



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**In a Fractured World, Indian Summer Festival Responds with Art:  
A Defiant Celebration of Collective Possibility**  
**— Ragas for a Ruptured World —**

***16th Edition includes Vancouver debuts of internationally acclaimed comedian Vidura Bandara Rajapaksa and genre-blending Punjabi singer and composer Rashmeet Kaur***

**VANCOUVER, BC – Indian Summer Festival** presents its 16th annual celebration of South Asian arts, bringing together more than 90 Canadian and international artists across a lineup of evocative mixed programming, including comedy, live music, theatre, literature, and interdisciplinary exchange, from **July 9-19, 2026 at various venues across Vancouver, Burnaby, and Surrey**. Curated by Indian Summer Festival Executive Artistic Director Am Johal, the festival's 2026 theme *Ragas for a Ruptured World* is a call to artistic expression, creative defiance, and collective meaning in an increasingly fractured world.

"We are currently living through a moment of profound upheaval—politically, spiritually, collectively," says Johal. "Art is not a luxury in times like these; it offers a vital lifeline for new openings and potent solidarities. Our festival theme of *Ragas for a Ruptured World* is an invitation for artists to improvise and think otherwise to the closures of thought on offer today."

The festival will feature two mainstage performances at the Vancouver Playhouse, including the Vancouver debut of Sri Lankan comedian **Vidura Bandara Rajapaksa**, who opens the festival with his razor sharp, irreverent comedy as part of his international tour *Paradise Gothic Tour*, and of Indian singer and composer **Rashmeet Kaur**, who will perform her genre-defying blend of folk, Sufi, hip-hop, and R&B influences as part of her first-ever North American tour.

Additional highlights include an evening in conversation with Academy Award-nominated filmmaker, writer, and activist **Julian Brave NoiseCat**, acclaimed for his feature documentary *Sugarcane* and lauded memoir, *We Survived the Night*; a special presentation with Vancouver's own **Tarun Nayar of Modern Biology**, who will transform plant bioelectricity into live, improvised sound amongst the lush surroundings of VanDusen Botanical Garden; a literary exchange between authors **Sonora Jha** and **Minelle Mahtani**; a world premiere solo performance from celebrated actor and playwright **Anita Majumdar**; and a special comedy

performance from one of the year's youngest internationally touring comedians, **Abby Govindan**.

"Our 2026 festival theme Ragas for a Ruptured World is an assertion, actually. A proposal of where art can live, and what kind of creative expression demands attention in the zeitgeist as we collectively navigate global political and ecological crises," says Laura June Albert, Executive Managing Director. "As a festival at the intersection of art and ideas, we actively position both discursive and aesthetic practices as critical in resourcing us forward."

A variety of free programming will also be offered throughout the festival, including the **Gong Library**, an immersive collection of gongs, chimes, and other instruments from around the world at Ocean Artworks Pavilion; two video works (*Inclination* and *Forgiveness*) by **Farheen Haq**, co-presented by Grunt Gallery at its Mt. Pleasant Community Art Screen (intersection at Kingsway and W Broadway); the interdisciplinary exhibition **Keerat Kaur: If Gardens Could Dream** at the Surrey Art Gallery; **Apna Mela**, a joyful, intergenerational event taking over Surrey's Strawberry Hill Park, produced by **Gen Connect**; and a closing event featuring poetry and live music called *Rishta*, in the heart of Vancouver's Punjabi Market, curated by **Ruby Singh**.

### **Indian Summer Festival's 2026 Festival Lineup (Ticketed):**

#### ***Opening Night!: Vidura Bandara Rajapaksa***

**July 9** at 7pm at Vancouver Playhouse (600 Hamilton Street), co-presented with PuSh Festival

The festival opens with a dynamic night of comedy and music headlined by Vidura Bandara Rajapaksa, making his Vancouver debut as part of his international *Paradise Gothic Tour*. Known for his sharp, darkly funny takes on immigration, spirituality, and late-stage capitalism, Rajapaksa brings a fearless new hour that is both subversive and deeply human. Rajapaksa is joined by acclaimed Canadian comedian Charlie Demers and a live performance by interdisciplinary artist Piu, blending raga-inspired vocals with experimental electronic sound.

