



GEMARTS

MASALA

FESTIVAL

14th-20th JULY 2025

*A mix & blend
of the finest
South Asian
arts & culture*



WELCOME

We're thrilled to invite you to GemArts Masala Festival 2025 programme – a vibrant celebration of South Asian arts, culture, and creativity!

This summer, Masala Festival returns, filling venues, places and spaces with a rich mix of music, dance, visual arts, literature, film, food, and family fun.

From world-renowned artists to emerging local talent, this year's festival promises unforgettable performances and inspiring experiences. Join us as we celebrate desi voices, spark new conversations, and create moments of connection and joy!

On behalf of all the team at GemArts I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all the brilliant artists, volunteers, partners, funders and sponsors.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Vikas Kumar MBE DL
Director



GemArts is Supported by:



Supported using public funding by
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ENGLAND**



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Royal**
Newcastle upon Tyne

TYNESIDE
Cinema

Vane

GemArts is part of Gateshead Visible Ethnic Minorities
Support Group. Registered Charity no 1008100



MASALA FESTIVAL LAUNCH

Gem Arts Masala Festival & Newcastle Theatre Royal present
Aakash Odedra Company in association with Manchester Camerata production of

SONGS OF THE BULBUL



Date: Monday 14th July
Time: 7.30pm
Venue: Newcastle Theatre Royal, 100 Grey St, NE1 6BR
Tickets: £13.00 - £36.00
Box Office: www.theatreroyal.co.uk / 0191 232 7010

GemArts Masala Festival 2025 launches with *Songs of the Bulbul*, a new dance work by Aakash Odedra with choreography by Rani Khanam and music by Rushil Ranjan, inspired by the ancient Sufi myth of a bulbul (nightingale) captured and held in captivity.

"One of the most exquisite and gratifying things audiences can ever see" ~ Corr Blimey



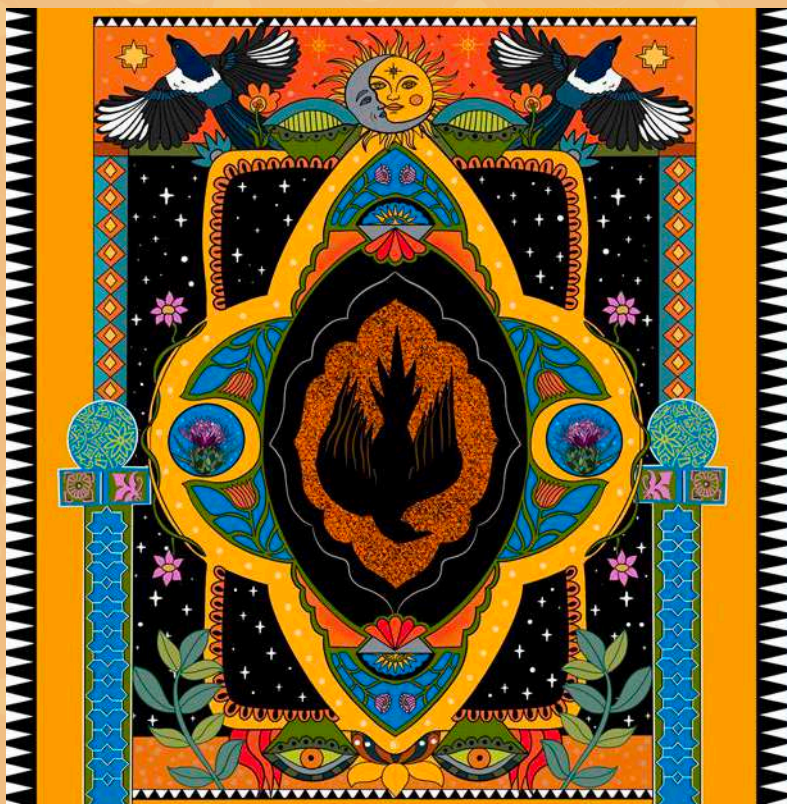
reviews from *The Guardian*,
The Scotsman, and *The List*.

