

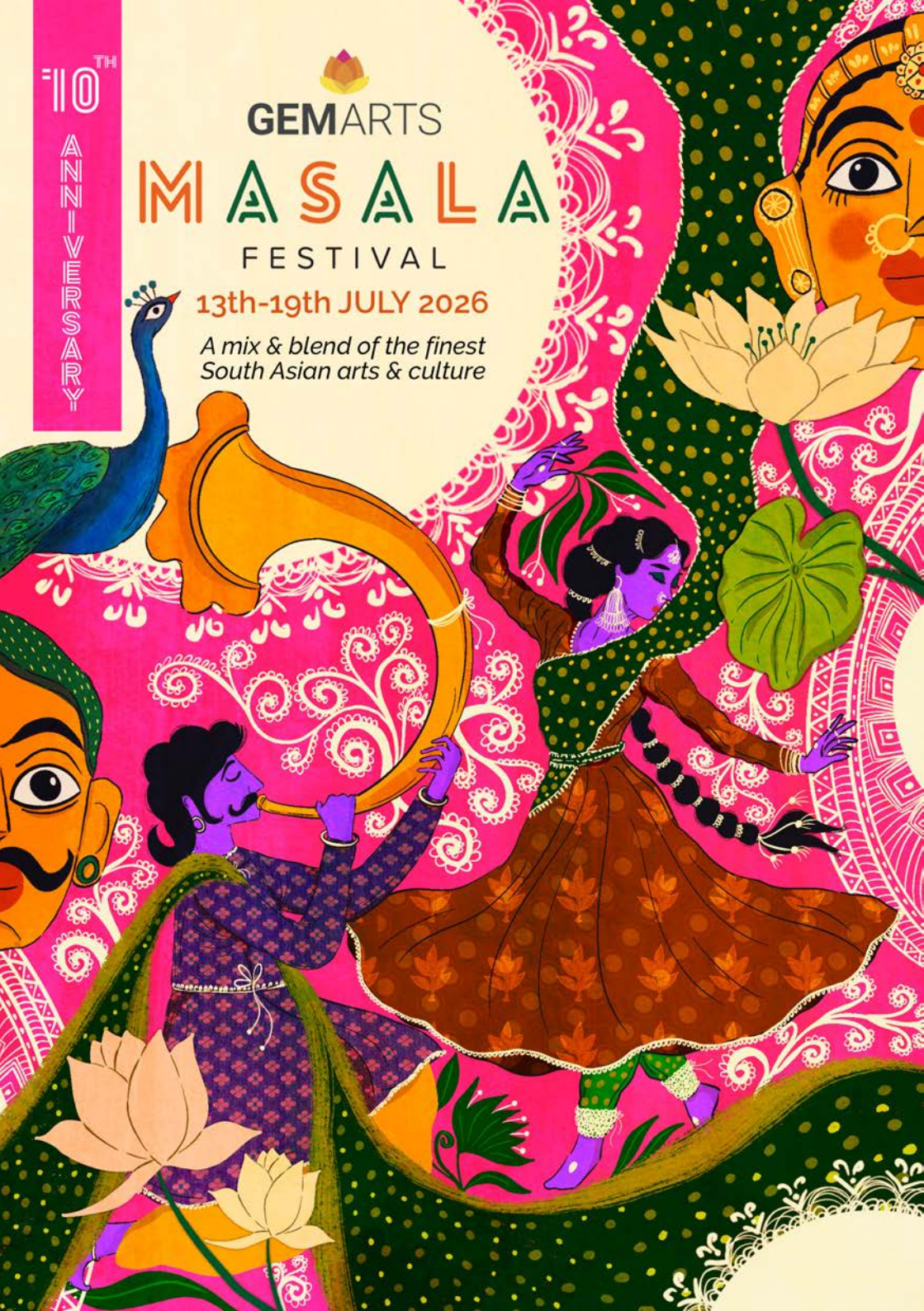
10TH
ANNIVERSARY



GEMARTS
MASALA
FESTIVAL

13th-19th JULY 2026

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



WELCOME

We're thrilled to welcome you to GemArts Masala Festival 2026 - our 10th anniversary edition, marking a decade of South Asian arts, culture and creativity! This milestone year brings an extraordinary programme of bold new commissions, unforgettable performances, and an exciting mix of music, dance, visual arts, literature, film, food and family events filling venues, places and spaces across the region from 13-19 July.

From trailblazing international artists to rising local voices, this year's festival brings new perspectives, big desi energy and South Asian creativity in full colour, celebrating the people and stories that continue to shape Masala Festival.

