

Thespo 25

A THEATRE GROUP YOUTH FESTIVAL

4 - 9 Dec, Prithvi Theatre
10 Dec, Veda Kunba Theatre

हर. का.राजा संघ

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Welcome to Thespo 25

The year seems to have flown by at record speed. Our regular community events - Saturday Open Houses, Thespo Reads, Thespo Listens, Theatre Bugs - were already on a roll. We entered July, and bam! First Calls. Registrations. Travel Schedules. Screening. Everything happened in quick succession and the clock kept ticking faster.

With schedules locked, venues finalised and tickets booked, the festival curators, Priti Bakalkar and Siddhesh Purkar, set off to interact with more than a thousand young theatre makers in October. They travelled across 13 cities in a span of a month to watch almost a 100 plays in 17 languages and dialects. As this expedition came to an end - the festival curation came into being.

Each play at the festival takes us on a unique journey. From reinterpreting mythology in *Glitch in the Myth* (Mumbai) and exploring folklore in *Shim Cheong* (Bengaluru) to finding fun in funerals in *A Study of Fear* (Mumbai), to taking to the streets in protest in *जो गाएब भी है हाज़िर भी* (Lucknow). It is all there. Hindi, English, Urdu, Arabic and even Korean! KOREAN? That's a first. How exciting and overwhelming!

The Thespo 25 mantra - हर रंग का मंच - shines through across the festival. Emerging theatre makers can train for tomorrow in diverse aspects of theatre with the wide array of workshops on offer. Experimental work finds a voice at the Fringe in Prithvi House. The platform performances in the foyer promise something for everyone and you are invited to spend the afternoons reading plays at the Prithvi Adda, where we throw a spotlight on the works of Satish Alekar - who will be presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Awards Night.

And if this is not enough, you can head to Juhu Beach, a hop-skip-jump away from Prithvi. Here, Damodharan K, Jino, and Rahul Magesh with their 'Tables & Stools', are eagerly waiting to be an audience to your story. And early mornings, you will also find Faezeh Jalali here, leading a bunch of young Kalari kalakars for a performance at the festival. And then, from the other side of the sea, Team Stages from Sri Lanka have joined us to work with Indian artists to create a devised piece. And if you are wondering how we are making all of this happen, the collaboration with Mohammed Ellyas Lehry is all about telling your own story with little or no resources! Honestly, it is a little too serendipitous.

None of this would have been possible without our community of 'Friends of Thespo'. Thanks to their incredible show of love, support and funding, Thespo 25 includes 18 performances, 7 workshops, 5 play readings and 4 collaborations in 6 languages with participants from over 20 cities in 3 countries!

And YOU are invited! Welcome to the Thespo tribe.

Cheers,
Team Thespo
Aliza, Arun, Ayesha & Mandar

P.S. In the following pages you can also encounter insightful features that reveal the diverse preoccupations of young theatre-wallahs.



PRATHAM  BAJAJ



THE WORLD'S
FAVOURITE
INDIAN

CHOOSE YOUR FAVOURITE BIKE

WHICH ONE YOU THINK WOULD YOU TAKE ON A RIDE?



Thane | Bhiwandi | Bhandup | Satara | Ratnagiri

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PRATHAM

Chetak

PRATHAM
Chetak



CHETAK
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Satara | Mumbai | Ratnagiri | Chiplun

 8169859993

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CURATOR'S NOTE

It's been 25 years of Thespo - the youth theatre festival. To run a nationwide theatre festival for 25 years straight, is an incredible commitment indeed. One that is backed by immense love and passion for the theatre. Thespo has created countless ties with theatre makers over these years, and I'm one of them too.

Back in those days, and even now, what excited me most about Thespo, was that two panellists would travel all over India, searching for plays to be performed at the festival. They would go to the nooks and crannies of the country, watch all the plays, have discussions and give feedback to the performing teams. This dialogue between the panellists and the participants is very crucial. A few years ago, when I was a participant, it was this very dialogue that helped shape my understanding of the national audience. And this year, as a panellist, I was able to have this dialogue while being on the other side of the table.

32 days, 13 cities, 97 plays and 17 languages made up this year's expedition. I was completely swept away by the genuineness, affection and the urge for creation displayed by these youngsters. Plays that were presented had original writing, devised formats, improvisational tools. They engaged with folk tales, mythological characters, societal occurrences, the impact of Covid-19 and delved into personal expression. Some seemed to be destabilised by the political situation of the country, some about the rise of AI and what that meant for our future.