Rooted in the expansive music, dance, and poetry traditions of Sufism, this new work by two of the most outstanding Sufi Kathak artists performing in the world today emerges as a sensitive dialogue between the ferocious physicality of Kathak and the spiritual journey of Sufism, a path seeking unity with the Divine.

Supported by Dance City



DEATH MAGIC BY SOFIA BARTON



Date: 14th July – 2nd August
 Venue: Vane, Orbis Community, 65 High Street, Gateshead, NE8 2AP
 Open: Monday 14th – Saturday 19th July, 12-5pm,
 Wednesday 23rd July – Saturday 2nd August, 12-5pm
 Tickets: FREE – Just drop in!

“Death Magic” offers a poignant journey through the intersection of neurodivergent experience and the rich tapestry of Punjabi perspectives on death, ancestry, and the enduring power of memory. This deeply personal exhibition by Sofia Barton presents a compelling collection of drawings, ethereal cyanotypes on glass, evocative paintings, and symbolically decorated rehals.

These diverse mediums explore themes of roots, legacy, and how the essence of loved ones remains woven into the fabric of our lives, informed by both personal neurodivergent experiences and Punjabi cultural narratives. “Death Magic” invites contemplation on the delicate connections between life and remembrance.

Presented by GemArts and Vane



SARASWATI: AN OBSERVER BEST DEBUT NOVEL OF 2025

Date: Tuesday 15th July
 Time: 6.30pm
 Venue: Northern Stage, Barras Bridge, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 7RH
 Tickets: £5
 Box Office: www.northernstage.co.uk / 0191 230 5151

Award-winning short story writer Gurnaik Johal reads from his debut novel *Saraswati*, in conversation with Preti Taneja.

Centuries ago, the myths say, the holy river Saraswati flowed through Northern India. When Satnam returns to his ancestral village for his grandmother's funeral, he's astonished to find water in the long-dry well behind her house. This discovery sparks a contentious plan to unearth the lost river and build a gleaming new city on its banks. Adrift from his job, girlfriend, and flat in London, Satnam is drawn into the upheaval unfolding around him.

Brimming with love, lust, violence and loss, *Saraswati* reveals buried ties between six relatives across the globe. Johal's magisterial debut explores the passions that bind us to our histories, our lands, and each other.

Presented by GemArts, Newcastle Centre for Literary Arts and Northern Stage

I, THE SONG

Director:
Dechen Roder

Dzongkha with English
subtitles

Bhutan 2024
112 mins

Date: Tuesday 15th July
Time: 7.45pm
Venue: Tyneside Cinema, 10 Pilgrim St, Newcastle, NE1 6QG
Tickets: £13.75 / £11.75 concessions (£7 Young Tyneside members)
Box office: www.tynesidecinema.co.uk | 0191 227 5500

Set in the small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan I, The Song is a film about music, identity, love, and a culture precariously balancing on the threshold of a digital future.

Presented by GemArts, Day for Night and Tyneside Cinema

PARADISE

Director:
Prasanna Vithanage

Sinhala with
English subtitles

Sri Lanka 2023
95 mins

Date: Wednesday 16th July
Time: 6pm
Venue: Culture Lab, Newcastle University, NE1 7RU
Tickets: Free, registration is essential
Box-office: GemArts Eventbrite / 0191 4404124

An Indian tourist couple arrive in the hill country of crisis ridden Sri Lanka to celebrate their 5th wedding anniversary. But, when things take an unexpected turn, conflicts deepen revealing cracks in their relationship.

Presented by GemArts, Newcastle University and Northumbria University



BAADAL DVAAR SE NAZAR

Date: Wed 16th July 2025
Time: 7.30pm
Venue: Cluny 2, 34 Lime Street, Ouseburn,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 2PQ
Tickets: £12 advance and £15 on the door
Box Office: GemArts Eventbrite / 0191 4404124

Baadal Dvaar se Nazar (A Glimpse Through the Cloud Door), is an original experimental work by William Rees Hofmann featuring Benedict Taylor, where sarod meets viola. It explores both tradition and solitude through the dhrupad idiom on the sarod, and openness and experimentation through explorations of consonance, dissonance, harmony, timbre, and resonance on the viola. Inspired by the soundtracks of the films of Mani Kaul, the piece is a new work rooted in Indian classical tradition, yet which moves beyond and experiments with form.

