



Kiran
Nadar
Museum
of Art

Virasat

Mahesh Elkunchwar's Wada Plays

Directed by Anuradha Kapur

Scenography by Deepan Sivaraman



24 - 27 Sep 26

7:00pm

📍 Sunder Nursery, Delhi

Developed in residence at
Black Box Okhla

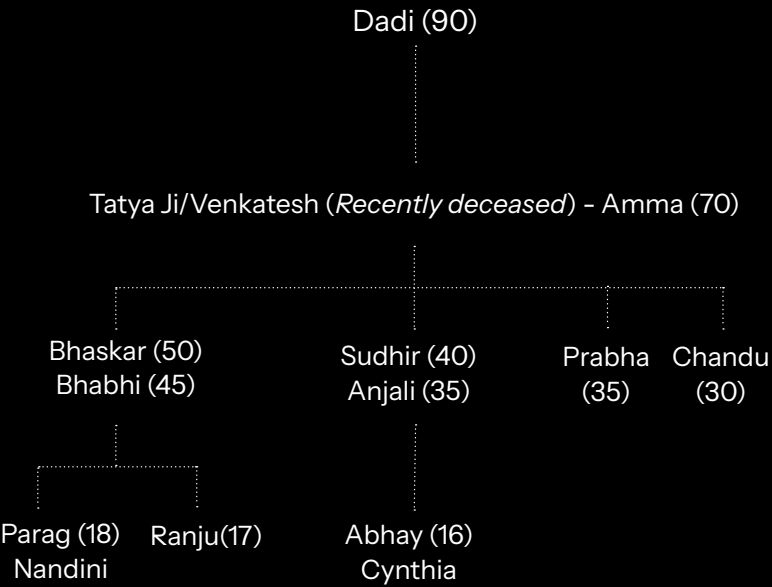
Virasat is a generational saga that maps the lives of the Deshpandes of Dharangaon upon the landscape of a rapidly changing India. The play traces the crumbling of a once prosperous feudal household, as shifting social circumstances upturn the lives of the family.

Veteran theatre-maker **Anuradha Kapur** directs eminent Marathi playwright **Mahesh Elkunchwar's** Wada trilogy as a single performance.

Virasat has been commissioned by the **Kiran Nadar Museum of Art** and developed in residence at **Black Box Okhla**.



Deshpandes of Dharangaon



The play begins shortly after the death of Tatya Ji.

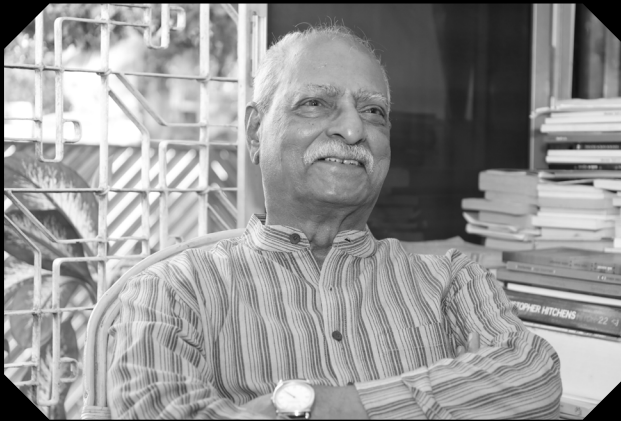
Mahesh Elkunchwar

Playwright

Mahesh Elkunchwar is one of the most eminent playwrights of modern India. His texts range from one-act plays to trilogies which have been translated into several Indian languages, staged across India and filmed by directors such as Aparna Sen and Govind Nihalani.

His acclaimed texts include *Virasat*, *Holi*, *Party*, *Sonata* and *Atmakatha*, among scores of others. His book of essays is also hugely acclaimed, as are his conversations and ruminations on the practice of art making.

Mahesh Elkunchwar is a Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellow, and is the recipient of numerous awards, such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Kalidas Samman, among others.