#### ***Julian Brave NoiseCat: We Survived the Night***

**July 10** at 7pm at Waterfront Theatre (1412 Cartwright St)

Celebrated writer, documentary filmmaker and journalist Julian Brave NoiseCat presents his acclaimed debut, a national bestseller and one of 2025's most lauded nonfiction works. Blending memoir, history, and reportage, the book offers a powerful exploration of Indigenous life and intergenerational reckoning. NoiseCat will be joined in conversation by Indian Summer Festival Executive Artistic Director Am Johal, with a book signing to follow.

#### ***Sacred Sounds, New Worlds: Rashmeet Kaur***

**July 11** at 7pm at Vancouver Playhouse (600 Hamilton St)

Punjabi singer and composer Rashmeet Kaur makes her Vancouver debut with a genre-blurring performance that fuses folk, Sufi, hip-hop, and R&B influences. Opening the evening, Asad Khan's Sammah Project offers an immersive, electronically inflected exploration of devotional and classical traditions. Together, they present a powerful meditation on sound, identity, and diasporic expression.

### ***Tiffin Talks***

**July 12** at 12pm, 3pm & 6pm at Ocean Artworks Pavilion (1531 Johnston St)

Tiffin Talks is a dialogue series that brings together diverse thought leaders, artists, innovators, and change makers across disciplines. Panelists gather to exchange knowledge, share projects and ideas, then join the audience for a nourishing meal. 2026 Tiffin Talks include:

- ***Reclaiming the Bloom: Pattern, Myth, and the Feminine*** moderated by artists Jas Lally, Keerat Kaur, and Manjot Kaur (12pm)
- ***Grammars of Return*** with guests Farheen Haq and Renisa Mawani, moderated by Jasbir K. Puar (3pm)
- ***Inherited Forms, Reimagined Futures*** with a work-in-progress performance by Sasha Ashwini, followed by dialogue with Tasha Faye Evans and Sujit Vaidya (6pm)

### ***Special Presentation: An Evening with Modern Biology***

**July 13** at 7pm at VanDusen Botanical Garden (5251 Oak St)

Set within the natural beauty of VanDusen Botanical Garden, this immersive outdoor performance by Modern Biology transforms plant bioelectricity into live, improvised sound. Drawing on raga and ecological systems, the work invites audiences into a contemplative listening experience that foregrounds connection, environment, and presence in a relaxed, picnic-style gathering with beloved local musician Tarun Nayar.

### ***Pushing 30: Featuring Abby Govindan***

**July 15** at 8pm at The Rio Theatre (1660 East Broadway)

A gut-busting night of laughter from two breakout comedians. One of the youngest touring comedians in the world, Abby Govindan presents *Pushing 30*, her hour-long special exploring aging, dating, and breaking generational curses. Abby will be joined by the hilarious Niki Mohrdar, who will open the evening with her relatable comedy.

### ***Why We Work Out***

**July 15** at 8pm, **July 16** at 7pm, **July 17** at 7 & 9pm, **July 18** at 7 & 9pm at The Fishbowl (100-1398 Cartwright St), co-presented with Boca del Lupo

A highly physical and deeply moving new immersive performance by Anita Majumdar, commissioned and in development with Nightswimming, and directed by Brian Quirt. *Why We Work Out* weaves together rigorous practice, Hindu mythology, classical Indian dance and Indian pop culture as Anita looks back at her various past training regimes.