On behalf of the whole GemArts team, a massive thank you to our brilliant artists, audiences, communities, volunteers, partners, funders and sponsors for your incredible support over ten remarkable years.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Vikas Kumar MBE DL
Director



MASALA FESTIVAL LAUNCH

BULLEH SHAH: SEEKER OF LIGHT BY GAURAV BHATTI



GemArts is Supported by:



GemArts Masala Festival Sponsors:



GemArts Masala Festival Partners:



day for night



Jazz
Northeast



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



Date: Monday 13th July 2026
Time: 7.30pm
Venue: Dance City, Temple St, Newcastle, NE1 4BR
Tickets: £15 / Concessions £12.50
Box Office: www.dancecity.co.uk / 0191 2610505

GemArts Masala Festival 10th Anniversary launches with *Bulleh Shah: Seeker of Light*, a powerful new dance production by internationally acclaimed Kathak artist Gaurav Bhatti. Blending North Indian classical Kathak with contemporary movement, Bhatti is known for explosive energy, striking theatricality and expressive storytelling. Drawing on the life and poetry of 18th-century Sufi mystic Bulleh Shah, a radical voice for compassion and unity, he reimagines this legacy for today. Weaving Kathak, Punjabi folk traditions and contemporary dance, and set to a dynamic soundscape of Indian classical and electronic textures, this visually stunning solo show reasserts Shah's enduring message of universal love and pays homage to the rich artistic heritage of the Punjab.

Presented by GemArts and Dance City



PLAYBACK / REWIND: SOUTH ASIAN SOUND & MEMORY

Date: Saturday 4th July – Saturday 10th October 2026
Venue: The Gallery, Gateshead Central Library, NE8 4LN
FREE: Just drop in!



An Exhibition by Jimmy Turrell

A new body of work exploring Bollywood vinyl, printed ephemera and the lived histories of South Asian communities in Gateshead. Through collage and large-scale compositions, Jimmy Turrell reimagines archive material to reflect how music carries memory, identity and cultural connection across generations. Commissioned by GemArts for Masala Festival's 10th Anniversary and Gateshead Libraries' Centenary

MASALA FESTIVAL: THROUGH THE LENS



Photographs by Anna Miller

Marking ten years of GemArts Masala Festival, this exhibition showcases Anna Miller's striking photographs capturing its most unforgettable moments. From electrifying performances to joyful community gatherings, these images celebrate the artists, audiences and creativity that have shaped one of the UK's leading South Asian arts festivals.

Presented by GemArts and Gateshead Arts Team

FREE FLOW CLASSIKAL

Date: Tuesday 14th July 2026
Time: 7.30pm
Venue: Cluny 2, 34 Lime Street, Ouseburn,
Newcastle, NE1 2PQ
Tickets: £12 advance / £15 on the door
Box office: www.gemarts.org

Four world-class musicians. A powerful exploration of South Asian classical music through free improvisation. No boundaries – no limits.

For the first time, zerOclassikal brings its celebrated Free Flow Classikal concept to Newcastle as part of GemArts Masala Festival, with an electrifying line-up. Artistic Director Jonathan Mayer leads on electric sitar, joined by James Pusey on guitar, Robin Christian on bansuri, and Debasish Mukherjee on tabla percussion.

Presented by GemArts and Jazz North East





FREESPILL: A NIGHT OF UNFILTERED DESI SOUL FLOW

Date: Wednesday 15th July 2026
 Time: 7pm
 Venue: Live Theatre, Broad Chare, Quayside, Newcastle, NE1 3DQ
 Tickets: £7
 Box Office: www.live.org.uk / 0191 2321232

Freespill returns with a powerful night of spoken word, spotlighting bold South Asian voices and stories of heritage, resistance and joy. Hosted by Newcastle's own Tahmina Ali, the evening features award-winning poet Jaspreet Kaur, author of the #1 bestseller *Brown Girl Like Me* and the acclaimed children's book *The Spaces in Between*, alongside Australian Poetry Slam Champion Zohab Zee Khan and poet and human-rights activist Chandni Chopra. Tahmina will also perform her commissioned monologue, published by Writers Mosaic and the Royal Literary Fund - a moving portrait of a South Asian woman navigating love, sacrifice and quiet bravery. The night includes an open mic, offering a platform for new voices.

To take part, sign up at hello@tahminaali.co.uk
 Presented by GemArts and Live Theatre



CARE / WORK

Date: Thursday 9th July - Saturday 1st August
 Venue: Vane. Orbis Community, 65 High Street, Gateshead, NE8 2AP
 FREE: Just drop in!
 Open Wednesday to Saturday, 12 noon - 5pm

An Exhibition by Nayeema Ahmed

Care / Work presents recent Northumbria University graduate and North East artist Nayeema Ahmed, whose practice explores the intersections of gender, ethnicity and labour. Drawing on her experience as a first-generation Briton of Bangladeshi heritage, Ahmed reflects on the quiet, often unseen forms of care that shape both home and working life. Her work examines how identity, value and recognition are negotiated within these essential but frequently overlooked spaces. Presented by GemArts and Vane

