Moreover, the digital dissemination of these performances ensures that the echoes of Lebanese theatre travel far beyond their local geographies, creating transnational circuits of memory, solidarity, and creative exchange. This digital theatre does not replace the live encounter—it extends its reach, enabling the diaspora to reconnect with its cultural roots and participate in Lebanon's ongoing artistic dialogue.

In essence, Lebanese theatre—despite censorship, economic hardship, and systemic neglect—continues to survive, resist, rebuild, and remember. It does not wait for ideal conditions to flourish. It creates conditions where survival itself becomes an aesthetic, and where performance becomes a ritual of endurance, protest, and hope.

Theatre in Lebanon is, above all, a radical act of continuity. It teaches us that in a nation where the future is uncertain, to perform is to believe that something better is still possible.

Theatres of the People: My Art, My Resistance

I remember the silence that followed the closing of the cinemas in Tyre. As a child growing up in this ancient city, I would stand outside the gates of the old Al Hamra Cinema, trying to imagine what the world looked like from the inside of that darkened hall. The screen had gone blank, the projectors had stopped humming, but something in me refused to accept that art had died in our towns. That refusal became my life's work.

When I began acting, it was not in glamorous auditoriums or institutions—it was in public squares, schoolyards, and crumbling spaces that hadn't heard applause in decades. I wanted to prove that art should not be reserved for the privileged corners of Beirut. Why should the people of Tripoli, Nabatieh, or Tyre be denied theatre, film, or poetry simply because they had been forgotten by those in power?

In 2014, I founded the Tiro Association for Arts (TAA). It was never about creating a brand. It was about creating a breathing space for culture, in a country that seemed to choke every attempt at beauty. We took risks—big ones. We broke locks on abandoned cinemas not to defy the law, but to reopen the doors to dreams. The Al Hamra Cinema in Tyre, the Stars Cinema in Nabatieh, and later, the Rivoli Cinema in Tripoli—each space had a history, and I felt it was our duty to give it a future.

These weren't just renovations. They were resurrections. I've always believed that art is a right, not a luxury. That's why we made access to our events free or donation-based. That's why we opened our doors to refugees, children, the elderly, the unemployed, and anyone who simply wanted to feel that they mattered in the cultural life of Lebanon.

Through our festivals—the Lebanon International Theatre Festival, the Tyr International Short Film Festival, the Children's Theatre Festival—we created bridges between local stories and global stages. I've seen young girls take the stage for the first time in towns where girls are rarely given space to speak. I've seen artists from Syria, Tunisia, Italy, and India sit together after a show and plan collaborations that never would have happened without this platform.

But the real magic is not in the lights or the applause. It's in the moment when someone says: "I never thought I'd see a play in my town. I thought that was only for others." That, to me, is revolution. People often ask me why I continue, especially when our theatres face electricity cuts, censorship threats, and funding shortages. But I continue because I've seen what theatre can do in the middle of crisis. I've seen it give people back their voice, their language, their pride.

I don't want to just build theatres—I want to build trust, community, and imagination. I want a child in Nabatieh to know that she doesn't need permission to dream. That her story matters. That the curtain will rise again—not just on stage, but in our hearts.

This is my Lebanon. This is my theatre.

Kassem Istanbuli is a Lebanese actor, director, and cultural activist, and the founder of the Tiro Association for Arts and the Lebanese National Theatre. He is known for revitalizing abandoned cinemas in Tyre, Nabatieh, and Tripoli, transforming them into inclusive cultural spaces. A recipient of the 2023 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, Istanbuli works to democratize access to the arts across Lebanon, believing that culture is a right for all.

Performing Identity and Memory: New Directions in Assamese Theatre Praxis

**Dr. Hari Prasad Baruah, Dr. Sanjib Borah,
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Introduction

Theatre has long served as a mirror to society, reflecting its values, anxieties, and conflicts, but it also possesses the unique capacity to transcend mere reflection and function as an active agent of transformation. As a socio-cultural and political medium, theatre enacts lived realities, embodies silenced voices, and interrogates dominant narratives. From ancient ritualistic performances to contemporary multimedia productions, the stage has consistently been a space for storytelling, resistance, remembrance, and revolution. Particularly in postcolonial and culturally diverse regions like Northeast India, theatre assumes an added layer of significance as it navigates questions of identity, memory, marginality, and survival.



In this dynamic landscape, Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami emerges as a leading figure whose theatrical practice redefines the contours of contemporary Assamese theatre. As a playwright, director, scholar, and cultural facilitator, Goswami's work goes beyond conventional dramaturgy. His productions combine indigenous performative traditions, post-dramatic aesthetics, and socio-political urgency to produce a body of theatre that is at once regionally rooted and globally resonant. His plays—*Imaan Imaan Paani*, *Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar*, *Irikoti Mirikoti* – *The Butterfly Effect*, *Etheror Irika* – *Ethereal Epoch*, *Bhukar Xaadhu* – *The Myth of Hunger*, *Alice in Assam*, *Eréndira's Metamorphosis*, and *A River's Tale*—span a remarkable arc of creative innovation, thematic profundity, and

artistic risk-taking. These works have been performed across local and international platforms, including the BRM, Colombo International Theatre Festival, and the International Festival of Theatre in the Sahara, signalling the emergence of an Assamese theatre vocabulary that is contemporary, plural, and transcultural.

This paper seeks to critically explore how Goswami's plays engage with the intertwined themes of identity, memory, and socio-political resistance. His characters—often women, children, the displaced, and the marginalized—embody psychological fragmentation, cultural alienation, and ecological trauma. The plays are less concerned with linear storytelling and more with performative presence, gesture, and image. Through fragmented narratives, symbolic physicality, and intercultural performance strategies, Goswami crafts a dramaturgy that is politically charged and emotionally immersive.

The objective of this paper is threefold:

- To investigate how Goswami's theatrical works negotiate the themes of identity and memory within the socio-cultural context of Assam and Northeast India.
- To analyze the performative techniques and dramaturgical choices he employs, including psychophysical acting, non-linear storytelling, and visual minimalism.
- To position Goswami's theatre within larger discourses of postcolonial aesthetics, ecological performance, and intercultural theatre praxis.

The scope of the study spans eight major plays of Goswami in their chronological development, allowing us to trace an evolving artistic and thematic trajectory. The methodology employed is a combination of textual analysis, performance criticism, and theoretical frameworks drawn from performance studies, postdramatic theory (Lehmann, 2006), and memory studies. Archival footage, production notes, interviews, and published reviews have been consulted, along with secondary literature such as *Trends in Contemporary Assamese Theatre* (Pathak, 2015) and *Literatures from Northeast India: Beyond the Centre–Periphery Debate* (Islam, 2022).

By critically examining these works, the paper hopes to contribute to an understanding of how regional theatre can serve as a powerful cultural force—not only preserving heritage but actively shaping the discourses of justice, resistance, and renewal in the contemporary world.

Contextualizing Assamese Theatre

Assamese theatre has a rich and layered history that spans from pre-colonial ritual performance traditions to post-independence political drama and, more recently, to globally influenced experimental practices. Its roots lie in indigenous narrative forms like Ankiya Bhaona (initiated by Srimanta Sankardev in the 15th–16th century), where performance was integrally linked to spiritual devotion and community education. These early theatrical forms, performed in Namghars (prayer houses), were highly stylized, involving dance, music, and symbolic costumes, and served not only as entertainment but as socio-religious pedagogy.

The colonial period introduced Western proscenium theatre structures, English and Bengali plays, and a growing engagement with nationalist and reformist themes. Post-independence Assamese theatre evolved rapidly, addressing regional identity, language politics, class inequality, and the scars of insurgency and displacement. Artists such as Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Phani Sarma, and Arun Sarma played key roles in shaping modern Assamese dramaturgy.

In recent decades, a new wave of theatre has emerged—characterized by hybridity, physicality, minimalism, and thematic experimentation. This shift coincides with global developments in postdramatic theatre, as theorized by Hans-Thies Lehmann an increasing interest in performative storytelling that transcends text-based realism.

Within this shifting terrain, Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami's theatre occupies a unique and transformative space. His work does not merely modernize Assamese theatre; it reimagines its epistemology and aesthetics. Goswami draws not only from indigenous forms but also from alternative sources of meaning—paintings, photographs, myths, children's literature, folk idioms, and visual memory. His dramaturgy is as much about the image as it is about the word; the body as much as the text; the gesture as much as the line. This synthesis of visual and verbal storytelling allows his plays to speak across generations, cultures, and social strata.

Importantly, Goswami's dramaturgy honours the oral-visual traditions of Assam while situating them in dialogue with international performance strategies. In works like *Alice in Assam*, he fuses global literary icons with regional symbolism; in *Eréndira's Metamorphosis* (Main author and Director of the play) a feminist reimagining of Latin American magical realism through Assamese performative idioms. His incorporation of physical theatre, silence, repetition, ritual choreography, and projected imagery connects Assamese spectatorship with the broader currents of intercultural and postcolonial theatre.



Thematically, Goswami's theatre also reflects the contemporary anxieties of Assam—insurgency and socio-political destruction (Imaan Imaan Paani), cultural alienation and memory loss (Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar), hunger and moral decay (Bhukar Xaadhu), and women's resistance against violence (A River's Tale). These concerns are presented not through linear exposition but through immersive environments, shifting timelines, and sensorial engagement—offering audiences not explanations but experiences.

In this evolving landscape, Goswami's theatre represents a new praxis—what may be called a poetics of embodied memory and image-based dramaturgy. His work stands at the confluence of folk resurgence, aesthetic experimentation, and socio-political critique. By embracing the ordinary and the mythic, the remembered and the imagined, Goswami crafts a performance language that is deeply Assamese and yet unmistakably global in its reach.

Thematic Concerns in Goswami's Theatre

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami's theatre is marked by a profound engagement with themes that resonate both locally and globally—ecological degradation, cultural memory, gender violence, identity politics, and socio-political inertia. His plays are not bound by traditional narrative constraints but unfold as sensory and symbolic experiences. Drawing from memory, painting, mythology, children's rhymes, and visual art, Goswami constructs a dramaturgy that is at once deeply Assamese and universally human.

Socio-political Absurdity – Rajai Hukum Dise

One of Goswami's early political allegories, *Rajai Hukum Dise* (The King Has Ordered) dissects the mechanisms of authoritarianism and the illusion of freedom under modern governance. Through the use of absurdist language and stylised repetition, the play stages a world where laws are delivered without logic, and obedience becomes survival. Characters are trapped in a system that pretends to offer choices while enforcing control. The text critiques the hollow performance of democracy in a deeply theatricalized manner. Goswami uses minimal props and fragmented dialogue, allowing space, silence, and the actors' bodies to convey the grotesque ironies of power.

Ecological Degradation and Cultural Memory – Imaan Imaan Paani

Imaan Imaan Paani, directed by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami, is a stylized, multilingual performance that explores ecological degradation and cultural memory within Assam's turbulent socio-political context. Inspired by Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* and Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, the play employs surreal imagery, fragmented narrative, and psychophysical movement to depict a landscape scarred by floods, displacement, and loss.

Through the reimagining of childhood games like "Imaan Imaan Paani" the performance evokes nostalgia and resilience amid crisis. Performed in Assamese, Rabha, Bodo, and gibberish, the multilingual soundscape captures the breakdown of communication in times of trauma. The stage transforms into a symbolic canvas—melting clocks, blood-stained pots, and broken puppets serve as metaphors for memory, violence, and ecological anxiety.

Water emerges as both metaphor and menace—reflecting play, threat, and

loss. Goswami's directorial vision resists linearity, instead offering a cyclical dramaturgy where trauma repeats and memory is enacted. The result is a haunting meditation on Assam's cultural erosion and the enduring human spirit in the face of environmental and political despair. Imaan Imaan Paani stands as a powerful theatrical response to the interlinked crises of nature, memory, and identity.

Memory and Trauma – Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar

In *Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar* (Complicity Ruins Us!), Goswami stages societal stagnation and forgotten revolt through haunting folk imagery and dreamlike disjunctions. The lullaby sung to a banana tree becomes a haunting refrain for dormant resistance, as characters drift through a landscape of intellectual paralysis and moral disengagement. The play critiques the Assamese middle-class intelligentsia's apathy toward political activism and cultural responsibility. Here, memory is both a burden and a failure—something that should empower but instead anesthetizes. The play's postcolonial and Marxist undertones are encoded not in overt speeches but in symbolic actions, static rhythms, and silent breakdowns.

Gender-Based Violence and Agency – Eréndira's Metamorphosis

Co-authored with Namrata Sarma, *Eréndira's Metamorphosis* transforms Gabriel García Márquez's narrative into a feminist performance of bodily resistance and psychological rupture. The protagonist's journey from objectification to autonomy is rendered through a series of fractured tableaux—veiled bodies, stifled movements, whispered griefs. Goswami's minimalistic aesthetic leaves emotional space for the spectator to enter and witness. *Eréndira's* body becomes the stage of both oppression and rebellion. Her silence becomes language. The performance denounces patriarchal commodification while holding space for female endurance and eventual revolt.

