

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art Presents the KNMA Annual Festival, 2026

Four Evenings Celebrating Love and Storytelling Through Dance



Press Kit

New Delhi, October, 2026: Following editions dedicated to Theatre in 2024 and Music in 2025, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art's Annual Festival turns its focus this year on the diverse dance traditions from across our country as they explore the myriad forms of love shown in Indian literature and oral tradition. **Curated by Leela Samson**, the 2026 edition will run from **15 to 18 October 2026 at Sunder Nursery**, Delhi, bringing together 14 performances, with 6 special commissions, that will unite dance styles and love stories from across Indian languages, performed by both veteran and emerging artists, each using movement, rhythm, music, gesture, costume and narrative in their own distinct way.

Day 1

The opening evening of the KNMA Dance Festival brings together traditions of rhythm, desire and divine love. Beginning with *Chenda Melam*, a vibrant traditional percussion ensemble from Kerala, the programme continues with *Anaṅga Raṅga*, celebrating the form in formless and love in its many forms across languages and dance traditions.

This segment brings together five distinguished practitioners of Indian classical dance, each representing a unique artistic tradition – a foremost exponent of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, and skilled vocalist who has reconstructed and documented the tradition of Vilasini Natyam through extensive research – **Swapnasundari**; Padma Shri awardee, a dancer, choreographer and teacher of Odissi, **Madhavi Mudgal**; noted Kathakali practitioner and the 2026 Kathakali Sreshta Puraskaram awardee, **Kalamandalam Balasubramanian**; renowned *Abhinaya* and *Nritta* maestro, **Bragha G. Bessell**; and performing artist, singer, choreographer and educator, **Vaishali Trivedi**. The evening concludes with *Ānanda-līlā*, a Manipuri Maharaas presentation by the Anjika Society Manipuri Dance & Movement Therapy for exploring the sacred dance of Krishna and the Gopis.

Day 2

The second evening brings together stories of devotion, romance and spiritual transformation. The programme opens with *Śubhārambha*, an excerpt from the Manipuri Sankirtana tradition by Anjika Society for Manipuri Dance and Movement Therapy. The evening continues with three performances – *Śṛṅgāra-manjarī*, inspired by the timeless story of Nala and Damayanti expressed in Kathakali by Kalamandalam Balasubramanian and Group, *Prema Darpaṇa*, presented through Kuchipudi and Marga Natya drawn from Aśvaghoṣa's *Saundarānanda-kāvya* by Amrita Lahiri and Sayak Mitra and *Anurāgam*, a Bharatanatyam presentation that celebrates love as the *rasa* from which all emotions emerge. *Anurāgam* is choreographed by **Dr. Smt. Sheela Unnikrishnan**, with a music score rendered by **Sri Embar Kannan**, and will be performed by skilled performers from 'Sridevi Nrithyalaya'.

Day 3

Day three explores love through friendship, romance, devotion and longing. The programme includes *Kādal*, an excerpt from *Subhadrā-kalyāṇam*, which reflects upon sibling bonds, friendship and romantic love. The presentation, led by **P. Rajagopal**, **Hanne M. de Bruin**, will bring together masters of the Kattaikkutta danceform. This will be followed by *Milan*, a choreographic interpretation of the life and poetry of the nineteenth-century Punjabi mystic Piro, performed by noted Bharatanatyam practitioner **Meera Sreenarayanan**. The evening will conclude with *Anurākti*, a contemporary work inspired by Akka Mahadevi's vachana that contemplates a love beyond worldly attachment, headed by Mumbai-based choreographer, performer and movement director, **Jahnvi Sheriff** and her group.

Day 4

The final day turns towards devotion, surrender and transcendence through four distinct performances. *Bhakti*, a presentation of Kathivanoor Veeran Theyyam rooted in a legendary love story from Kerala; *Praṇidhāna*, based on Sant Janabai's devotion to Lord Panduranga, performed by dedicated Bharatanatyam artiste and disciple of Dr. Sheela Unnikrishnan,

Harinie Jeevitha; *Raṅg Rūḥānī*, explores the relationship between Amir Khusrau and Nizamuddin Auliya, presented by one of India's leading male Bharatanatyam dancers, managing director of the Upadhye School of Dance and Co-Artistic director of the Punyah Dance company, **Aditya PV** and acclaimed Kathak artist and teacher **Dheerendra Tiwari**.

The festival concludes with *Basanta Anurāga*, a celebration of Krishna through the moods of spring, love, longing and enchantment. This Odissi presentation will be led by State Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and Central Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee **Dr. Aruna Mohanty**, and the Orissa Dance Academy.

Aditi Jaitly Jadeja, Associate Director, Performing Arts, KNMA said, *"The KNMA Festival is an important part of our commitment to create meaningful connections between the performing arts, the Museum and our audiences. Each edition offers a distinct lens through which to engage with India's cultural diversity. This year, through dance, we explore the many expressions of love across India's literature, music and storytelling traditions. The festival brings together senior artists alongside a newer generation of accomplished artists, from those who carry traditions forward to those who are reinterpreting and pushing the boundaries of their practice. Leela Samson draws these diverse practices together through a quiet yet distinct curatorial voice."*

Leela Samson, Curator, KNMA Dance Festival, said, *"What the world so desperately needs now is understanding, tolerance, sharing and love. Let us therefore celebrate Love. Love in all its many dimensions - in nature and between men. The way India's dance forms have celebrated it from millenia. This edition of the KNMA Festival extends the ideas of vulnerability in art, overlapping cultures and continuums that previous editions have explored through varied individual expressions, philosophies and beliefs."*

Listing Details:

Dates: 15th-18th October, 2026

Venue: Sunder Nursery

Tickets : [Available on KNMA website](#)

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Notes to Editor

About Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)

Founded in 2010, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is India's leading private museum of modern and contemporary art from South Asia. A non-commercial, not-for-profit institution supported by the Shiv Nadar Foundation, KNMA presents exhibitions, commissions, performances, and public programmes that connect visual and performing arts with broad audiences. Through its wide-ranging learning and community initiatives, KNMA works to expand access to the arts and foster deeper engagement with modern and contemporary practices. KNMA is currently under construction on a new purpose-built campus in New Delhi that will significantly expand its exhibition, performance, and learning capacities. Conceived as an interdisciplinary cultural center, the new building will enable more ambitious artistic production, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and public programming, strengthening the museum's role as a leading cultural platform in India and internationally.

www.knma.org

Participating Performers :

Delhi Panchavadya Trust, Swapnasundari, Bragha Bessel, Kalamandalam Balasubramanian, Madhavi Mudgal, Vaishali Trivedi, Gaurav Bhatti, Sundaresan Pandurangan, Anjika Society, Priti Patel, K. Ratan Singh, W. Suraj Kumar, Th. Imocha Singh, S. Karuna Devi, Amrita Lahiri, Sayak Mitra, Sridevi Nrithyalaya, Dr. Smt. Sheela Unnikrishnan, Kattaikkuttu Sangam, P. Rajagopal, Meera Sreenarayan, Jahnvi Sheriff and Friends, International Centre for Folklore and Culture, Harinie Jeevitha, Sri Rajkumar Bharati, Adithya PV, Dheerendra Tiwari, Odissi Dance Academy, Guru Dr. Aruna Mohanty