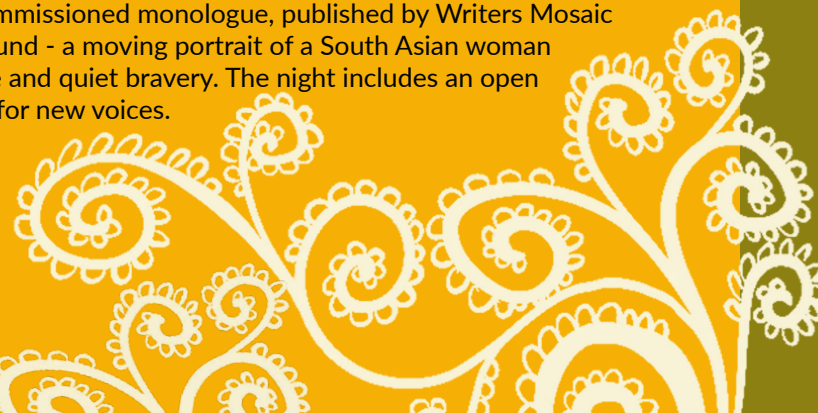
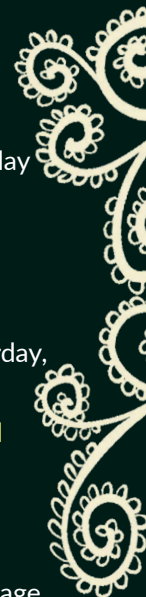
SHAPE OF MOMO

Date: Thursday 16th July 2026
 Time: 7.30pm
 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

Director: Tribeny Rai | Nepali, English subtitles | India/South Korea 2025 | 114 minutes

After leaving her job in Delhi, Bishnu returns to her Himalayan village in Sikkim, where family pressures and old tensions resurface. A connection with a local architect offers escape, forcing her to choose between expectation and her own path. Inspired by global filmmakers, Tribeny Rai crafts a semi-autobiographical story of searching for freedom yet belonging nowhere.

Presented by GemArts, Day for Night and Tyneside Cinema



THE MOHAN BROTHERS (SITAR & SAROD), SANJU SAHAI (TABLA) AND JASDEEP SINGH (JORI)

Date: Friday 17th July 2026
Time: 8pm
Venue: The Glasshouse, St Marys Square,
 Gateshead, NE8 2JR
Tickets: £11.30 - £22.50
Box Office: www.theglasshouseicm.org / 0191 3344661

Celebrate a decade of Masala Festival with an exceptional evening of Indian classical music at The Glasshouse. Experience the Mohan Brothers - sitarist Lakshay Mohan and sarod player Aayush Mohan - two of the most exciting artists on the global stage, making their first-ever regional appearance exclusively for Masala Festival. They are joined by Pt. Sanju Sahai, a sixth-generation tabla master renowned for his dazzling virtuosity and the only tabla player to have performed at the BBC Proms three times. Jasdeep Singh, a rising talent revitalising the rare Jorī tradition of the Punjab Gharana completes this stellar ensemble.

Presented by GemArts and The Glasshouse



SONIA SABRI COMPANY MUGHAL MINIATURES: THE AWAKENING



Date: Saturday 18th July
Times: 12pm, 1pm and 2pm (15-minute performances)
Venue: Monument Metro, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1
FREE: Just drop in!

Join us for Mughal Miniatures: The Awakening, an outdoor performance inspired by Indian and Persian miniature paintings. Sumptuous costumes and bold movement transform a living picture from Mughal splendour to a contemporary twist. Funny, joyful and empowering, the show bursts with dance and music as a feisty queen and her attendants break free to claim where they belong!

Presented by GemArts and Tyne & Wear Metro



Date: Saturday 18th July 2026
Time: 2.30pm
Venue: Fine Art Lecture Theatre, Newcastle University,
 King Edward VII Building, 49 King's Rd, NE1 7RU
Tickets: Free, registration is essential
Box-office: www.gemarts.org

Director: Jude Ratnam | Sri Lanka 2017 | Tamil, English, Sinhalese | 94 min
 In 1983, five-year-old Jude Ratman escapes anti-Tamil violence on a red train. Years later, as a filmmaker, he retraces that journey through a landscape marked by a 26-year war, confronting buried memories and suppressed stories in search of truth and healing.

Presented by GemArts, Newcastle University and Northumbria University

DEMONS IN PARADISE

AN EVENING WITH NIKESH SHUKLA: CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE GOOD IMMIGRANT



Date: Saturday 18th July 2026
 Time: 7pm
 Venue: Northern Stage, Barras Bridge, Newcastle, NE1 7RH
 Tickets: £5
 Box Office: www.northernstage.co.uk / 0191 230 5151

Join us for a special reading and in-conversation event with award-winning writer and activist Nikesh Shukla, marking the 10th anniversary of his landmark anthology *The Good Immigrant* alongside Masala Festival's own milestone.