Cultural Hybridity and Identity Politics – Alice in Assam and A River's Tale

Alice in Assam is a remarkable experiment in intercultural dramaturgy. By transplanting Lewis Carroll's fantastical world into the socio-cultural fabric of Assam, Goswami interrogates the anxieties of identity, cultural confusion, and postcolonial assimilation. Through bilingual dialogues,

local motifs, and distorted time-spaces, the play crafts a mirror of Assamese society negotiating with modernity. It questions the cost of cultural translation and the dangers of forgetting one's roots while navigating a globalised world.

A River's Tale—based on Priyanka Das's poem *Lakheitorai Dhuwa Daag*—is Goswami's most internationally celebrated psycho-physical performance. The river Lakheitra becomes a maternal symbol, a witness, and finally a refuge. Through fluid movements, visual projections, and minimal language, the play narrates a woman's struggle against patriarchal violence and ecological dislocation. Whether performed at CITEF, BBTF, or in the Tunisian Sahara, the work resonated as a poetic elegy for loss and a ritual of resilience.

Hunger and Social Inertia – Bhukar Xaadhu (The Myth of Hunger)

In *Bhukar Xaadhu*, Goswami delves into the brutal realities of hunger—not just as physical deprivation but as a metaphor for societal failure. The play strips down language and ornamentation, letting empty vessels,



emaciated gestures, and strained silences speak louder than words. It is not a documentary of suffering but a poetic dismantling of systemic neglect. The performance doesn't offer closure or catharsis but leaves audiences disturbed and reflective. It asks: what do we hunger for—food, justice, voice, or dignity?

Through these thematically rich and structurally innovative works, Goswami crafts a theatre of urgency and empathy. His dramaturgy resists narrative comfort and instead opens a space for confrontation, mourning, and possibility. The themes he tackles are not isolated issues—they are interwoven structures of oppression and survival, rendered with an artistry that speaks to both the everyday and the eternal.

Narrative Structure and Aesthetic Innovations

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami's theatre resists traditional Aristotelian structure and instead operates within a post-dramatic framework, embracing fragmentation, fluidity, and a multiplicity of performative languages. The narrative architecture of his plays is constructed not to unfold stories in a linear fashion, but to evoke emotional, psychological, and political states through montage, movement, and imagery. Goswami's dramaturgy belongs to a realm where time is layered, space is symbolic, and the body becomes both archive and instrument.

Non-linear Storytelling and Fragmented Narratives

Across productions like *Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar*, *Imaan Imaan Paani*, and *A River's Tale*, Goswami intentionally avoids chronological

storytelling. Events do not follow a cause-and-effect logic but instead unravel as memory traces, emotional impressions, and associative leaps. In *Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar*, characters exist in a state of somnambulistic drift, caught between remembered revolution and current inertia, with flashbacks and dreams intermingling. Similarly, *Imaan Imaan Paani* unfolds like a psychotropic memory map—where childhood games, myths, and surreal images (inspired by Salvador Dali and Edvard Munch) collide with contemporary despair. This disjunctive narrative technique reflects not only trauma's incoherence but also the impossibility of finding resolution in a fractured world.

Use of Psychophysical Performance and Post-Dramatic Strategies

Goswami's actors are trained not merely to deliver dialogue but to embody concepts, emotions, and metaphors through their physicality. Influenced by psychophysical performance methodologies (Barba, Grotowski, Suzuki), his actors perform movement sequences where gesture precedes language, and breath rhythms sculpt emotional space. In *Eréndira's Metamorphosis*, for instance, the protagonist's silences are filled with trembling, pulsating, resisting motions—turning her body into a text of oppression and reclamation. Similarly, in *A River's Tale*, the performer transitions through ritualistic movements that mimic the flow of water, grief, and eventual immersion, evoking the non-verbal language of trauma and transcendence. Goswami's theatre thus shifts the spectators' attention from “what is said” to “what is lived” on stage.

These strategies align with Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of post-dramatic theatre, where text no longer dominates the performance



but becomes one of many equally important elements—alongside space, light, sound, movement, and scenography. In Goswami's work, each element is carefully orchestrated to generate a visceral, often uncomfortable intimacy between performer and audience.

Integration of Traditional Art Forms

While innovating with global theatrical vocabularies, Goswami remains deeply anchored in Assamese cultural traditions. He weaves in indigenous performance elements such as different movements from dance, lullabies, and oral narratives—not as nostalgic insertions but as re-contextualized tools of expression. In *Tuponi E Ture Kalatalat Ghar*, a lullaby sung to a banana tree conjures the echo of forgotten cultural wisdom and emotional dislocation. These integrations affirm that tradition in Goswami's theatre is not frozen; it is dynamic, politically charged, and dialogic.

The Role of Silence, Repetition, and Ritual

Silence in Goswami's plays is not the absence of language—it is its critique. Strategic silences are deployed in *Bhukar Xaadhu* and *Eréndira's Metamorphosis* to signify the unspeakable—hunger, violence, grief. Repetition, another key device, serves to both lull and unsettle. Repeated gestures, phrases, and scenes—as in *Irikoti-Mirikoti: The Butterfly Effect*—evoke the cycles of oppression, bureaucracy, and existential entrapment. Repetition functions as both aesthetic rhythm and political indictment.

Ritual plays a central role in Goswami's staging. His theatre borrows from Assamese folk rites and expands them into secular ceremonies of mourning, resistance, and transformation. Whether it is the symbolic planting of a tree in *A River's Tale*, or the use of body painting and trance-like movement in *Etheror Irika – Ethereal Epoch*, Goswami's theatre invites audiences into a collective ritual space—where meaning is not stated but sensed, not dictated but discovered.

Goswami's narrative and aesthetic innovations serve a larger purpose: to dismantle dominant modes of perception and invite spectators into an active, embodied encounter with the performance. His theatre becomes a site of sensory archaeology—uncovering layers of cultural memory, social trauma, and hidden resistance. It is a theatre that listens, mourns, challenges, and ultimately transforms.

Performance Analysis: Selected Case Studies

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami's theatre is marked not only by its themes and narrative structure but also by the nuanced precision and innovation in individual productions. His performances are rigorously layered, aesthetically daring, and politically alert. The following case studies offer a closer examination of four significant works, each representative of distinct thematic and performative strategies in his evolving theatre praxis.

Rajai Hukum Dise: Resistance and Power Structures

In *Rajai Hukum Dise* (*The King Has Ordered*), Goswami presents a searing critique of autocracy and institutionalized absurdity. Set in an unnamed regime, the play portrays how language and logic are co-opted by authoritarian structures to enforce conformity. Dialogue is deliberately abstract, repetitive, and often nonsensical—evoking the alienation of Kafkaesque bureaucracy and the futility of resistance in totalitarian systems.

The performance space is minimal—sparse furniture, symbolic props, and regulated lighting create an atmosphere of emotional sterility. Characters speak as if compelled, not by choice but by decree, highlighting how individuals are rendered speechless by systems that pretend to offer speech. Physical stillness is juxtaposed with sudden, chaotic movement to emphasize psychological entrapment.

In staging this play, Goswami employs the aesthetics of political absurdism, using repetition, contradiction, and silence to expose the mechanisms of power. The effect is one of cognitive dissonance—forcing the audience to question the legitimacy of command, the illusion of participation, and the cost of blind obedience.

Imaan Imaan Paani: Ecological Politics and Scenographic Metaphors

Imaan Imaan Paani, directed by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami, is a visually compelling, psychophysical performance that confronts Assam's ecological turmoil and cultural disintegration. Drawing intermedial inspiration from Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* and Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, the play weaves myth, memory, and socio-political anxiety into a surreal, non-linear narrative.

Performed in Assamese, Rabha, Bodo, and gibberish, the multilingual fabric of the play mirrors the fragmentation of language and meaning amid environmental and systemic collapse. Here, scenography becomes

a primary narrative force—water containers, rustling plastic sheets, and disjointed clocks symbolize flooding, displacement, and the distortion of time. Ritualistic re-enactments of childhood games like “Imman Imman Paani” evoke a haunting nostalgia, transforming play into a metaphor for survival on collapsing cultural ground.

The actors’ trance-like movements and mechanical gestures express emotional numbness and unresolved grief. Goswami’s emphasis on image, rhythm, and embodied metaphor crafts a theatre of affect and resistance. Ultimately, Imaan Imaan Paani stands as a poetic elegy for a world submerged in forgotten responsibilities and delayed justice—where memory surfaces not as solace, but as a call to confront ecological and ethical urgency.

Eréndira’s Metamorphosis: Feminist Re-reading and Corporeal Dramaturgy

Eréndira’s Metamorphosis, co-authored with Namrata Sarma, is a radical feminist re-imagining of Gabriel García Márquez’s novella. It tells the story of a young girl forced into sexual servitude by her grandmother, but Goswami’s staging transforms this into a ritual of awakening and resistance. The production rejects sentimental victimhood and instead locates agency in embodied silence and choreographed resistance.



The use of psychophysical performance is central. Eréndira rarely speaks, but her body trembles, recoils, and ultimately breaks out of its imposed roles. Her silence is not submission; it is narrative. The choreography—a mix of stillness, spasmodic motion, and ritual gesture—becomes a vocabulary of resistance.

Staged with minimal props and evocative lighting, the play offers a sustained meditation on systemic patriarchy. Objects like ball, net become symbols of control and transformation. The final act—where Eréndira faces the audience in still defiance—is not a climax but an emergence. It affirms Goswami’s belief in performance as a space of survival, dignity, and feminist re-imagination.

Socio-Political Engagement and Global Reception

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami’s theatre is fundamentally political—not in the narrow sense of didactic or partisan commentary, but in its insistence on confronting the structures that govern memory, identity, and silence. His stage becomes a space of resistance and re-imagination, where forgotten voices speak, wounded bodies move, and ritual reclaims the right to narrate. Goswami’s works interrogate not only the content of oppression—be it environmental neglect, gender violence, or political apathy—but also the very form of theatre itself. His artistic activism lies in crafting affective encounters that disorient, question, and mobilize.



international productions but also conducts physical theatre workshops, symposiums, and environmental sensitization programs. It has served as a vibrant hub for cultural diplomacy and artistic exchange, welcoming artists from over 15 countries since its inception.

Through these engagements, Goswami and AANK have contributed to shaping a global network of artistic solidarity. Their role in the founding of the “New World Theatre Network (NWTN)” —a collective of theatre groups from nine countries committed to intercultural collaboration—demonstrates how local theatre from Assam can speak meaningfully across borders. Theatre, in Goswami’s hands, becomes both a mirror of injustice and a scaffold for global resistance.

Dramaturgy and Inter-Medial Practices

Goswami’s dramaturgy is not confined to text, gesture, or even actor—a defining characteristic of his theatre is its embrace of inter-mediality: the merging of media, disciplines, and sensory modes to create a multidimensional narrative experience. His performances are living installations where light, sound, image, body, and silence form a dialogic ensemble.

One of the most striking intermedial strategies Goswami employs is the use of visual art as a dramaturgical tool. In *A River’s Tale*, he integrates paintings by visual artist Dr. Sanjib Borah—not as static backdrops, but as evolving emotional states. These projected images accompany the actor’s psychophysical journey, creating a dreamlike tapestry where water, grief, and memory flow seamlessly. The paintings do not illustrate the story; they intervene in it, adding layers of metaphor and mood.