***Intemperance: Sonora Jha in Conversation with Minelle Mahtani***

**July 16** at 6pm at Waterfront Theatre (1412 Cartwright St)

Acclaimed novelist, professor, and essayist Sonora Jha brings her new novel, *Intemperance* – a bold, unflinching exploration of race, power, desire, and the uneasy moral terrain of liberal institutions – to Indian Summer Festival, in conversation with Minelle Mahtani, author of the award-winning memoir, *May It Have a Happy Ending*. The lively exchange will be followed by a book signing with both authors.

***IGNITE! Emerging Artists Showcase featuring Arthur Flowers***

**July 16** at 8:30pm at Waterfront Theatre (1412 Cartwright St)

IGNITE! weaves together a dynamic assemblage of five emerging artists for an inspiring Pecha Kucha-style evening. Lightning round presentations explore how memory, migration, or resistance shape contemporary diasporic artistic practices. Hosted by Arthur Flowers, Memphis-born storyteller, novelist, and musician.

***Imaginal Airlines***

**July 17** at 5pm at Ocean Artworks Pavilion (1531 Johnston St, Vancouver)

For one night only, enter the departure lounge for a site-specific, immersive performance of Imaginal Airlines' flagship Flight A108, a sonic experience through imaginal airspace. Performed live by the Imaginal Cells and a full airline crew, the experience is part concert, part active meditation, and part return-journey to the Self.

***Ragas Reimagined***

**July 17** at 7:30pm at Surrey Arts Centre (13750 88 Avenue, Surrey)

Ragas Reimagined brings together two extraordinary ensembles for an evening of lush vocals, beloved melodies, and boundary-crossing sound. Opening the night is Raga Echoes, an ensemble with special guest Gurmukh Singh, presenting *Live Unbound*, an intimate, unplugged journey through iconic Bollywood-led South Asian songs. The evening will continue with the Juno Award-nominated Indo-jazz ensemble, Raagaverse, led by vocalist Shruti Ramani and pianist-composer Noah Franche-Nolan. They will be joined by globally renowned tabla and ghazal master Cassius Khan.

***HYDRONE***

**July 18** at 3pm at Lobe Studio (713 E Hastings St, Vancouver)

HYDRONE is a transdisciplinary spatial audio installation by Ruby Singh exploring water as memory, force, and connective tissue. Presented through the 4DSOUND system at Lobe Studio, the work combines hydrophones, environmental recordings, modular synthesis, poetry, and climate data sonification to create an evolving sonic ecosystem that moves through elemental states of ice, river, rain, ocean, and mist.

**Strings of Solace: Mohamed Assani Quartet**

**July 18** at 8pm at the Ismaili Centre Vancouver (4010 Canada Way, Burnaby)

The Mohamed Assani Quartet pushes the boundaries of music-making while deeply honoring the rich traditions of classical music. Led by two-time Western Canadian Music Award nominee Mohamed Assani will bring his unique training in Indian, Pakistani, and Western music to craft a truly cross-cultural experience, within the captivating setting of Ismaili Centre Vancouver’s Social Hall.

For tickets and full programming details, including free programming, please visit:

[indiansummerfest.ca](http://indiansummerfest.ca)

**About Indian Summer Festival ([indiansummerfest.ca](http://indiansummerfest.ca))**

Indian Summer Festival is dedicated to the exceptional creativity of South Asian arts and artists. Through our programming, we push boundaries and merge worlds. Our approach embraces the complex diversity of South Asian voices and cultures. Curating through a South Asian lens, we centre and amplify diverse South Asian artists in conversation with wider communities. Driven by care and curiosity, we nurture artistic exploration and innovation, expanding the platforms for South Asian art and performance.

**LISTING INFORMATION**

**Indian Summer Festival 2026**

Dates:

July 9-19, 2026

Festival Venues:

Various venues across  
Vancouver, Burnaby & Surrey

Ticket Prices:

**From \$20 - \$69** (plus taxes + fees)

Tickets:

[indiansummerfest.ca](http://indiansummerfest.ca)

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