Presented by GemArts, Jazz North East and zerOclasikal



STARTING OVER, REBUILDING FROM THE RUINS

Date: Thursday 17th July
 Time: 6.30pm
 Venue: BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, NE8 3BA
 Tickets: £5
 Box office: GemArts Eventbrite / 0191 440 4124

At a time when discussions around migration have become especially critical, this curated programme of short films takes a closer look at displacement and diasporic experiences, from rural communities in South Asia to urban centres in the Western world.

Post-screening discussion with industry contributors.
 Running time: approx. 120 minutes
 Suitable for Ages 14+

Curated by Sonali Joshi

Presented by GemArts and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art



BLOSSOMING: EESHAR SINGH WITH ROYAL NORTHERN SINFONIA

Date: Friday 18th July
 Time: 8pm
 Venue: The Glasshouse, St Mary's Square, Gateshead, NE8 2JR
 Tickets: £11.30 - £22.50
 Box-office: www.theglasshouseicm.org / 0191 4434661

Experience Blossoming at Masala Festival, a breath-taking collaboration between Eeshar Singh and Royal Northern Sinfonia. Inspired by ancient mythology and Indic folklore, this mesmerizing live performance seamlessly weaves Indian classical instrumentation with Western orchestration and neoclassical textures.

Led by virtuoso santoor player Eeshar Singh, alongside percussionist Jeevan Singh and multi-instrumentalist Sirrjan Singh, Blossoming is an immersive journey of music, storytelling, and stunning live visuals. This one-of-a-kind performance expands with a full string section, bringing new dimensions to Singh's evocative compositions.

Presented by GemArts and The Glasshouse



BOLLYWOOD BRASS BAND

Date: Saturday 19th July
Time: 2pm, 3pm and 4pm (each performance 30 minutes)
Venue: Monument Metro and Haymarket Metro,
 Newcastle upon Tyne

FREE EVENT – Just drop in!

Bollywood Brass Band is the UK's pioneering Indian-style brass band, playing the great tunes and compulsively danceable rhythms of Bollywood. Twice nominated for the Songlines World Music Awards, this vibrant ensemble has taken its sound global – performing at festivals, venues, and Indian weddings across the UK, Norway, India, Thailand, and South Africa.

Don't miss your chance to catch them at Masala Festival in Newcastle City Centre! With blazing brass, soaring saxophones, pounding dhol drums, and a booming sousaphone, the Bollywood Brass Band is one of the most colourful, joyful and exhilarating acts around!!

Presented by GemArts and Tyne & Wear Metro



FREESPILL: A NIGHT OF UNFILTERED DESI SOUL FLOW Hosted by TAHMINA ALI

Date: Saturday 19th July
Time: 6pm
Venue: DiverCity Hub, 120 Buckingham Street,
 Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE4 5QU
Tickets: £5.00
Box Office: GemArts Eventbrite / 0191 4404124

Freespill returns to Masala Festival with a powerful night of spoken word, celebrating bold South Asian identity through themes of heritage, resistance, and joy. Hosted by Newcastle's Tahmina Ali, the event features local and national talent, headlined by Shareefa Energy, known for her activist-driven poetry.

A special segment will spotlight work from Thresholds, a groundbreaking new anthology published by Butcher's Dog and co-edited by Tahmina Ali and Jo Clement, highlighting South Asian women poets from the North East. Come through, bring your people, and celebrate stories that are rooted, resilient, and proudly South Asian.

Presented by GemArts.



MINI MELA

Date: Sunday 20th July
 Venue: Bensham Grove Community Centre, Gateshead, NE8 2XD
 Time: 11am to 3pm
FREE EVENT – Just Drop In!