Digital projections and video mapping are used in several productions to fragment space and temporality. In *Etheror Irika – Ethereal Epoch*, for instance, the digital visuals create a hallucinatory environment

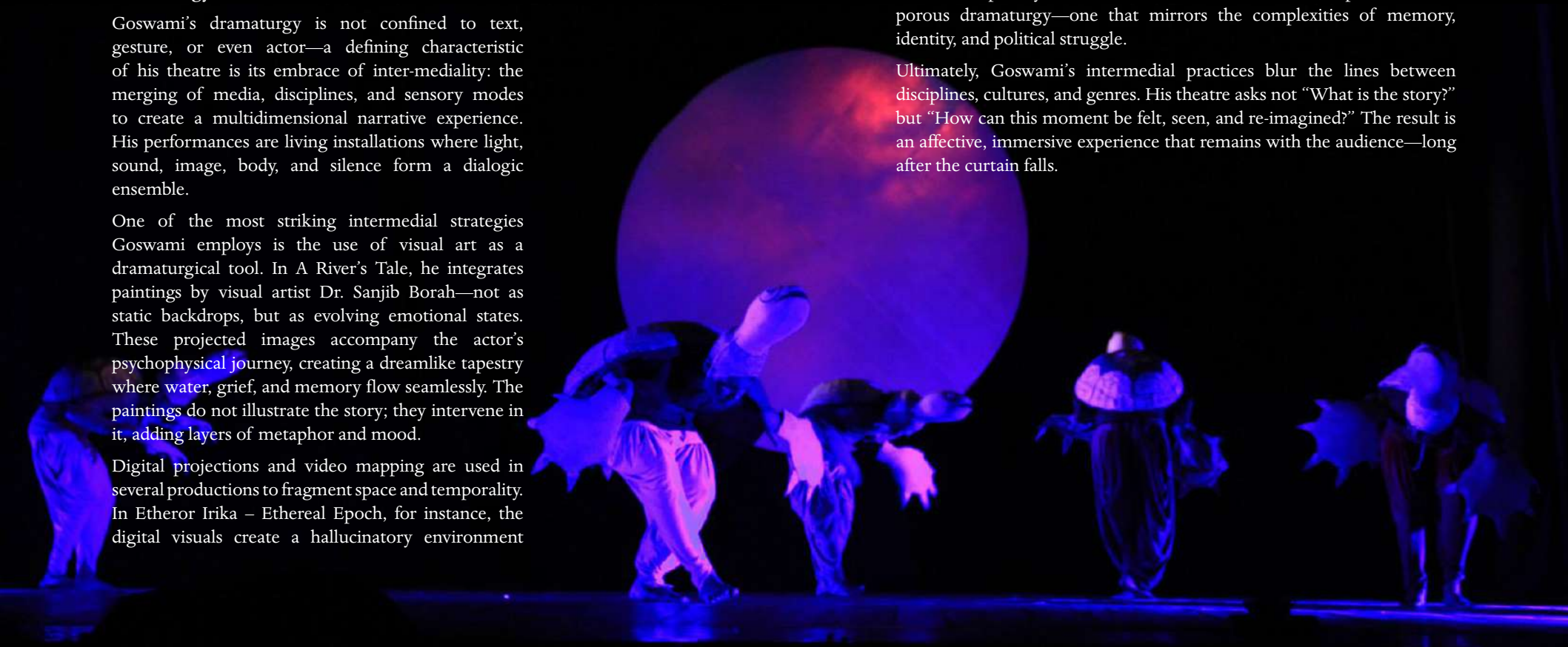
where the past and future collide in a metaphysical now. Screens become mirrors, borders, and portals—extending the stage into virtual landscapes that expand meaning and rupture realism.

Sound, too, is carefully curated—not simply as background or atmospheric element, but as a performative presence. In Imaan Imaan Paani, dripping water and distorted lullabies form a sonic score that heightens the audience’s sense of dislocation. The rhythmic use of silence—frequent across Goswami’s works—is not absence but charged potential. Silence becomes space: for breath, for mourning, for resistance.

Space design in his theatre is minimalistic but expressive. The absence of elaborate sets draws attention to the body, while subtle spatial cues—ropes, lights, containers—carry immense symbolic weight. The set often transforms in function and meaning during the performance, allowing audiences to engage actively in reinterpreting the environment.

Collaborations with scholars, dancers, visual artists, and musicians have expanded the aesthetic horizons of Goswami’s theatre. His openness to interdisciplinary methods reflects a commitment to a pluralistic and porous dramaturgy—one that mirrors the complexities of memory, identity, and political struggle.

Ultimately, Goswami’s intermedial practices blur the lines between disciplines, cultures, and genres. His theatre asks not “What is the story?” but “How can this moment be felt, seen, and re-imagined?” The result is an affective, immersive experience that remains with the audience—long after the curtain falls.



Conclusion

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami's theatre represents a bold and vital contribution to the evolving discourse of intercultural performance. Rooted in the socio-political soil of Assam yet resonant with global concerns, his works exemplify a theatre praxis that is at once locally rooted and globally conscious. Through productions that travel across languages, nations, and aesthetic boundaries, Goswami constructs a dramaturgy that challenges the complacency of realism and reinvigorates performance with urgency, imagination, and emotional truth.

At the heart of his theatre is a sustained engagement with the themes of identity and memory—both individual and collective. His characters are often survivors of displacement, trauma, hunger, and silence, but they do not exist merely to represent pain. They remember, resist, reimagine. In staging their stories, Goswami utilizes a wide array of artistic resources: visual art, folk idioms, childhood games, non-verbal expression, and ritual repetition. This synthesis creates a layered experience where meaning emerges not through plot but through presence.

Goswami's dramaturgical innovations—non-linear storytelling, psychophysical performance, integration of traditional art forms, and intermedial experimentation—offer a powerful model for contemporary theatre-makers navigating the complexities of postcolonial identity, climate crisis, and cultural hybridity. His work demonstrates how performance can be a site of remembrance, resistance, and renewal, offering not only critique but also compassion.

As Assam continues to negotiate its position within national and global narratives, theatre-makers like Goswami pave the way for a new generation of artists committed to social engagement, aesthetic innovation, and intercultural dialogue. Festivals like BBITF and international platforms such as CITF, YITF, and the Sahara Festival have already begun to build networks that transcend borders—culturally, linguistically, and politically.

Looking forward, the future of Assamese theatre lies not in emulation of dominant models but in the deepening of its own language—visual, physical, and philosophical. Goswami's body of work stands as both a blueprint and a provocation: to dream dangerously, to perform fearlessly, and to remember collectively. Through his theatre, we are reminded that the stage is not only a mirror—it is a river, a scream, a threshold. A place where art and life flow together in the search for meaning and transformation.

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Voicing the Singular: Monodrama and Emerging Trends in Contemporary World Theatre

Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami

Introduction: The Power of One Voice

Monodrama, traditionally defined as a theatrical performance built around a single performer, occupies a unique space within the broader spectrum of theatre. Characterized by its minimalistic approach and intense focus on the solitary actor, it offers a heightened experience of intimacy between performer and audience. The absence of co-actors or elaborate ensembles amplifies the vulnerability of the solo performer, while also creating a space for deep psychological, emotional, and philosophical engagement.

Historically, monodrama was often relegated to the margins of mainstream theatre, considered either a formal experiment or a budget-constrained necessity. However, in the current global context—marked by political unrest, mass displacement, environmental crises, public health emergencies, and rapid digitalization—monodrama has emerged as

an urgent and powerful form of theatrical expression. The single voice on stage becomes a metaphor for resistance, resilience, and reflection, embodying both personal testimony and collective experience.

In this era of overstimulation and fragmented attention, monodrama invites audiences to pause and listen—to engage deeply with one story, one presence, one truth. Its simplicity belies its complexity. A single performer, navigating memory, trauma, identity, or ideology, can evoke layers of meaning that resonate far beyond the boundaries of the stage. Moreover, as contemporary audiences increasingly seek authentic, direct, and affective encounters, monodrama meets this demand through its raw immediacy and introspective tone.

The revival of monodrama also aligns with a broader shift in global theatre towards minimalism, solo storytelling, and identity-based narratives. As diverse voices struggle to be heard in an often polarized world, monodrama provides a platform for the singular voice to speak the unspeakable, reveal the invisible, and reimagine the real. Whether in a traditional theatre, a digital platform, or an unconventional site-specific space, the monodramatic form continues to evolve as a relevant and radical tool in the contemporary theatre landscape.

Historical Roots and Contemporary Relevance

The roots of monodrama can be traced back to the aesthetic and philosophical undercurrents of 18th- and 19th-century Romanticism, where the emphasis on subjectivity, solitude, and emotional intensity gave rise to early experiments in single-performer storytelling. These performances were often introspective, poetic, and dramatized internal struggles, aligning with the Romantic ideal of the tortured individual artist confronting the vastness of existence. Monodramatic expressions

during this period were literary and often presented as recitations or dramatic readings, rather than full-fledged stage productions.

The 20th century, however, marked the true maturation of monodrama as a theatrical form. Pioneering figures like Ruth Draper, known for her character-driven sketches, expanded the possibilities of solo performance by embodying multiple personas in a single act. Her nuanced voice work and psychological realism laid the foundation for modern solo acting. Later, Samuel Beckett redefined the existential potential of monodrama through plays like *Krapp's Last Tape*, where minimalism, silence, and repetition served as metaphors for memory, decay, and isolation. Similarly, Spalding Gray turned monodrama into a vehicle for autobiographical performance, popularizing the “sit-down” monologue that combined personal narrative with socio-political commentary, often delivered with ironic detachment.

The contemporary period has witnessed a global reimagining of monodrama, no longer confined to elite literary traditions or individual confessionals. Across cultures—from Eastern Europe to South Asia, from Africa to Latin America—artists have employed the monodramatic format to confront issues of gender, race, caste, displacement, mental health, and ecological crisis. Monodrama is increasingly viewed not as a reductive or restrictive form, but as an expansive space for experimentation, embodiment, and confrontation.

This evolution also aligns closely with Hans-Thies Lehmann's concept of “Postdramatic theatre” (2006), where the classical notions of plot, character development, and dialogue are often destabilized. Instead, emphasis is placed on presence over representation, fragmentation over linearity, and affective resonance over narrative closure. Monodrama, in its modern iteration, resonates deeply with these postdramatic concerns. The performer is no longer merely a character but becomes a site of convergence—of memory, history, politics, and performance.

Furthermore, the contemporary relevance of monodrama lies in its ability to collapse the boundaries between actor and character, and between fiction and reality. In many solo performances today, the artist draws upon autobiographical material, oral histories, or real-world testimonies, crafting a hybrid form that blurs performance and lived experience. The aesthetic of minimalism—often just a chair, a spotlight, and a voice—is not an absence of resources but a deliberate strategy to foreground the body, the voice, and the gaze.

Thus, monodrama in the 21st century is not merely a form of solo theatre—it is a philosophical and political intervention. It reclaims the personal as

political, the solitary as universal, and the minimal as monumental. It offers a space where silence can speak, and where the singular voice can echo across borders and cultures with profound resonance.

Pandemic Theatre and Digital Monologues

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought the traditional machinery of theatre to a sudden halt. Physical distancing protocols, lockdowns, and the closure of performance venues forced artists around the world to rethink the foundational premises of liveness, space, and communal spectatorship. In this moment of rupture, monodrama emerged not only as a survival strategy but as a resilient, adaptive, and deeply human form of expression.

With limited or no access to physical theatres or ensemble collaboration, performers turned inward—toward solo storytelling, and outward—toward digital platforms. Thus arose what may be called the “theatre of isolation”: a new dramaturgy forged in the crucible of solitude, uncertainty, and technological improvisation. Tools like Zoom, Instagram Live, YouTube, Facebook Live, and even WhatsApp video recordings became makeshift stages, rehearsal spaces, and audience halls.

One of the most striking features of this period was the intimate immediacy of digital monologues. These performances were often presented from the artist's own room, kitchen, or balcony, thereby collapsing the distance between art and life. The performer's vulnerability—once confined to the metaphorical ‘black box’—was now vividly literal: raw, unfiltered, and personal. Monodrama, in this new configuration, transformed from a theatrical genre to a ritual of witnessing and emotional communion.

International examples abound. Productions such as “Seven Methods of Killing Kylie Jenner” by Jasmine Lee-Jones (UK) gained traction not only as a staged piece but also through its monologic power and digital translatability during the pandemic era. The play, cantered on identity, race, internet culture, and digital activism, was particularly resonant in a time when both social and theatrical spaces were mediated by screens.

In the Indian context, several grassroots theatre collectives and independent artists adapted to the digital medium by producing short video monologues. Some were scripted; others took the form of confessions, testimonials, or poetic recitations. These works often addressed themes like domestic violence, caste discrimination, migrant worker crises, and mental health—all intensified by the pandemic. They demonstrated that monodrama was not only technically feasible during

lockdown but aesthetically and politically urgent.

In this context, monodrama became a performative archive of the pandemic experience. The solitary performer—speaking to a camera, often with minimal resources—became the voice of a generation grappling with isolation, grief, and digital fatigue. The audience, dispersed and remote, was invited to engage not as passive spectators, but as empathetic witnesses to a shared global rupture.

Moreover, the technological mediation of monodrama reshaped its performative dynamics. While the liveness of theatre was compromised, it was partially reconstituted through real-time interactions in chat boxes, audience responses via emoji's, and shared watch parties. The act of watching became participatory, social, and sometimes collective, albeit virtually. This redefined the relationship between performer and audience, echoing Philip Auslander's notion of "liveness" in the digital age (Auslander, 2008).

Thus, the pandemic did not diminish monodrama—it reinvigorated it, expanding its formal boundaries and democratizing its access. Bedrooms became black boxes, webcams replaced spotlights, and silence echoed through buffering screens. In these reconfigured spaces, monodrama proved not only its endurance but its evolving relevance in a time of global precarity.

Monodrama as Political and Testimonial Theatre

Monodrama has increasingly evolved into a powerful vehicle for political expression, social critique, and testimonial performance, especially in contexts where voices are silenced, identities are marginalized, and histories are erased. Its stripped-down form allows for a focused engagement with individual experience as a site of political discourse, thereby collapsing the binary between the personal and the political.

In today's theatre landscape, solo performances are no longer mere introspective explorations; they have become acts of resistance, tools for advocacy, and rituals of memory. Across continents, artists are embracing monodrama as a form of performative testimony, using their bodies, voices, and stories to articulate trauma, injustice, and aspirations for change.

A striking example is the Sri Lankan monodrama "The Inviction", which brings forth narratives of war, loss, and post-conflict identity. Performed by a single actor embodying multiple lived realities, the piece underscores the urgency of voicing what is often unspoken in public discourse.