Anuradha Kapur

Notes from the Director

“As a theatre-maker, what interests me is the epic scale of Mahesh Elkunchwar’s trilogy – The Old Stone Mansion, The Pool and Apocalypse. Epic narratives about modern India are rare and Elkunchwar’s epic is different from the structure of the conventional epic inasmuch as there are no heroic characters here. Characters in Virasat are defined by the quotidian. Everyday objects determine the width and breadth of a lifetime; and everyday routines make up the business of living. The women cook, serve, eat, clean, sweep, swab; they rear children, cope with old age, and wait on the menfolk who, on the other hand, look after the land, deal with court-kachehri, defend family honour, and maintain a charade of respectability. Through the the saga of three generations of the Deshpande family that is mapped on the landscape of a rapidly changing India we witness the crumbling of a Brahmin feudal household, the incursion of capital into our villages, the onset of agrarian distress, the lumpenisation of our youth and the ongoing climate crisis and its asymmetric impact on the poor and the marginalised. Parag identifies with, and then combats, a lumpenised town. Abhay contends with alienation and urban disaffection living as an immigrant in Europe and America, and through Ranju we see the family gold travel from the feudal household into the bazaars of Bombay. In this iteration – the first iteration was attempted a decade ago – I revisit the trilogy as a single, durational experience. I also revisit Mahesh Elkunchwar’s experiment with form. In a remarkable journey, he deftly takes us through the conventions of realism, then centralises the metaphor of a pond (life, plenitude and also decomposition and silt), and thereafter writes up three “soliloquies” as ruminations about the self and soul in Yuganta. A hyperrealist score of action defines the grammar of performance where the time taken to perform quotidian routines mirrors “real time” actions. It shapes the experience of duration in order to draw the spectators into the frame of the playing space. The ordinary and the mundane are experienced as directly and as palpably as possible by the spectators.

Special thanks to friends without whom this performance would not have been possible: Nikhil Mehta, Geeta Kapur, Indu Chandrasekhar, Gargi Bharadwaj, Amritha Sruthi, Ravikant, Anirudh Khutwad, Treasure Art Association, and the team at Black Box Okhla – Ashok Kumar, Anil Sharma, Roshan, Mukesh, Shyam Kishore, Purnabha Chaturvedi, and Mukesh Gupta.”



Anuradha Kapur is a theatre-maker and teacher. Among her acclaimed productions are *Nale Wali Ladki* (2018), *Dark Things* (co-directed with Deepan Sivaraman, 2018), *409 Ramkinkars* (2015), *Virasat* (2013), *Dr Jekyll and Hyde* (2012), *Jeevit ya Mrit* (2011), *Centaurs* (2006), *Pata Shahar Mumbai* (2004), *Sundari: An Actor Prepares* (1997) and *Umrao* (1993). Her theatre work has travelled widely within India and abroad, and she was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi award for Direction in 2004. Anuradha Kapur served as Director, National School of Drama, New Delhi from 2007 to 2013, where she was also Professor of Acting and Direction. She has held Visiting Professorships at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi, University of Warwick and University of Cape Town. She is the author of *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings, and Gods: The Ramlila at Ramnagar* (1990, 2004), and her writings on performance have been widely anthologised.

Deepan Sivaraman

Notes from the Scenographer

"The wada in Mahesh Elkunchwar's Virasat trilogy becomes the central sensorial and experiential element in this retelling of the story. The constructed scenography follows not merely from the architectural design of the traditional and conventional Wada, but from the emotional core of the unfolding narrative of a family's multi-generational devastation and a village's transformation into semi urbanity. The incompleteness and the material choices reflect the overall grammar of a fragmented/ interrupted realism. The choice to work with materials as they are, as they guide our working processes with them, while avoiding faking one material for another defines this work's relationship with the idea of real/reality/realism. Crucial to these conceptualisations is the idea of spectatorship. The placement of the audience around and close to the Wada is designed to make one feel as if they are inside the house. The resultant sightlines necessitate a bodily response from the audience as they need to shift and move in their seats to get the best possible view of the family members."