From Spiderman comics to literary fiction, Shukla's work has reshaped conversations on race, identity and belonging in the UK. Published in 2016 after a groundbreaking crowdfunding campaign, the anthology brought together 21 vital voices - including Riz Ahmed, Reni Eddo-Lodge, Nish Kumar and Vinay Patel - and remains a defining text in contemporary literature. Shukla joins award-winning writer Preti Taneja for an insightful discussion on its lasting legacy.

Presented by GemArts and Northern Stage

BIJLEE / बिजली / ELECTRIC



Date: Saturday 18th July 2026
 Time: 7pm - 1am
 Venue: Zerox, 48-52 Sandhill, Newcastle, NE1 3JF
 Tickets: £5 advance / £8 on the door
 Box Office: www.gemarts.org

BIJLEE is Masala Festival's first multidisciplinary club night, where Bollywood, Ghazal and Qawwali classics are reimagined through contemporary club edits - from Oldskool Hardcore and 90s Jungle to Footwork, Garage, Bassline, Dubstep, Baile Funk and more. The night opens with Busk With Us, inviting audiences to remix pre-partition archives into live visuals and upcycle ten years of Masala Festival materials into celebratory collages. BIJLEE's South Asian line-up features genre-bending sets from Chande, Lotus Phaze, Girl Called Sim, PSK, Jameela, and live Bollywood-meets-Jungle remixer Haaji Ka Halva, capturing the evolving South Asian sounds shaping the UK's underground club scene.

Presented by GemArts



MINI MELA

Date: Sunday 19th July
Time: 11am-3pm
Venue: Bensham Grove Community Centre, Gateshead, NE8 2XD
FREE: Just drop in!



Wrap up Masala Festival's 10-year celebration with our much-loved Mini Mela, a fun-filled, family-friendly burst of creativity, culture and community. Dive into Bollywood dance, block printing, Rangoli, pottery, face painting and stunning henna, all inspired by the rich traditions of the Indian subcontinent. With delicious Indian food in the mix, it's the perfect summer Sunday. Come for the colour, stay for the flavours, and celebrate ten years of Masala magic. Presented by GemArts

DABBAWAL™

DABBAWAL x GEMARTS MASALA FESTIVAL

Celebrating 10 Years of Flavours & Friendship

For Masala Festival's 10th anniversary, we proudly celebrate a decade of partnership with Dabbawal, Newcastle's original Indian street food pioneers. Each year, Dabbawal brings the spirit of South Asian street food culture to the festival, and this milestone menu is inspired by the region's rich culinary heritage — from Sri Lanka's spice bazaars to Kerala's coastal kitchens and Lahore's sizzling grills.

Enjoy a vibrant, specially crafted festival menu served with Dabbawal's signature warmth and creativity.

Masala Festival Menu available:
13th to 19th July

69-75 High Bridge,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6BX

1 Brentwood Mews, Jesmond,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3DG

Bookings: dabbawal.com



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MASALA FESTIVAL
SET MENU**



WORKSHOPS AT MASALA FESTIVAL 2026

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



MASALA FESTIVAL X ART DIAMONDS: PRINT WORKSHOP WITH MICHELLE WOOD

Date: Tuesday 14th July
Time: 2-4pm
Venue: Gateshead Central
Library, NE8 4LN

Create bold, colourful prints with artist Michelle Wood in this hand-on workshop for people of retirement age, celebrating Masala Festival's 10th anniversary.



CREATIVE WRITING WITH TAHMINA ALI

Date: Tuesday 14th July
Time: 6-8pm
Venue: DiverCity Hub, 120 Buckingham
Street, Newcastle, NE4 5QU

Join poet Tahmina Ali for a creative writing workshop exploring roots, South Asian identity and new ideas. Experiment, connect, find your voice - with the chance to share at Freespill's open mic.



MOVEMENT & MEDITATION SESSION

Date: Thursday 16th July
Time: 4:00pm - 5:30pm
Venue: Yoga X Life Studios, Units 1-3
Bryson Court, Portland Road,
Newcastle, NE2 1DW

A 90-minute Masala Festival session blending Vinyasa Flow yoga, guided meditation and deep relaxation – supporting strength, focus and calm. A restorative space to slow down, reconnect and reset.



SATURDAY ART CLUB X MASALA FESTIVAL

Date: Saturday 18th July
Time: 10:30am - 12:30pm
Venue: Wailes Room, Gateshead Central
Library, NE8 4LN

Are you aged 10-14? Get creative at Sheryl Jenkins' animation workshop. Inspired by Masala Festival make colourful cut-out puppets, animate them with apps, and add your own voices, sounds, and music to bring them alive.

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