Similarly, the Romanian production "#NotMe", performed by Andreea Tănase, uses a direct-address narrative to tackle issues of sexual violence, victim-blaming, and institutional neglect. Both pieces exemplify what performance theorists refer to as the "body as archive"—where the performer not only narrates but embodies lived memory, transforming it into a shared political act (Taylor, 2003).

In India, monodrama has taken on culturally specific forms that weave together folklore, gender consciousness, and ecological themes. The play *Main Rahi Masoom*, for instance, is rooted in poetic narrative and brings forth issues of caste, belonging, and memory, reflecting how individual identity becomes entangled with collective trauma. Likewise, *A River's Tale*—written and directed by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami—uses Assamese poetic language, psyche-physical movement, and ecological symbolism to represent a woman's complex relationship with the river Lakheitra. Here, the river becomes both witness and metaphor, and the performer's body becomes a site of conflict between tradition and resistance, femininity and societal oppression.

What makes these works impactful is their use of minimal resources to confront monumental issues. Monodrama enables the lone performer to shift between characters, temporalities, and emotional registers, offering a multidimensional experience of structural violence. This is particularly resonant in communities and nations where censorship, patriarchy, and political instability curtail collective artistic freedom.

In such contexts, the monodramatic stage becomes a safe yet subversive space—a place where one can speak truth to power without intermediaries. It is performative speech as political action, where the solitary voice reclaims space in both literal and symbolic terms. Judith Butler's notion of "performativity" resonates here: when the marginalized subject performs their identity and history, they not only assert their presence but also challenge hegemonic norms that seek to erase them (Butler, 1997).

Thus, monodrama's testimonial power lies in its immediacy, sincerity, and ethical demand. It invites spectators not just to witness but to respond—emotionally, intellectually, and politically. In doing so, it restores agency to those whose narratives have been systemically muted, proving that a single voice can resonate like a chorus when it carries the weight of a silenced multitude.

Technological Interventions and Hybrid Forms

The evolution of monodrama in recent years has not only been

conceptual or thematic but also technological. As digital media, AI tools, and immersive technologies become increasingly accessible, monodrama is undergoing a radical transformation. These interventions challenge its perceived purity—traditionally defined by the unmediated presence of a single performer—by integrating virtual elements that expand the form’s expressive, aesthetic, and communicative possibilities.

Contemporary monodramas frequently employ projected visuals, pre-recorded voiceovers, augmented reality overlays, algorithmically generated soundscapes, and even AI-generated dialogue prompts. These enhancements do not diminish the performer’s centrality but rather complicate and enrich it. In such hybrid performances, the lone actor is no longer alone in a conventional sense; rather, they interact with a complex dramaturgy of digital elements—avatars, disembodied voices, shifting visual backdrops, and real-time data streams—that function as both scenic partners and thematic extensions.

This “techno-monologue” mode introduces a significant ontological shift. The performer, once the sole focal point of liveness and embodiment, is now in conversation with technologies that may be recorded, reactive, or even autonomous. This dynamic leads to what performance scholar Steve Dixon (2007) describes as a shift from presence to telepresence—where liveness is mediated through digital transmission, often experienced asynchronously or interactively across devices and platforms.

Consider performances where the actor’s monologue is punctuated by audience chat reactions, live polling, or AI-generated textual inserts, creating a feedback loop that dissolves the traditional boundaries between performer, audience, and author. In such settings, the spectator becomes a participant or collaborator, contributing to a co-authored dramaturgy. This shift aligns with the postdramatic aesthetics of de-hierarchized narrative and multi-sensory engagement (Lehmann, 2006), further expanding monodrama’s critical and creative scope.

Moreover, the integration of motion-tracking technology, holograms, and digital scenography enables the performer’s body to activate or manipulate visual and sonic environments in real time. For instance, movement across the stage may trigger lighting changes, spatial distortions, or the appearance of virtual characters. These innovations align monodrama with contemporary performance art, where the actor’s corporeality merges with coded systems, producing a new hybrid presence—both embodied and disembodied.

This technologically mediated form also redefines notions of space and temporality. The stage is no longer confined to a physical location, and

performances may occur across multiple geographies simultaneously. A monologue performed in one city may be live-streamed, commented on, and interactively reshaped by audiences in another. This translocality reflects the condition of global digital spectatorship, making monodrama a potent tool for intercultural exchange and remote engagement.

Importantly, these hybrid forms open doors for disabled performers, remote artists, and financially constrained creators, offering alternative ways to access, produce, and distribute monodramatic work. They democratize the form, while also raising questions about the aesthetics of interruption, glitch, latency, and machine-agency in live performance.

Thus, technology in monodrama is not simply an add-on—it is an aesthetic partner. It pushes the solo performer into new realms of interaction and invents a digitally augmented intimacy that reshapes how we define presence, voice, and liveness in theatre. As artists continue to experiment with these tools, monodrama is poised to remain at the cutting edge of performative innovation in the 21st century.

Aesthetics of the Singular: Direct Address and Affective Engagement

A crucial aesthetic hallmark of monodrama is its intense reliance on direct address—a performative gesture where the performer intentionally breaks the “fourth wall” to speak directly to the audience. This formal strategy transforms the theatrical space from a representational illusion into an ethical encounter. In contrast to traditional dramatic theatre, where the audience is a passive observer peering into a fictional world, monodrama often collapses distance, drawing the spectator into a space of immediacy, vulnerability, and shared presence.

This direct address functions on multiple levels: it can be confessional, accusatory, ironic, meditative, or dialogic. By blurring the boundaries between character and performer, fiction and reality, it invites audiences to not just watch, but to reflect, judge, empathize, and sometimes even respond. The monodramatic performer, often acting as both narrator and protagonist, navigates emotional terrains in real time, allowing for affective engagement that is both intimate and intense.

This aesthetic choice lends itself naturally to testimonial and identity-based theatre, where the performer assumes the role of a witness or truth-teller. Whether recounting a personal trauma, articulating a social grievance, or staging a poetic rumination, the monodramatic voice directly challenges the audience to listen deeply and bear witness. The performance becomes a relational act, transforming spectators into ethical participants rather

than distant viewers.

Furthermore, monodrama's aesthetic vocabulary often eschews conventional dramatic action in favour of techniques such as stillness, silence, repetition, and fragmentation. These elements function not as absences, but as charged presences—what Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) terms “presence without representation.” In postdramatic theatre, such as monodrama, the focus shifts from storytelling and plot progression to the sensory, emotional, and temporal experience of performance. The voice may pause for long silences, the body may freeze mid-gesture, and words may be repeated obsessively—not to develop a narrative, but to generate resonance, disrupt linear time, or evoke an emotional undertow.

For instance, in a solo performance addressing loss or displacement, a sustained silence may carry more meaning than a paragraph of exposition. The absence of speech becomes a language of its own. Similarly, fragmentation—whether in speech, thought, or scenography—mirrors the fractured realities of memory, trauma, and identity. These formal choices intensify the affective impact of the performance, enabling a kind of performative poetry that transcends logical meaning.

Moreover, the aesthetic of minimalism—often a necessity in monodrama due to limited staging and resources—amplifies this stylistic power. A bare stage, a single chair, a shifting light—these become potent dramaturgical elements. Without the distractions of elaborate sets or supporting characters, every movement, breath, and pause by the performer is magnified. The audience is compelled to listen with their whole body, to perceive nuances in rhythm, tone, and gesture that might otherwise be lost.

The monodramatic performer, therefore, is not merely acting but enacting presence—a presence that demands attention, evokes empathy, and constructs meaning through minimal yet concentrated expression. This concentration produces an aesthetic of density—a compact form that is layered, reflexive, and emotionally charged.

In this sense, the aesthetics of monodrama are not only about theatrical style but also about modes of ethical engagement and cultural perception. The solitary voice on stage, stripped of spectacle, becomes a mirror and a provocation—a call to attend to what is often ignored or erased in the noise of contemporary life. It is in this silent, still, fragmented voice that the monodrama finds its most enduring and radical power.

The Economics and Accessibility of Monodrama

Beyond its aesthetic and political significance, the contemporary proliferation of monodrama is also deeply tied to economic pragmatism and logistical flexibility. In a time when funding for the arts is increasingly precarious, particularly in the Global South and among independent theatre communities worldwide, monodrama has emerged as a viable, sustainable, and accessible mode of performance. Its structural simplicity—requiring just one performer, minimal technical support, and flexible staging—makes it remarkably cost-effective.

Unlike ensemble productions that demand extensive rehearsal time, complex set designs, and large production crews, monodramas can be staged in non-traditional or low-budget venues: community halls, classrooms, black box theatres, heritage sites, open-air spaces, galleries, or even domestic interiors. This mobility opens the form to decentralized audiences, especially in rural, under-resourced, or politically sensitive regions where mainstream theatre infrastructure is either absent or inaccessible.

Monodrama's compactness also makes it highly tourable and festival-friendly, particularly within the fringe theatre circuits of Edinburgh, Avignon, Colombo, or Seoul. Solo acts are easier to transport across national borders and are favoured in international festivals for their lower costs, concise duration, and focused narrative appeal. For many emerging theatre-makers—particularly those without institutional backing—monodrama offers a gateway into professional visibility on global stages.

Furthermore, solo performance provides a space of creative autonomy. For politically engaged artists, especially those navigating censorship, monodrama becomes a strategic form. It allows for self-authored, self-directed, and self-performed work, reducing the layers of institutional mediation or compromise. In regimes where ensemble political theatre may be surveilled or banned, a solo performance in an intimate or private space can still wield tremendous subversive power.

Monodrama also invites performers to engage in psychophysical and embodied exploration—aesthetic practices that require deep internal focus and expressive range. The absence of co-actors pushes the solo performer to sustain rhythm, modulate tone, and navigate complex emotional transitions without external cues. This can lead to innovative dramaturgical structures and bold experimentation with voice, breath, silence, stillness, and repetition. It also encourages hybrid forms, where autobiography blends with fiction, or movement interfaces with multimedia, offering dynamic possibilities for urgent and affective

storytelling.

Moreover, the affordability and accessibility of monodrama democratize the theatrical field. It lowers entry barriers for first-generation artists, marginalized creators, and youth collectives, making it possible to devise and present meaningful theatre without elite training or capital-intensive production. In this sense, monodrama serves both as an artistic practice and a pedagogical tool, nurturing a generation of performers and storytellers who can articulate their realities with limited means but infinite vision.

In essence, the monodramatic form thrives at the intersection of artistic agency and economic necessity. It embodies the ethos of “doing more with less,” proving that theatre does not require opulence to be transformative. In a world where resources are unevenly distributed, monodrama reaffirms that theatre, at its core, is not a spectacle of means but a spectacle of meaning—a single voice, a bare stage, and a truth that needs to be heard.

Conclusion: The Singular as Universal

In an age defined by fragmentation—social, political, ecological, and psychological—the solitary voice on stage resonates with a newfound urgency and universality. Monodrama, in its contemporary manifestations, is no longer a peripheral form or an economic fallback; it has evolved into a powerful dramaturgical strategy—one that fuses aesthetic precision with emotional depth, and minimalism with expansive meaning. The singular voice, embodied in a lone performer, often bears the weight of collective trauma, memory, longing, and hope.

Across cultures and geographies, monodrama continues to adapt and thrive in diverse forms: from the confessional to the testimonial, from the digital to the ritualistic. Whether it unfolds in the stark silence of a black box theatre, the confined intimacy of a bedroom-turned-stage during a lockdown, or the algorithmic abstraction of a virtual performance space, monodrama proves theatre’s resilient capacity to connect, confront, and transform.

The form’s greatest strength lies in its paradox: though it focuses on a single performer, it speaks to the plurality of human experience. The personal becomes political; the anecdotal becomes allegorical. In doing so, monodrama aligns with the ethics of presence, the poetics of vulnerability, and the politics of voice—offering a counterpoint to the noise, spectacle, and dislocation of the contemporary world.

In this context, monodrama is not just a form—it is a stance, a mode of witnessing, a tool of resistance, and a sanctuary of expression. It is where solitude becomes solidarity, and where the margins become the site of new theatrical visions. As global theatre continues to evolve amidst technological disruption, economic uncertainty, and cultural shifts, monodrama stands as a vital, versatile, and visionary form—one that will continue to shape the future of performance by honouring the singular as a mirror of the universal.

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Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami is a noted playwright, director, and scholar in Drama, Theatre, and Cultural Studies. He authored the first online Short History of Assamese Literature, translated *The Land Where the Sticker Tree Grows*, and presented papers at international forums including YITF (South Korea) and Shanghai Theatre Academy. His plays have earned global acclaim at festivals like CITF and the Sahara Festival in Tunisia. He actively enriches Assamese and global theatre through research, writing, and intercultural collaboration.

PHYSICAL THEATRE WORKSHOP: BBITF25

Theme:

Embodied Voices: The Craft of Physical Expression on Stage

Dates: September 4–6, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM (Daily – 2 sessions per day)

Venue: Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society, Guwahati, Assam, India

Total Seats: 30 participants

CONCEPT NOTE

The Physical Theatre Workshop at BBITF 2025 is an intensive, hands-on training programme designed to deepen the performer's connection to their own body as a storytelling instrument. This year's edition brings together international facilitators and master practitioners to guide participants through movement-based techniques, non-verbal communication, and embodied improvisation. The workshop emphasizes creating emotional resonance through gestures, spatial dynamics, and ensemble energy—transcending language through physical narratives.