Deepan Sivaraman is a theatre director, scenographer, dramaturg, curator and educator, and is presently a Professor at Ahmedabad University. He is a scenography postgraduate from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London and has taught theatre-making and scenography at various art institutions such as Wimbledon College of Art, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, Summer Academy of Art in Venice, National School of Drama in Delhi, and Sarojini Naidu School of Arts and Communication at Hyderabad University. He is the founding Artistic Director of Oxygen Theatre Company based in Kerala and Performance Studies Collective based in Delhi. His work has been invited to festivals abroad, including the celebrated Wuzhen Festival in China and the Alexandrinsky Festival in St Petersburg, among others. Notable productions by him include *The Legends of Khasak*, *Ubu Roi*, *Peer Gynt*, *Spinal Cord* and *Dark Things*. Presently, he is directing Dostoevsky's novel *The Gambler* for Moscow Theatre of Nations which will premiere at the Chekhov International Theatre Festival Moscow in 2027.



Aditi Jaitly Jadeja

Associate Director, Performing Arts,

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

“Virasat is a collaboration between KNMA and Black Box Okhla, rooted in a shared commitment to supporting rigorous theatre practice and new creative processes. Developed in residence at Black Box, the production reflects a sustained investment in the making of ambitious new work and in strengthening Delhi’s theatre landscape through long-term institutional and artistic partnerships. The play’s presentation at Sunder Nursery further expands opportunities for audiences to engage with contemporary theatre in a public setting.”

Nikhil Mehta

Founder and Artistic Director, Black Box Okhla

“What makes this collaboration between KNMA and Black Box Okhla unique is a commitment not just to presenting work, but to investing in the artistic process of theatre-making. Every element in the theatre needs time to rehearse and grow, whether it’s the actors, the sets, the lights, or the music. For this reason, we offer artists a laboratory to experiment, followed by a preview period, where we keep developing the work with an audience. This partnership, and Black Box Okhla’s mission more broadly, is an effort to disrupt the product-driven theatre-making ecosystem and pivot towards artistic inquiry and craft. The show you see tonight is the culmination of that process and a small step towards rethinking a model for commissioning and supporting new works for the stage.”

Black Box Okhla (BBO) is a performing arts initiative founded in 2017 that offers long term residencies for developing new work for the stage.

Cast and Creative team

(In alphabetical order)



Aditi Gautam as Ranju

Aditi is a graduate of the National School of Drama. What began as an extracurricular activity, took the center stage in her life. Hailing from Lahaul Spiti, she aspires to build her own world of whimsical fantasies fusing them with folktales. As an actor she's been a part of *The Money Opera* by Amitesh Grover, *Agnisuta Draupadi* by Joy Maisnam, *Aakhirkaar* by Neel Chaudhuri and *Hedda Gabler* by Bhagyashree Tarke. She's a trained contemporary dancer and Ashtanga Yoga teacher.



Ajeet Singh Pallawat as Parag

Ajeet is an actor, director and founder of Ujaagar Dramatic Association. An alumni of the National School of Drama, he has been recognised for his performances in plays such as *Mai hun Yusuf aur ye hai mera Bhai*, *Virasat* and *Hunkaro* and has been the recipient of the META best actor critic citation, Aditya Birla Kala Kiran Puraskar and Vinod Doshi Fellowship. As a director, he has received acclaim for the plays *Kasumal Sapno*, *Mithyasur* and *Papa Painter*. He has also appeared on screen in shows such as *Sector 36*, *Collar Bomb*, *Luka Chuppi* and *Criminal Justice*, to name a few.



Bhumisuta Das as Amma & Nandini

Bhumisuta is a theatre practitioner, actor, director, and researcher from West Bengal. A graduate of the National School of Drama, she has worked extensively in acting, direction, and theatre pedagogy. Associated with Gobardanga Naksha, her practice bridges traditional and contemporary theatre, emphasising rural performance, collaborative creation and intercultural exchange.



Dhwani Vij as Anjali

Dhwani is a theatre director, performer and educator based in Delhi. She is one of the founding members of Third Space Collective, a Delhi based drama group. Her directorial works include *Dastaan-e-Bhookh*, *Pascualnama*, *Rat*, *Bhaagi Hui Ladkiyan* and *For The Record*. Her plays have won multiple awards at the META Theatre Festival and she is the recipient of the Vinod Doshi Scholarship. She leads the arts department at Shiv Nadar School, using the arts to teach skills of critical thinking and compassion to young learners.