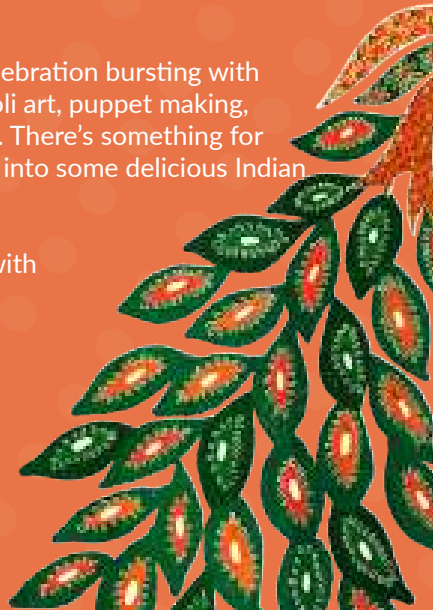
Get ready for the grand finale of the Masala Festival – our fabulous Mini Mela is here, and it's completely FREE!

Bring the whole family and dive into a colourful celebration bursting with Bollywood dance workshops, block printing, Rangoli art, puppet making, pottery, face painting, and beautiful henna designs. There's something for everyone – whether you want to craft, dance, tuck into some delicious Indian food or just soak up the vibes!

Come for the fun, stay for the flavours, and leave with unforgettable memories.

We can't wait to celebrate with you!

Presented by GemArts



DABBAWAL™ x MASALA FESTIVAL 2025 *Celebrating the Flavours of South Asia*

We're back and once again, proud to partner with the GemArts Masala Festival to honour the vibrant culture and cuisine of South Asia.

As Newcastle's original Indian street food pioneers, we've crafted a special festival menu inspired by the rich, diverse culinary traditions of South Asia. From the bustling spice bazaars of Sri Lanka to the coastal kitchens of Kerala and the sizzling street-side grills of Lahore.

Join us for a joyful celebration of the dishes that define South Asian street food, served with the signature flair and warmth you've come to expect from Dabbawal.



Newcastle's original Indian street food pioneers!

Date: 14th-20th July
 Venue: 69-75 High Bridge,
 Newcastle upon Tyne
 NE16BX;
 1 Brentwood Mews,
 Jesmond, Newcastle upon
 Tyne NE2 3DG

Bookings: dabbawal.com



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 MASALA FESTIVAL
 SET MENU**



WORKSHOPS AT MASALA FESTIVAL 2025

Workshops £5 to attend and can be booked at GemArts Eventbrite or call 0191 4404124



ASHTANGA YOGA WITH PALAK RASTOGI

Date: Monday 14th July

Time: 1pm – 2pm

Venue: Bensham Grove, Gateshead,
NE8 2XD

Experience the transformative power of Ashtanga Yoga and embrace a journey of mind-body wellness. This session is for complete beginners, no experience needed – just bring your breath and open mind!



SHADOW PUPPETRY WITH SAYA NARUSE

Date: Thursday 17th July

Time: 1pm – 3pm

Venue: Gateway Studio, High Street,
Gateshead, NE8 1EP

This introduction to shadow puppetry will give you a chance to play with materials and make a simple puppet inspired by the themes of Masala Festival from wildlife to myths and legends.

CREATIVE WRITING WITH TAHMINA ALI

Date: Wednesday 16th July

Time: 5pm – 7pm

Venue: DiverCity Hub, 120
Buckingham Street,
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE4 5QU

Join our creative writing workshop. Explore your roots, celebrate South Asian culture, and craft new work in a welcoming experimental space. Two participants will be invited to share their work at the Freespill open mic! Open to all—come as you are and let your words flow!



BOLLYWOOD DANCE WITH BREEZE GEORGE

Date: Saturday 19th July

Time: 10 – 11am

Venue: Gateway Over the Road Studio,
224 High Street, Gateshead,
NE8 1AQ

A fun-filled session packed with vibrant music, iconic moves, and pure Desi energy! Whether you're a total beginner or a secret dance floor hero, come shake a leg, laugh a lot, and feel the magic of Bollywood.

nexus.org.uk/kids

Kids go free!

Up to three kids aged 11 and under travel free, all day every day, on Metro and the Shields Ferry when accompanied by a fare-paying adult.

M METRO

find out more →



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For more information visit our website
www.gemarts.org

Contact GemArts on 0191 4404124
or
email info@gemarts.org