WORKSHOP FOCUS AREAS

- Body Awareness and Physical Presence
- Improvisation Techniques and Expressive Gestures
- Integration of Dance, Mime, and Physical Storytelling
- Cultural Rhythms and Nonverbal Dialogue

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN

Whether you're a seasoned actor or a passionate beginner, this workshop will unlock new dimensions of your performance abilities. Through interactive exercises, cross-cultural exchange, and professional mentorship, participants will gain the tools to communicate with clarity, emotion, and power—using only the language of the body.

Come, move, create, and express—beyond words.

WORKSHOP DETAILS AND THE FACILITATOR

CONTEMPORARY AERIAL ACROBATIC WORKSHOP

Workshop by: IVA PETER-DRAGAN, IVANA BESKER AND ANA BAKSIC.

Country: CROATIA

About the Workshop:

In this workshop we will explore the advantages of acrobatic training for actors. Learning the basic of aerial acrobatics can be of great help in creating theatre pieces, exploring you character and enriching the dramaturgy of a piece. Everyone can be an acrobat to a certain degree so the focus will be on pushing your inner fears and physical boundaries through movement in the air. We will use aerial silks, ring and hammock.

About the Facilitator:

Iva Peter-Dragan is a founder and artistic director at TRIKO CIRCUS THEATRE, the Best Croatian independent theatre of the season 2011/2012. The performances of Triko were performed around the globe. Monodrama PALUNKO'S WIFE won four awards in three international festivals last two years. She holds a PhD degree from the University of Zadar, Department of Interdisciplinary Humanistic Studies, Science of Art, and the title of her thesis is THEATRE CLOWN, PERFORMATIVITY OF COMICAL.

A versatile artist, Iva is skilled in stilts walking, aerial acrobatics, juggling, and playing the trombone. She is actively involved in professional theatre productions in Croatia, working as a director, movement choreographer, and performer. She also serves as the Artistic Director of the newly established Zagreb Clown Festival, an international platform dedicated to the art of clowning.

IMPROVISATION IN THEATRE

Workshop by: KASSEM ISTANBOULI

Country: LEBANON

About the Workshop:

This workshop explores how a simple story can be transformed into a powerful theatrical experience using improvisation, movement, voice, and collective imagination. Participants will engage in devising techniques to discover multiple perspectives within a shared narrative, turning it into a poetic and dynamic stage expression. Through rhythm (with sticks or instruments), spatial exercises, and interactive play, the group will explore presence, trust, and creative storytelling.

About Workshop Facilitator:

Kassem Istambouli is a Lebanese actor, director, and cultural activist, and the founder of the Tiro Association for Arts and the Lebanese National Theatre. He is known for revitalizing abandoned cinemas in Tyre, Nabatieh, and Tripoli, transforming them into inclusive cultural spaces. A recipient of the 2023 UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, Istambouli works to democratize access to the arts across Lebanon, believing that

culture is a right for all.

THE MASK IN THE ACTOR'S BODY PERFORMANCE

Workshop by: HAFEDH KHALIFA

Country: TUNISIA

About the Workshop:

Working with masks helps unleash the actor's body to express itself effectively and creatively. Through this workshop, we will focus on the experience and importance of the art of neutral masks and the Italian Commedia dell'Arte masks in helping the actor express himself physically, improvise, and use imagination in his performance, and interact with space in a fluid, lively, and innovative manner.

About Workshop Facilitator:

Hafedh Khalifa is a Tunisian actor, director, scenographer, and theatre production trainer. A graduate of the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Tunisia, he also holds a Master's degree in Cultural Sciences. Khalifa has directed nearly twenty plays and has contributed to several Italian films. He is the founder and director of the International Festival of Theatre in the Desert and the International Festival of Cinema in the Desert, both held in Tunisia. Based between Tunis and Rome, his work bridges continents and cultures, combining artistic innovation with a deep commitment to intercultural exchange and the development of contemporary Arab theatre.

"THE BODY UNSCRIPTED"-FREEDOM TO EXPLORE MOVEMENT WITHOUT LIMITS.

Workshop by: UPEKSHA LANKATHILAKA

Country: SRI LANKA

About the Workshop:

This workshop will introduce participants to the fundamentals of physical theatre, where the body becomes the primary medium of expression. We will explore how movement, rhythm, stillness, gaze, and silence can be used to communicate emotions and tell compelling stories without the use of spoken words.

I will also share my personal experience and challenges as a director

working in physical theatre, particularly how to create emotionally engaging narratives and guide performers to express complex ideas purely through physicality. This includes shaping timing, spatial awareness, and emotional rhythm without relying on a written script.

In addition, we will examine the broader challenges within physical theatre itself. These include the demand for total physical awareness, emotional vulnerability, and the difficulty of conveying meaning to an audience through abstract or symbolic movement. The workshop will include both discussion and guided movement exercises, offering participants a chance to explore their own expressive potential and understand how the body can speak across cultures, languages, and boundaries.

About Workshop Facilitator:

Upeksha Lankathilaka is a Sri Lankan theatre educator, actor, director, and scriptwriter. She holds a BA in Drama and Theatre from the University of Colombo and is pursuing an MPhil in Performing Arts at the University of Peradeniya. Her work focuses on physical theatre, exploring how movement, space, and silence communicate beyond words. Upeksha is passionate about creating spaces for artistic exploration, where participants can discover the expressive power of the body and connect through shared creative experiences.

DRAMATIC PHYSICAL THEATRE

Workshop by: KIM SO-JUNG, KANG JU-SUNG AND JANG SE-HYUN

Country: KOREA

About the Workshop:

The purpose of our workshop is to focus on “how to express the drama with the body.” First, how will the actor express the emotions or emotions of the characters in the script with the body? Second, what is the technique of ‘expansion’ to realize as art? All of this will begin with learning slow motion.

About the Facilitator:

Director Kim So-jung started as an actor and now works as a director. Based on 30 years of acting, she is constantly experimenting with the physical expression of drama and making performances.,

Actors Kang Joo-sung and Jang Se-hyun, who are working with director Kim So-jung, have won various acting awards at international festivals as actors with excellent physical expression. They participated in international theater festivals in Romania and Mongolia and are about to perform in Britain and India.

WE ALL CARRY STORIES: DEVISING THEATRE WORKSHOP

Workshop by: ANDREEA TANASE

Country: ROMANIA

About the Workshop:

In this workshop, we will explore the symbolic dimensions of a story — transforming it through play, imagination, emotion, body, and voice into a living testimony on stage.

Participants will use devising theatre techniques to bring to life different perspectives drawn from one shared narrative. Through group work, physical exploration, and collaborative creation, we will discover how a story can become a collective experience: poetic, playful, honest, and alive.

No prior theatre experience is needed – just curiosity and presence.

About the Facilitator:

Andreea Tanase is an actress based in Bucharest, Romania. She graduated from the Theatre and Film Faculty in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in 2014. She has played numerous roles in shows directed by both prestigious national and international directors, for which she received the nomination for Best Debut at the Annual Theatre Awards, Uniter, in Romania in 2016. She also won the Award for Best Actress at the Young Actor’s Gala Hop in 2018. In 2025 she won the Grand Prix for Best Monodrama and Best Actress Award with the one woman-show #Notme directed by Casandra Topologeanu.

Theatre Forum at BBITF 2025

4 SEPTEMBER 2025

Theme 1: “Sponsorship, Sustainability, and Survival: Rethinking Theatre Funding Models”

Time: 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM |

Moderator: Mr. Jinyoung Youn (South Korea)

5 SEPTEMBER 2025

Theme 2: “Global Crises, Local Stages: Theatre’s Role in a World on Edge”

Time: 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM |

Moderator: Mr. Nayan Prasad (India)

Venue: Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra Society, Guwahati, Assam, India

Description:

The Theatre Forum at BBITF 2025 brings together prominent voices from the global theatre community for two critical conversations. The sessions address pressing challenges in sustaining theatre amidst financial uncertainties and explore the evolving role of the stage during times of global crisis.

The first forum will reflect on funding models, sponsorship opportunities, and sustainable strategies to support independent theatre in an age of shrinking cultural budgets. The second session explores how local

theatre can respond meaningfully to global crises—be they environmental, political, or humanitarian—and still maintain artistic autonomy and relevance.

Objectives:

- To spark critical dialogue on economic resilience and artistic survival
- To examine theatre’s responsibility and potential in crisis contexts
- To encourage cross-border learning and creative adaptation

Audience:

Open to theatre professionals, scholars, students, cultural leaders, and anyone invested in the future of performing arts.

Outcome:

The forums aim to generate fresh thinking around theatre production, funding, and purpose in today’s uncertain world. They serve as catalysts for global collaboration, offering a space where challenges are shared and strategies co-created.

Conclusion:

The Theatre Forum at BBITF 2025 continues the festival’s mission to be a hub for critical engagement and intercultural exchange. It celebrates theatre not only as performance but as a living, evolving dialogue between artists and the world they reflect. These discussions are a vital part of building a more connected, resilient, and imaginative global theatre community.

Environmental Sensitization Workshop Workshop Facilitator

Dr. Partha Jyoti Das and his Team | Aaranyak

Overview:

As part of its continued commitment to environmental awareness, the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2025 is proud to collaborate once again with Aaranyak for a two-day Environmental Sensitization Workshop. This year's edition focuses on re-establishing a deeper cultural and ecological connection with the Brahmaputra River, and advocating for climate consciousness through education and artistic expression.

Objectives:

- To explore the cultural and historical significance of the Brahmaputra River
- To raise awareness about ecological threats and sustainable conservation efforts
- To engage students, artists, and communities through creative environmental education

Workshop Structure:

- Interactive Lectures and Discussions:

Experts from Aaranyak, along with invited professionals from the fields of environmental studies, heritage conservation, and the performing arts, will guide participatory sessions exploring river ecology, climate resilience, and the role of art in environmental advocacy.

• Creative Performances:

The workshop will include vibrant student presentations, traditional dance, poetry recitals, and short performances themed on river conservation and environmental justice. These artistic expressions are designed to emotionally resonate with the audience, enhancing engagement and message retention.

Audience:

Open to students, environmental activists, artists, teachers, and community members who are passionate about integrating culture with climate action.

Outcomes:

- Strengthened ecological awareness among youth and academic communities
- Enhanced appreciation for Assam's riverine heritage and environmental challenges
- Inspired participants to become active voices in ecological stewardship

Conclusion:

The Environmental Sensitization Workshop at BBITF 2025 stands as a powerful bridge between science, art, and community. Through the guidance of Aaranyak and the creative energy of Assam's youth, we aim to nurture a generation that not only celebrates nature through art but also defends it with awareness and responsibility. This initiative continues to reflect our festival's larger theme—Theatre for Harmony—where performance and activism flow together like rivers shaping the land.



Swings of Love

An International Collaborative Production | From Assam to Colombo

Swings of Love is a landmark theatre production that emerged from the International Collaborative Theatre Project, jointly initiated by AANK_A Creative Line (India) and Inter Act Art (Sri Lanka). The production is one of the most significant outcomes of the growing partnership between the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival (BBITF) and the Colombo International Theatre Festival (CITF), where BBITF proudly stands as a parallel festival to CITF.

Written by French-Sri Lankan poet Manjula Wediwardena, directed by M. Safeer, and translated into Assamese by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami, Swings of Love features a compelling physical mono-performance by Assamese artist Jahnabi Bora. The piece explores themes of love, identity, displacement, and the inner emotional world of women through psychophysical movement, visual symbolism, and cross-cultural narrative textures.

Assam Premiere & BBITF 2024 Showcase

Swings of Love premiered at the Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium, Guwahati, on 28–29 April 2024 during a special international collaborative theatre event jointly supported by BBITF, Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra Society, and Saanjog. The event also featured a Theatre Forum with participants from India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, fostering dialogue on collaborative creation.

Following its impactful debut, the play was selected as the final performance of BBITF 2024, where it captivated audiences and affirmed its global relevance.

Towards CITF 2025

Following its successful run in Assam, Swings of Love is now set to represent this unique collaboration at CITF 2025 in Colombo, symbolizing the shared artistic vision of two leading South Asian festivals. The project



Performances

not only celebrates the power of collaborative creation but also highlights Assam's role in facilitating boundary-breaking theatre.

Key Outcomes:

- A landmark co-production bridging artists from Sri Lanka and India under the umbrella of CITF-BBITF partnership.
- A demonstration of multilingual, multicultural dramaturgy that transcends geographical boundaries.
- Recognition of BBITF as a nurturing space for global artistic exchange, validating its status as CITF's parallel festival.
- A unique model of international theatre-making, rooted in regional identity yet resonating universally.

Swings of Love is more than a play—it is a journey across continents, languages, and emotions, echoing the shared humanity that binds us all through theatre.