Himanshu Kohli as Sudhir

Himanshu is an actor, theatre director, producer, and educator, and a graduate of the National School of Drama (NSD). With over a decade of experience across theatre, film, and digital media, he has worked on acclaimed productions such as *Soni*, *Scam 1992* and *Luka Chuppi*. Passionate about actor training and independent cinema, he combines artistic practice with education, mentoring emerging performers while creating socially engaged, collaborative work.



Joy Maisnam as Chandu

Joy is an alumnus of the National School of Drama (NSD) and the London International School of Performing Arts, Joy Maisnam is a multilingual theatre director. His work combines traditional physicality with contemporary performance, and he is trained in diverse martial arts forms—including Thang-Ta, Kalaripayattu, Chhau, and Silambam—alongside Yoga and Kickboxing. His notable directorial works include *The Diary of a Madman*, *The Journey of Sorrow*, *Andha Yug*, *9 Days Newspaper*, *The Dance* and *The Railroad*, Binod Maisnam's "ECHO", *Loidriba Wari*, and *Natak ho hi Nahi Sakta*, which have travelled to prominent international and national festivals. His accolades include the Akademi Young Talented Award (2014 & 2018, Manipur State Kala Akademi) and the Yuva Natya Samaroh Award (2017, Sahitya Kala Parishad, Delhi).



Mann Thapar as Dadi

Mann is a professional actor. A graduate of the National School of Drama (NSD), he is trained in Classical Music and movement. He has worked with numerous prominent Indian theatre directors such as Atul Kumar, Anuradha Kapur, Neelam Mansingh Chowdhary and Abhilash Pillai, as well as internationally acclaimed directors like Romeo Castellucci and Pillar Velencino.



Petrishia Melodi Dorcas, Direction Team & Costume Design

Petrishia is a theatre artist, actor, director, writer and screenwriter. A graduate of the National School of Drama (NSD), she is the founder member of Fluid Space collective group, an ensemble of artists engaged in interdisciplinary and multicultural collaborative practices. She has directed several acclaimed theatre productions such as *Behind the Borders*, *Untold Stories*, *Nilam*, *Dead Can Breathe*, *In the Shadow of Nakba*, and *The Wait*. Her international collaborations include Daughters Opera, Seni Tiga B and the Farm Lab Exhibition. She has acted in and provided technical coordination for more than 80 theatre productions and has conducted numerous theatre, acting, and camera acting workshops across India.



Pranav Nigam, Sound Design & Operation

Pranav (aka Lani.akea) is a Delhi-based composer, sound designer, and experimental sound artist working across electroacoustic music, acoustic composition, alternative pop, and interdisciplinary performance. He holds a diploma from KM Music Conservatory, Chennai, an undergraduate degree through Middlesex University London, and a Master's in Composition from the California Institute of the Arts. His work has been performed internationally by ensembles including the London Firebird Orchestra, German National Youth Orchestra, and Allegri String Quartet. Currently active in Delhi's independent music and theatre communities, he recently worked as sound designer for the Black Box Okhla production *Harvest*.



Pranjal Vaid as Abhay

Born into a Punjabi joint family with twenty six living under a roof, Pranjal's tryst with drama began fairly early. He's continued to keenly observe and re-imagine it onto the stage and the screen, as an actor, writer and director. A recipient of the prestigious Inlaks Foundation scholarship, Pranjal has played in productions such as *Mezok*, *Amb Da Boota*, *Quicksand* and *Still and Still Moving*.



Purav Goswami, Dramaturg

Purav is a dramaturg and theatre maker and researcher from Assam, India. He is pursuing a PhD in Theatre from University of Cape Town, South Africa, as part of the Reimagining Tragedy from Africa and Global South project (ReTAGS) funded by the Andrew W. Mellon foundation (2019-2024). Currently, he resides and works from Delhi, India.



Sajida as Bhabhi

Sajida's theatre journey began nearly 27 years ago in Dhampur, Uttar Pradesh, and deepened in Meerut under the late Surendra Kaushik before she graduated from the National School of Drama (NSD). Six years with the NSD Repertory Company followed, performing under directors like Anuradha Kapur, Neelam Mansingh, and Prasanna. In 2015, she founded Treasure Art Association in New Delhi, going on to direct productions such as *Tamasha E Nautanki* (Sahitya Kala Parishad Best Play, 2017), *Banjara* (Theatre Olympics, 2018), and *DOZAKH*, which opened Bharat Rang Mahotsav 2024 in Patna. She has been awarded Best Costume Designer at META 2019, the Natsamrat Award, and Rajiv Gandhi Award among others.