THE GIRL WHO RODE A BICYCLE

The Girl Who Rode a Bicycle

Name of The Group: SURJYA, India

Original Assamese Play: Naren Patgiri

English Dramaturgy: Dr. Manabendra Sarma

Design & Direction: Nayan Prasad

Duration: 20 minutes

Language: English

About the Group

Formation of “Surjya” in 1985 was a phenomenon. Assam State Cultural Affairs Department had organised an All Assam Full Length Drama Competition in February March, 1985, and a batch of Guwahati-based like-minded young and serious theatre activists desperately wished to take part in the said competition. But as they did not have an organisation of their own, joining in the competition became an impossible task and this had made them more restless. Suddenly, one enthusiast among them came up with a proposal of forming a new cultural organisation. The proposal attracted concern from all and another enthusiast sounded a name: Surjya. And there came no second thought. Surjya was formed and it got registered under Registration of Society’s Act. The Surjya team took part in the said competition and the play performed was Arun Sarma’s much acclaimed ‘Kukurnechiya Manuh’. Thanks to the superior performance of the entire team, Surjya won all major awards, such as, Best Team, Best Direction, Best Actor and Best Actress. In this way, Surjya now enjoys the reputation of one of the leading cultural organisations of Assam.

Year 2010 was an eventful year for Surjya. Because while celebrating its Silver Jubilee on completion of 25 years, Surjya had successfully organised the nine-day Surjya National Theatre Festival from February 12 to 19, 2010.

Surjya is now equipped with a mini auditorium which has become an ideal venue for literary seminars and other events, theatres, talks, lectures and musical soiree.

Holding the annual “Sher Choudhury Award” and “Bidyut Chakraborty Award” with generous financial support from Oil India Ltd. since 2016 are two other significant events of SURJYA.

About the Play

This performance is an adaptation of a play Saikel Saluwa Sowalijoni written by Naren Patgiri, a renowned playwright of Assam. The original play depicts the life of Chandrababha Saikia, an iron lady of Assam who had left indelible mark as a freedom fighter and a staunch advocate of women's rights. Fighting for the freedom of her country, reinstating her identity through independent motherhood in a patriarchal society, creating mass awareness on self-reliance and financial freedom for women - the multifaceted struggle of Chandrababha Saikia needs a broader spectrum to get a justified representation. Understanding that her larger-than-life personality can't be brought in within the limited span of a performance, this devised performance is an effort to present slices of her life using two narrators. To make it more compact we hold on to a central line of thought equating independence of women with the independence of a nation.

Director's Note

Storytellers are an integral part of human culture. They collect, churn and then tell stories which eventually become part of our collective experience. Storytellers have the privilege of choosing their stories and

(re)telling them the way they like. Like stories, tellers also move from place to place in search of new tales, new experiences and new ways of telling stories. No story could exist without a teller and such is the symbiotic relationship between them that sometime the teller becomes the tale and vice versa. The design of The Girl who Rode a Bicycle revolves round this relationship. The tradition of storytelling has an unstated demand – the presence of a listener who, in the course of the narration, becomes a participant and plays a vital role in the progression of the story. The two narrators of this performance are visualised in terms of this age old arrangement. Both the narrators are bound by the story which they need to tell and of course, in our case, by the bicycle that has given both the narrators the sense of freedom. For us telling is the most ancient and powerful act of performing.

On Stage: Namrata Sarma

Off Stage

Video Production: Jhulan Krishna Mahanta

Sound Design: Dhanjit Boro

Make-up: Ashitav Baruah

Light Operator - Dimpal Kuamr Das

Aerial trainer - Priyanka Baishya

Production: SURJYA

C.K. Agarwala Road, Guwahati : 781001

mama.nayan@gmail.com, 98640-91941



TEATRUL
TONY BULANDRA
TÂRGOVIȘTE

#nueu

după un text de Samuel Beckett



CU ANDREEA TĂNASE
REGIA CASANDRA TOPOLOGEANU

VIDEOPROIECȚIE&SOUND DESIGN
CĂTĂLIN CĂRĂMIDĂ ȘI OVIDIU CRISTIAN
LIGHT DESIGN&SOUND
ADRIAN ENACHE

foto afis Mihaela Ene

#NotMe (Originally in Romanian - #NuEu)

Name of the Group/Company:	Tony Bulandra Theater
Director of the play:	Casandra Topologeanu
Duration of the play:	50 minutes
Language of the play:	Romanian with English subtitles

About your Company

Andreea Tănase is an actress who played numerous roles in shows directed by directors like Alexander Hausvater, Dumitru Acriș, Petr Shereshevsky. She received the Nomination for Best Debut at UNITER the Annual Theatre Awards in Romania in 2016 and won the Award for Best Actress at the Young Actor's Gala Hop in 2018. She received the Special Prize of the Jury for the Best Female Interpretation for #NotMe at the Undercloud International Festival

Casandra Topologeanu (director) is juggling with both theatre and film. She started to direct theatre since 2013, staging both classic plays and musical theatre, but it was in 2017 when she discovered performative theatre at work after winning a residency at Reactor in Cluj-Napoca. In 2020 she started her own film production company Reverb44, where she directs shorts, animations, sketches, but also commercial work.

#NotMe is her the most ambitious project, where she combined several art techniques for both theatrical language and cinematic work. The performance won Best Jury Award at Dhofar International Theater Festival in Salalah, Oman in 2024.





About the Play

Written through devised technique by Andreea Tanase (actress) and Casandra Topologeanu (director), inspired by Samuel Beckett's play Not I. #NotMe is a one woman show about an isolated woman who tries to reclaim her life by confronting her past. Starting from the need to escape from a reality too difficult to accept and build up to the dissociative amnesia in the story that Beckett proposes in the homonymous text, our performance is a mosaic of short scenes inspired by personal events. #NotMe is a cocktail of performative elements, visual projections and sound design that reformulates the confession about isolation, abuse and the way these have changed our relationship to our own reality and femininity.

Director's Note

I think that both as a society and as individuals, we do dissociate, more or less, in our own mundane lives. It's the story we fabricate for ourselves, the persona we carefully craft and project to the outside world. Whether it's our physical appearance on social media or our opinions on geopolitics. Our lived experiences are slowly being turned into content.



Paradoxically there was no 'director's intention', but there was a constant question which came frequently during rehearsals: is this a story worth telling? It pains me to surface it, it definitely takes its toll on the performer to be brave enough to enact it over and over again, but is it a somewhat universal pain? Is it your pain?

We worked devised theatre and experimented with performative elements. Besides the obvious setbacks of living as artists in full pandemics, the need for Truth and Play came out, but so did general anxiety and panic attacks, of which we both and Beckett, suffered from. A serious push for us to come in vulnerable and centre stage how it really feels when a crisis hits. But there's a huge benefit from this constant self-analysis in the context of isolation. Just like our character, which I literally took to therapy, it's all about society's dissociative behaviour.

Cast and Credit

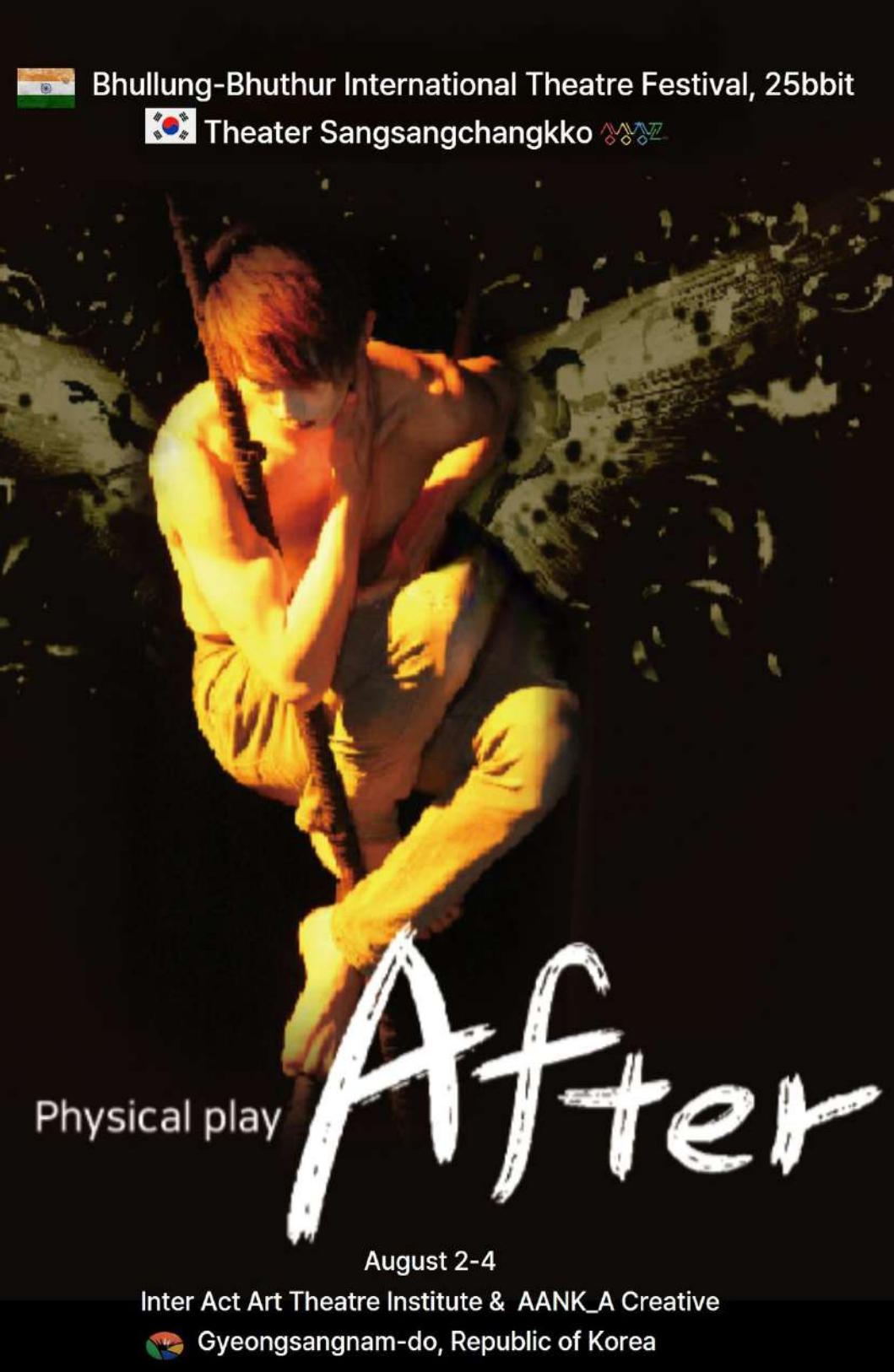
Actress/performer:	Andreea Tanase
Director:	Casandra Topologeanu
Sound & Video:	Ovidiu Cristian, Catalin Caramida



Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival, 25bbit



Theater Sangsangchangkko



Physical play

After

August 2-4

Inter Act Art Theatre Institute & AANK_A Creative



Gyeongangnam-do, Republic of Korea

After

Name of The Group:	Sangsangchangkko, South Korea
Language of The Play:	Non-verbal
Duration of The Play:	60 minutes
Designed and Direction:	Kim So Jung

About the Group

The theatre company 'Sangsangchangkko' is a theatre creation group that seeks the most important means of expression from 'imagination' in the play. With 'Dramatic Physical Theatre', They are creating a dramatic movement play. Based on this, they use video mapping, music, and various objects to give the audience imagination and create performances with a lot to see. Sangsangchangkko will continue to pursue new theatricality and put on a theatre play with various body languages, theatrical musicality, and the use of objects. They try to inform the world of the unique theatricality of the theatre company.

About the Play

"After" is the story about the fixed ego from in any time. Ryu is a man isolated from the world because of something shocked in his childhood. We often see the people who have the fixed ego of any part of themselves because of the lack or shock from childhood, despite they are already grown-up. Surprisingly, there's many people as like in that case and it causes some sad cases. Someday I heard the story about a heartless man who threw his son out of the <bridge> in spite of the boy was crying for living. I felt hard to breath also I was captured with a reverberating sound of boy's cry as like an auditory hallucination. I hopped that the boy lives here despite he has gone away, even it was in the Fantasy. This story is

composed of the story about that how Ryu keeps on living 'after' 'facing of Death. With this story, I hope to support the patience and overcoming life of Ryu and ours.

Director's Note

"After" is the story about the fixed ego from in any time. Ryu is a man isolated from the world because of something shocked in his childhood. With this story, I hope to support the patience and overcoming life of Ryu and ours.

- To express a character's thoughts, emotions, situations, psychology, and stories as a physical movement of an actor beyond a traditional play.
- It's not an abstract expression, it's a physical play with clear characters and dramas.
- Objects and image mapping such as structures, dolls, and seagulls are used.