Saras Kumar, Direction Team & Light Design

Saras is an alumnus of the National School of Drama, New Delhi, specialising in Direction. His areas of interest include devising theatre performances, playwriting and screenwriting, and directing for both stage and film. He also works as a lighting designer and New Media artist, and is deeply interested in exploring New Media in theatre.



Sarthak Narula, Direction Team & Set Design

Sarthak is a theatre director, scenographer, and educator. A graduate of the National School of Drama (NSD) with a Master's in Theatre from the Academy of Theatre Arts, Mumbai. His practice focuses on devised theatre, site-specific scenographic interventions and experiential environments. His directorial works include *Ruins in Reverse*, *Hiraeth*, *Adhantar*, *Dhucin Di Lakeer*, *Kagaz Ke Kaafle*, *Sehar* and *Inquilab*. He has collaborated with leading Indian theatre directors in over thirty major productions and he serves as visiting faculty at NSD, NID, RNTU (Bhopal), and SRC (New Delhi).



Uma Katju as Prabha

Uma is an actor and theatre maker, whose work spans theatre, dance and film. She has performed in *Sister Midnight* (2024) by Karan Kandhari, *Don Juan Comes Back from the War* (2023) by Rehaan Engineer, and Mira Nair's *A Suitable Boy* (2020). Her works include *I Don't Remember + Chai Samosa*, *Skeleton Under My Skin* and *Chickens*, which was awarded the Goethe Institut's Refunction Theatre Grant.



Yash Yogi as Bhaskar

Yash is an actor, writer, director, clowning facilitator. An alumnus of the National School of Drama (NSD), he has written and directed original productions, devised performances, and mentored actors through workshops, schools, universities, and acting institutes across India. Alongside his theatre work, he has spent the past decade working as a medical clown with hospitals and diverse communities in India and internationally. Yash has appeared in films including *Dream Girl*, *Raagadesh*, *Fukrey 3* and *Superboys of Malegaon*, as well as in web series, short films, radio productions, and television projects.

Credits

KNMA Technical Lead: MT Aditya Srinivasan

Sound Engineer: Varun Tanwar

Props Research and Production: Nihal Kardam

Stage Hands: Amrat, Tezkant, Shoaib

Production Partner: TNBT Marketing Services Private Limited

Permissions: TNBT Marketing Services Private Limited

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Scaffolding: Punj Formworks

Housekeeping: Radiance Manpower Group

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Documentation: Whistleman Films

Tech Support: Batra Electricals

Printers: Rohit Art Centre

Fumigation: Expert Pest Control

Music Sponsor: Novex Communications Pvt. Ltd.

We express our gratitude to the team at Black Box Okhla and Nikhil Mehta, Founder and Artistic Director, for his constant support throughout the development and staging of *Virasat*.

A special thanks to Mr. Ratish Nanda, Mr. Hardeep Thakur, and the staff at Sunder Nursery.

Our gratitude to all the Trustees of the Shiv Nadar Foundation, the Board of the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Ms. Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Mr. Shikhar Malhotra, Mr. Shiv Nadar and Mrs. Kiran Nadar and all our colleagues at KNMA.

About KNMA

Founded in 2010, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is a pioneering institution dedicated to making art accessible to diverse audiences and providing an important platform for art and artists. Over the past sixteen years, KNMA has built a significant collection with seminal modernist and contemporary works from India and South Asia region, now broadening its scope to include classical, vernacular and indigenous art, extending from the 3rd century CE to the 20th century, tracing historical trajectories in Indian art alongside the experimental practices of young contemporaries. In addition to presenting critically acclaimed visual and performing artists, the museum hosts workshops, art appreciation programs, symposia, and public discourses that highlight India's rich and diverse artistic and cultural heritage.

As KNMA prepares to open its new museum in New Delhi, it is entering an important phase of growth and transformation. The new museum will significantly expand the scale and scope of KNMA's visitor offerings, with the ambition of creating a leading cultural destination for India and South Asia.



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