On Stage

Liu	Kang Ju Sung
Child Liu	Jang Se Hyun
Bean Lee	Yeong Ja

Playwright & Acoustics off	Min Su In
Video	Lee Sang Ho
Director & Lighting off	Kim So Jung





It's Not Me, Someone Else

Name of the Groups: Abhiranga Theatre Production_Sri Lanka

Writer, Choreographer & Director of the play:

D. Randika T. Wimalasuriya

Language(s) of Performance: English

Duration of the play: 15 minutes

About the Group

Abhiranga Theatre Group “Find your own world within the world”, we started our Abhiranga Theatre Group” in 2012 under this vision. Our theatre group is the first and only drama academy in Negombo registered with the Department of National Culture (2015) and it has 65 members in our group ranging in age from 6 to 76 years. We have won many awards at national levels, youth competitions, university competitions and other theatre competitions and festivals. Our theatre group has demonstrated talent in directing, scriptwriting, acting, stage management and all other aspects. We are always keen to gain knowledge from local and international resource persons. Furthermore, our group conducts many theatre workshops in various parts of the country. We are committed to not only creating the best artists but also to creating audiences with loving hearts. We participated in the Colombo International Theatre Festival in 2016 and have been actively contributing to it as a theatre partner ever since.

About the Play:

A young woman is imprisoned for stabbing her mother. She says it wasn't her, but someone else like her, and she strongly believes it wasn't her. So she is sent for psychiatric treatment. She escapes and performs a public confession in a play.

Director's Note:

The person who should be here today is someone else. Think about it. Are you here today because you want to be here? No... Someone else should be here instead of you. But you are here today for a reason. Or maybe you are here by accident. If there is anyone who believes in me even a little, please save you. There are seven people like you. Can you say that you will never meet any of those six people in your life? Can you say with confidence that they will never come into your life? Can you? If you can't save yourself, tell someone who can. If you see someone like you, tell them to be fooled into thinking it's you. Tell them it's not you. Or one day you will be like me. This is my story written by someone else. Look where you are in that story. This is not me, this is someone else.

On Stage

Yung Woman: Uththara Aravindi

Off Stage

Stage Manager: M.B. Enoch Perera

K. Sudesh Nishantha

Stage Supporting: E. Sehansa T. Silva

Makeup: B. Onelee W. Fernando

Costume: Tashiya M. Liyanapathirane

Lighting: Mohomed Sharaf

Music Director: B. Anupradha Umali

Light Designer: Vidura Abeydeera

Stage Manager: Suhan Perera





A Journey of Despair

Writer of the Play: E.K.J.R Jayathunga, Sri Lanka
Duration of the play: 12 minutes
Director of the play: Upeksha Lankathilaka

About the Group

This Sri Lankan production brings together a passionate team of independent artists dedicated to creating socially relevant theatre. A Journey of Despair is written by E.K.J. Rajitha Jayathunga, known for his evocative lighting and socially conscious storytelling, and directed by Upeksha Lankathilaka, an accomplished theatre educator and performer. The solo role is performed by Nayanthara de Silva, a gifted actress celebrated for her emotional depth and stage presence.

The team shares a strong academic background in theatre, with members graduating from the University of Colombo, University of Visual and Performing Arts, and University of Rajarata. Producer and stage manager Madhusa Chandrasiri ensures all logistical and technical support. Together, they focus on physical storytelling and immersive theatre to amplify unheard voices.

They are honoured to present A Journey of Despair at the Bhullung-Bhuthur International Theatre Festival 2025, showcasing the strength of contemporary Sri Lankan theatre.

About the Play

A Journey of Despair is a powerful mono drama that explores the inner world of a young woman facing an unplanned pregnancy, rejection, and isolation. Without spoken dialogue, the story is told through expressive



movement, lighting, projections, and sound drawing the audience into her emotional and psychological journey. The performance uses multimedia elements such as projections, and sound to reflect her shifting emotions. The visual language is abstract yet deeply human, revealing the inner conflict and sorrow of a girl forced to make an impossible choice in a judgmental world. A Journey of Despair is more than a personal story, it is a reflection on societal silence, stigma, and survival. This production aims to spark empathy, dialogue, and awareness through bold, emotionally charged performance.

Director's Note

A Journey of Despair is a visceral exploration of a young woman's silent suffering pregnancy, rejection, abandonment, and the brutal choices she is forced to make in a society that refuses to listen. As the director, I aimed to amplify the unspoken pain carried by many women who fall through the cracks of cultural expectation and systemic neglect. The script's minimal dialogue and emphasis on physicality and projection offered a unique opportunity to tell a deeply emotional story through movement, light,



shadow, and sound. Each scene from conception to collapse unfolds like a dream, or a nightmare, shaped by social forces far beyond her control. The girl's journey is not just a personal tragedy, but a mirror held up to a society that judges before it listens and abandons before it understands. My hope is that this performance doesn't just evoke sympathy, but compels reflection and conversation about the invisible burdens many women carry. Let this be a reminder: behind every silent story is a soul who once had dreams.

On Stage:	Nayanthara De Silva
Off Stage:	
Producer and Stage Manager:	Madhusa Chandrasiri
Make Up and Costume:	Upeksha Lankathilaka
Video Editing:	E.K.J.R Jayathunga



Palunko's Wife

Name of The Group: Triko Cirkus Teatar, Croatia

Language of The Play: Non-verbal

Duration of The Play: 50

Name of The Playwright: Ivana Brlić Mažuranić

Dramaturg: Marija Antić

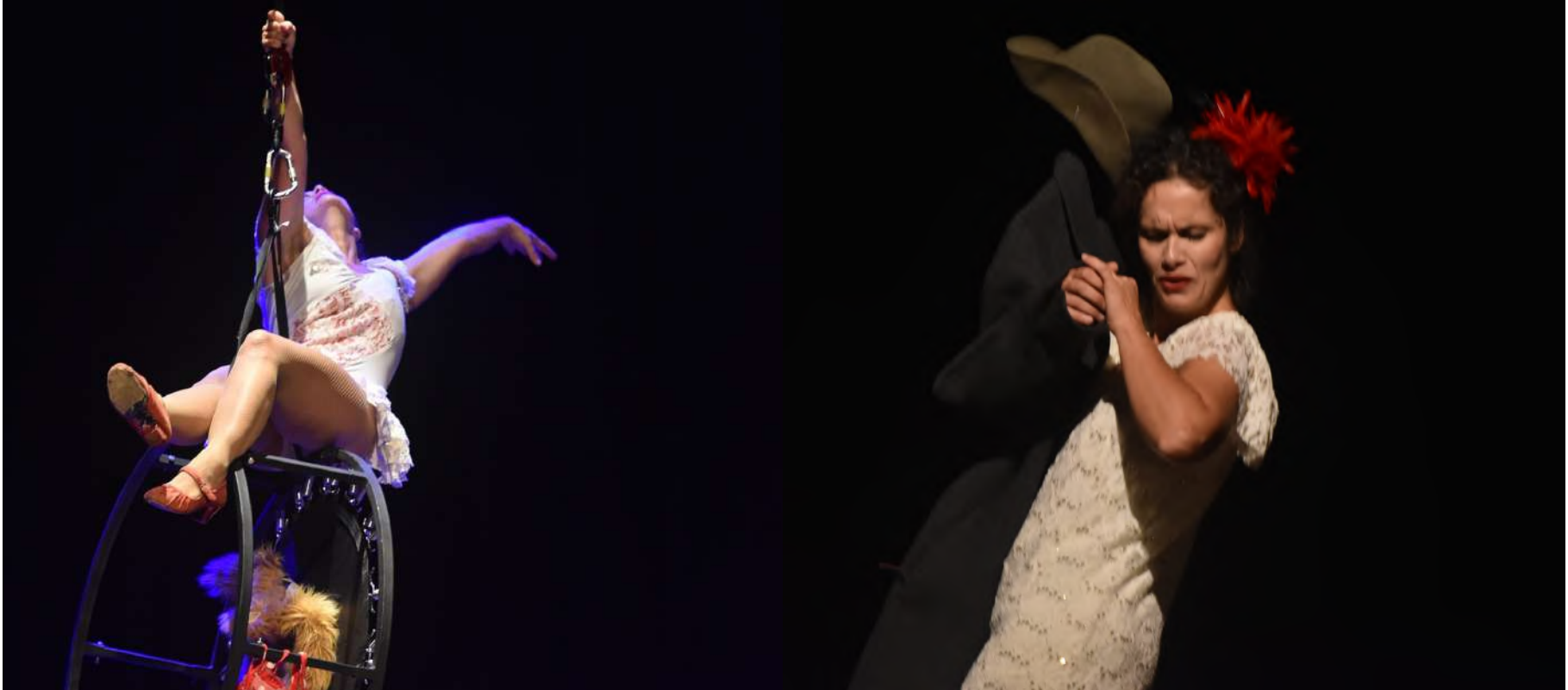
Name of Director: Iva Peter-Dragan

About the Group/Company

TRIKO CIRKUS TEATAR is a professional independent theatre group from Zagreb. During the past 10 years, we've worked diligently to promote contemporary circus and theatre clown in our region through productions of shows and programs, including festivals, workshops and international gatherings of different artists. Through our project CLOWN PLATFORM, we have organized workshops of world-famous clowns and clown pedagogues like Jango Edwards, David Shiner, Lee Delong, John Towsen, and Ira Seidenstein. Our activities include networking on a European and world level. We have worked in collaboration with The University of Galway in Ireland, presented Croatia at the European Theatre Night in Brussels, as well as in Croatie, La Voici, a national program for promoting Croatian culture in France, and we have toured in the USA, China and Mexico. We've received numerous awards as a group and individual awards for artists who've worked in our productions.

Synopsis of the Play

This is a story about a woman who is eager to have her own family. She does everything to fulfil her everyday duties as a mother and wife, but



still she cannot please everyone.... She is getting more and more tired and one day she wakes up to find herself completely alone.... Her family – her whole life – is gone... She goes back to her old career as circus artist: she tames animals and does acrobatics, but we are left wondering if she is really happy.

How can a woman find the right balance between her professional and family life is the main question in this story.

The answers come in unexpected comical situation with aerial acrobatics.

No words so it is suitable for all audiences.

Director's Note

Palunko's wife is a well-known character from the fairytale Fisherman Palunko and his Wife by world famous storyteller Ivana Brlić Mažuranić. She doesn't have a name, she never got one. That namelessness is fascinating because she is the main hero in this story. Yet, that same namelessness, of not only Palunko's but many other women heroes throughout history, is the anchor of our show. In this show Palunko's wife

does not talk at all, red nose hidden on her face, underneath her apron a leotard, she is a master of heights and she tames wild animals. With a smile, and maybe a few tears, we are searching for our pure femininity, asking ourselves whether we can fulfill that feminine nature without a man and wondering why are we, women, so stubbornly faithful.... Is our urge to sacrifice ourselves weakness or strength?

Performed and directed by: Iva Peter-Dragan

Dramaturgy: Marija Antić

Costumes: Tajana Štasni

Light design: Milan Kovačević

Music arranged by: Nicolas Sinkovć

Production: Triko Cirkus Teatar

Rigging: Ivana Bešker, Ana Bakšić

Sound engineer: Ana Milić Štrkalj

Co-producer: KUC Travno



The Immigrants

Name of the Groups: Art of two banks Production, Tunisia

Director of the play: Mr. Hafedh Khalifa

Language of performance: ARABIC

Duration of the play: 60 minutes

Art of the Two Banks – Company Profile

Established in 2008 in the Jemna region of Gebli, Tunisia, Art of the Two Banks is one of the pioneering cultural companies in southern Tunisia and the only one in the state of Gebli dedicated to advancing theatre and cultural movement. The company blends the talents of both professionals and amateurs, playing a crucial role in shaping the cultural landscape of the region.

To date, the company has conducted over 40 technical workshops and field training sessions, and produced 12 theatrical works for both children and adults. These productions reflect themes from daily life, desert heritage, and the civilization of southern Tunisia. With more than 120 performances across the south and direction of plays in Douz, Gebli, and Tataouine, the company has a strong local presence.

Art of the Two Banks has regularly participated in major cultural events, including the International Festival of Dates in Jebli and the International Desert Festival in Douz (2013–2018), often opening or closing the festivals.

It founded the Faraj Arts Festival in 2009 and helped launch the Oasis Festival in Jemna in 2019, engaging youth through theatre workshops across the province.



Internationally, the company has represented Tunisia at festivals such as the Sharjah Desert Theater Festival and Contemporary African Cultures Festival in Rome. In 2019, it was awarded the National Shield of Culture and named Best Private Production Structure at the Carthage Theatre Days.

About the Play

The play "The Two Immigrants" talks about a Christmas night that is repeated every year, when Christians celebrate in particular. The writer conveys to us what succeeded in a tense dialogue fraught with hostility, emptiness, and sympathy at the same time between two unknown immigrant characters from an unknown country. They are two different personalities in terms of work, different, but they meet in lost. However, the length of the palace is long, the length of the length of the length, the length of the length, the length of the length, the length of the length of the joint joint together.

Celebrating the start of a new year. Sometimes the people of the country celebrate with joy and pleasure, as music plays and singing voices rise in a room on an upper floor, while two immigrants celebrate the same evening with an uninterrupted quarrel for many hours without realizing



the misery and intellectual poverty that takes place in it when people hear people live the joy of the New Year.

The writer conveys to us, through dialogues, the person's behavior and their malicious behavior. The relationship between them is the relationship between them. And his truth is, he really hides it under his bed and locks it lest the other burglary.

On Stage: Salaheddine M'sadek, Jalaeddine Saadi

Off Stage

Author: Slavomir Mrozek

Director: Hafedh Khalifa

Music: Bethoven

Production Manager :Moufida Marouani Ep Khalifa

Stage Manager: Kamel Zhiou



Dummy

Duration of the Play: 13 minutes

Language of the Play: Nonverbal

Playwright, Designed & Direction: Sarathchandra Walpola, Sri Lanka

About the group

Our team members consist of theatre professionals. We have been involved in theatre activities for more than two (02) decades with experience in script writing, directing, performing, make-up, stage management and music composing. We also have participated in theatre workshops to enhance our theatre skills and have represented in local drama festivals, like the state drama festival and other festivals (Wedikawen maha polowata, Dahadiya sithtama), which was an experimental play and well-made theatre productions. We were able to achieve winning awards. Our last theatre production was a non-verbal experimental short play named "CURTAIN CALL."

About the Play

A middle-aged man in his fifties who look like a thief with a sense, reminding Janawarjana portrait in the novel 'Les Miserables' enters a textile clothes shop while he escapes from the jail. The man grabs some clothes from a display rack and rushes to the fit-on room. He takes off his ruined jumper and puts on new clothes. When he comes out, he suddenly notices a female dummy with a glamour outfit kept in the showroom.

This man, who had been suffering a monotonous life in jail for long, quickly changed his mind and aroused his romantic feelings by seeing the erotic female dummy. Now the prisoner metaphorically transforms into a romantic lover. Then he tries to attract her (dummy) with his

exaggerated body language. He begins to communicate with her (dummy) through eye contact. Gradually, the dummy animates his imaginary world, and he falls in love with the female dummy. The sub-text of the play is about the wondrous relationship between a human being and a non-living object (dummy) and the conflict of structured lifestyle and confused mental conditions.

Director's Note

In language practices "tree" is considered as an inanimate noun. Man is an animate noun. But in theatre arts, all objects, whether living or non-living, are considered as live. An imaginary conversation between a live human being and a non-living object (dummy) is explored through this non-verbal mono play.

All the objects become just consumer stuff in this situation dominated by the global neoliberal trade economy. Likewise, people without power would be helpless victims of injustice. But the decision-making rights are reserved for you, the 'DUMMY' audience.

Prisoner	: Samitha Sudeeshwara.
Credit	
Make-up	: Sumeda Hevawitharana
Stage management	: Wijaya Premadarshana Ajith Sirimanne
Lighting & Designing	: Mohamed Fazly
Background Sound	: Tharaka Baddage
Sound Operator	: Prethiba Galabada
Director, Concept script, choreography, costume and set designing:	Sarathchandra Walpola





Unseen

Language of Performance: English

Duration of the play: 15 minutes

Script and Director of the Play: Asanka Ishan Dayapala, Sri Lanka

About the Group:

In a silent, surreal world of sterile routines and sensory dissonance, an autistic woman embarks on an internal journey through memory, emotion, and self-perception — reclaiming her true identity by reconnecting with the light she once hid from the world. We are representing the “Unseen” group from Sri Lanka.

About the Play

Unseen is a 15-minute psycho-monodrama written and directed by Asanka Ishan Dayapala, a playwright, theatre director, and special needs educator. This minimalist, emotionally charged solo performance delves into the raw internal world of an autistic woman confronting the unbearable weight of societal rejection, misdiagnosis, and forced conformity. Presented through poetic realism, fragmented memory, and haunting inner monologue, the play gives voice to the often-silenced lived experience of neurodivergent individuals. By rejecting stereotypes and the medicalised gaze, “unseen” illuminates a truth rarely seen on stage — the painful beauty of reclaiming identity in a world that never fought to understand.

Synopsis

On the morning of her birthday — and what she has decided will be her



final day alive — an autistic woman stands alone in a minimalist space, determined to be heard for the first time. In the remaining minutes before her chosen end, she recounts her story: the silence of institutions, the violence of masking, and the sensory chaos she’s been forced to endure under the guise of “normalcy”. Moving through trauma, memory, and revelation, she dismantles societal expectations and reclaims her neurodivergent identity. Through rising vulnerability and poetic strength, she finds the courage not to die but to live — unapologetically, unmasked, and finally seen.

Director’s Note:

As the director and playwright of *Unseen*, I contribute not only my artistic vision but also my personal experience as a trainer for individuals with special needs. This monodrama was born from the urgent need to illuminate the often-silenced inner world of autistic individuals—those forced to conform, mask, and endure misunderstanding in a neurotypical society.

Told through the eyes of an autistic woman on the brink of life and death, *Unseen* is not a cry for pity, but a raw, poetic act of truth-telling. It challenges the clinical lens that defines autism as a disorder, instead celebrating the depth, sensitivity, and unique perception it offers.

Minimalist in staging but emotionally expansive, the piece uses sensory detail and vulnerable storytelling to convey the cost of living behind a mask—and the power of reclaiming identity. It is a reckoning with systems that fail to see, and a declaration of the right to exist without apology.

Presented on the international stage, *Unseen* speaks to a universal longing: to be seen not as broken, but as whole. This is not just a performance. It is a call to justice. And above all, a call to truly listen.

Full Cast and Credit List

Performer:	Tasmin Anthonisz
Stage Manager:	Dulani Seelika Gunapala



Metamorphosis of Mitrachi Goshta

(Based on Vijay Tendulkar's "Mitrachi Goshta")

Name of the Group: AANK_A Creative Line_India

Name of the Playwright: Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami

Duration: 25 minutes

Synopsis of the Play

Metamorphosis of Mitrachi Goshta is a reimagining of Vijay Tendulkar's landmark play Mitrachi Goshta, which was among the first Indian works to explore same-sex love and gender non-conformity. While the original is narrated by Bapu—a male friend—this adaptation places Mitra's own voice at the centre. Set in 1940s India, it explores the emotional and psychological journey of a young woman who dares to love beyond social norms and pays the price through rejection and isolation.

Performed in a psycho-physical and non-linear style with minimal dialogue, the production uses movement, silence, and spatial symbolism to reveal Mitra's inner world. It also poses powerful questions through alternate realities: What if Mitra had lived? What if she were born today? These imagined futures invite audiences to reflect on resilience, identity, and the freedom to love. The play becomes an act of reclamation—reviving what society silenced.

From the Viewpoint of the Director

As a director, I see Metamorphosis of Mitrachi Goshta not as an adaptation, but as a radical reclamation. Tendulkar's original offered a ground-breaking portrayal of same-sex love, but filtered through Bapu's

male gaze. In this version, Mitra becomes her own narrator—reclaiming her story, her silence, and her identity.

Through a psycho-physical, non-linear approach, we move away from dialogue-based realism. Here, gesture, breath, and stillness speak louder than words. Mitra's internal rupture—between desire and rejection—is expressed through fragmented motion, aerial metaphor, and raw embodiment.

We also explore alternative possibilities: survival, healing, or social conformity—each rendering new facets of queer existence. This play stands for every Mitra denied the right to speak. It resists reduction into tragedy and celebrates the power of reclaiming narrative space. In doing so, it becomes not just theatre, but testimony—a mirror that reflects, questions, and dares to hope.

ON STAGE: Nilutpala Pachani

OFF STAGE

Poster Design & Graphics : Dr. Sanjib Borah

Aerial Yoga: Priyanka Baishya

Costume Nilutpala Pachani

Management & Production in Charge: Dr. Junmoni Gogoi, Oinau Jengrai

Prop, Light, Music and Direction: Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami





Qouma Yaba (Stand Up Father)

Writer of the Play: Salman Natour

Duration of the Play: 50 minutes

Language(s) of Performance: Arabic

Director of the Play: Kassem Istanbouli

About the Group/Company

Tiro Association for Arts (TAA), Lebanon was established in 2014 as a non-governmental organization under license no 2633, located in the Lebanese National Theater in both cities, Tyre and Tripoli, in South and North Lebanon. TAA works on encouraging the local communities to engage with culture and the arts outside of religious and political frames. The association also believes that these communities can express themselves through culture and the arts, not only to convey their identity but also to showcase the issues and challenges that they face. That is, by gathering young volunteers from diverse social, cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds with the aim of creating an alternative movement to have a social change.

About the Play

This play weaves together oral histories, collective memory, and personal trauma to portray the enduring impact of displacement, war, and resistance in Palestine. At its heart are stories passed down through generations—about Abu Salah, the ever-young folkloric figure whose scarf stirs revolution in the dabke; about Abdel Hassan, a heroic rebel betrayed through a moment of maternal love; and Sheikh Abbas, a fighter-

turned-keeper of lost keys,
whose belief in the return
never wavers, even in madness.
Each tale—full of humour,
pain, and nostalgia—reflects
the communal struggle against
occupation and the bittersweet
resilience of those who continue
to remember.

The play intertwines tragedy
and satire, juxtaposing surreal
elements (like planes needing
keys to fly) with the brutal reality
of executions, bombings, and
lost children. It critiques empty
international resolutions and
false solidarity, as characters
cry out for recognition while
burying their dead. Through
Salma, a child born during
war, the narrative shifts to the
present, where memory becomes
both burden and weapon. The
grandmother's fear of even
her keffiyeh being turned into
a fashion item underlines the
erasure of identity. In the end,
the cry “the child is dead”
reverberates like a haunting
echo—summoning justice,
remembrance, and mourning.

Director and Actor:
Kassem Istanbouli
Scenography:
Ana Cendreo Alvarez



The Fivefold Melody of Emotions

Duration: 30 minutes

Format: Purely Musical Performance

Languages: Assamese, with Karbi, Mising, Rabha, and Goalpariya dialectical and musical elements

Narration: Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami

Arranged by: Mr. Arup Jyoti Patgiri (Bapi)

Production: Alumni of AT 4 Boy's Hall, Gauhati University

Concept Note:

The Fivefold Melody of Emotions is a deeply meditative and evocative musical journey that explores the soul of Assam through the emotional lens of its folk traditions. Designed as a 30-minute pure musical performance with narration, this presentation brings together five distinct musical forms from five communities — Karbi, Mising, Rabha, Goalpariya, and the greater Assamese Bihu tradition — each carrying its own emotional rhythm, lyrical nuance, and historical depth.

Folk music is not merely a form of entertainment; it is a living archive of human experience. The selected traditions reflect a wide emotional arc — the grief of farewell, the sorrow of separation, the echo of ancestral memory, the longing for reunion, and the subtle joy of survival and hope. Through this curation, the performance presents an organic interplay between tears and laughter, silence and voice, past and present.

The Karbi Chamangkan tradition mourns the passing of loved ones with raw vulnerability, while the Mising Kaban addresses the river — often sung when a loved one has passed away — as a powerful symbol of transition and the journey beyond life. The Rabha Farkanthi resonates with ritualistic chants, inviting us into a communal space of ancestral remembrance. From the

Goalpara region, the lyrical Goalpariya Geet offers plaintive melodies of waiting, longing, and womanhood — deeply poetic and universally human. Finally, the Bihu segment provides a reflective contrast: although celebratory in tone, Bihu songs often carry undertones of emotional yearning and philosophical reflection on impermanence.

By weaving together these varied traditions, The Fivefold Melody of Emotions not only showcases the rich diversity of Assam's sonic heritage but also reveals a unified emotional truth: that the folk soul does not separate sorrow from celebration — it embraces them as parts of a continuous, cyclical journey. This musical collage becomes both a tribute to the lived experiences of rural Assam and a mirror to the audience's own emotional landscape.

The performance avoids theatrics and dance to retain the purity of musical expression. Accompanied by minimal acoustic instrumentation and guided by spoken narration, the emphasis remains entirely on the voice as vessel — of culture, of memory, of shared human emotion.



Artistic Pair Yoga Demonstration

Led by Dr. Hridayananda Tamuli Phukan, India

Blending the grace of modern performance art with the spiritual discipline of traditional yoga, the Artistic Pair Yoga Demonstration offers a rare and evocative performance that transcends the boundaries of genre and tradition. This unique presentation unfolds as a visual and physical dialogue between two performers whose synchronized movements embody the values of trust, balance, and harmony.

Through seamlessly coordinated postures, rhythmic breath-work, and meditative transitions, the duo explores the profound connection between inner calmness and outer expression. Each gesture becomes both a reflection and a revelation—a poetic conversation between bodies in motion. The performance invites the audience to not only witness but also feel the energy and intentionality behind each movement, transforming yoga into a performative art form that speaks across cultures.

Set within the vibrant atmosphere of BBITF, which celebrates intercultural artistic exchange, this demonstration reinforces the festival's commitment to integrating diverse cultural and philosophical practices into the theatrical realm. It emphasizes the adaptability of yoga beyond its traditional settings—showcasing it as a powerful medium of storytelling, embodiment, and collective consciousness.

Expect a deeply immersive experience that transcends the confines of stage performance, inviting all to embark on a journey of self-discovery, aesthetic reflection, and spiritual awakening through the artistic lens of yoga

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