Moving from one play to another was like jumping from universe to universe. We would get an insight into the motive and purpose behind the plays through the discussions. Which allowed us to notice that while some writers and directors had clarity about what they wanted to say, they had difficulty in articulating it through the play. The urge to comment on the harsh realities around them often led to a documentary-like production. As for teams with a background of inter-collegiate competitions, they had a vibe that their only aim was just to win. They weren't able to perceive theatre as a means of self-expression. Some still practised it as if it were an old art piece in a museum, exploring the old plays and doing them in an old fashion way without an independent and contemporary interpretation. The dialogue we shared with the teams then allowed us all to take a step back from just the narrative of the play and reflect on the process of theatre making.

I believe, as artists, the crucial questions we need to ask ourselves are: What stories do we want to tell? In what context do we write and perform them? And, what is their relevance to our times and reality?

There were many plays that got this right as well.



Our current era is indeed a complex one. These plays of the post-COVID era mostly dealt with serious issues. There were some with humour, but very few. The younger generation these days looks at life seriously and knows the importance of their stories. The political situation in the country, social media, trolling, mental health, AI, war, and the environment all played a role in the material we saw. Today, these subjects have a huge impact. In many plays, the entire team had collective clarity about what they wanted to say. It was evident from their research on the subject. They were able to convey their message effectively using stage grammar.

In cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bengaluru, Jaipur, and Ahmedabad there is an infrastructure for theatre. There are theatre groups and audiences who have an appetite for theatre and want to watch plays. We also went to cities where the situation was completely different. Despite the lack of infrastructure, the young and talented individuals we met there were passionate about theatre and managed to overcome obstacles and pursue their passion. Having abundant resources and money is not a prerequisite for making theatre but having determination and enthusiasm surely is and I witnessed it first hand there. Thanks to this Thespo expedition, thousands of young individuals from our vast country came together with great enthusiasm to perform plays, and it was inspiring to witness the energy they brought with them.

Through the journey there was an elephant in the room - the influence of television, films, OTT platforms, and reels, on theatre. We live in a time where these mediums have gained prominence and have impacted an entire generation of artists. Does this make it necessary to reassess the independent strength of "theatre"? We need to acknowledge this reality and see how theatre fits into this narrative. If we do not ask these questions at the right time, we may face challenges going forward.

As this adventure came to an end, a sense of heaviness settled in. We had developed a habit of watching at least three plays a day. And now, that was no longer a part of our routine. Travelling through various modes of transportation: planes, trains, metros, taxis, cycle rickshaws, and tuk-tuks, my co-panellist Priti and I watched plays and indulged in exploring the different cities in this beautiful country. Even after a demanding day of watching plays, we changed two metros and reached Chandni Chowk in Delhi, walked the busy crowded roads during Navratri season, just to grab some delicious street food. Sometimes, we almost missed our train and sometimes our flights landed so early that we were welcomed by the locked gates of a venue. Early morning flights, late night trains and the never ending post performance discussions with the teams made it almost impossible to stick to the schedule; but also gave us an opportunity to connect with over a thousand young theatre makers across the country. Thespo 25's screening journey was filled with these vivid experiences.

For my own journey, Thespo holds a special place and will continue to do so. As for the 25th edition, it is sure to be a special one, not just because this year is a milestone, but also because of the plays that are a part of the curation.

We hope you enjoy watching them as much as we enjoyed putting them together.

Siddhesh Purkar
(who along with **Priti Bakalkar**
curated Thespo 25!)



GLITCH IN THE MYTH

#SitaSpinsHerStory with song, dance and humour.
A revolution is afoot...



TUE, 5 DEC &
WED, 6 DEC
8PM
PRITHVI THEATRE

GLITCH IN THE MYTH

āwaaz theatre
Mumbai

English, Hindi
115 minutes (with interval)
Age group: 12+

Glitch in the Myth gives you front-row seats to Sita's childhood, her marriage, her time at court, in the forest... and her subsequent disappearance.

Who is responsible? Who are her allies? Will she return?

To find out, you must promise to be bold, to forget what you have been taught, and to go on a journey of music, dance, poetry, laughter and revolutions!

Written and Directed by
Anoushka Zaveri

Cast
Anoushka Zaveri, Maahi Zaveri

Credits
Lights: Adi Shastri
Music Director: Maahi Zaveri
Production Managers: Anoushka Zaveri & Hiya Saraf
Stage Manager: Hiya Saraf
Social Media Documentation: Anant Jain & Sarthak Patil
Special thanks: Atif Ally Dagman, Puja Sarup, Siddhesh Purkar

ਜੋ ਗ਼ਾਇਬ ਮੀ ਹੈ ਹਾਜ਼ਿਰ ਮੀ

A WAR. SIRENS. PROTESTS.
ANOTHER WAR.
CAN HOPE OUTLIVE IT ALL?

THU, 7 DEC
6PM & 9PM
PRITHVI THEATRE

जो ग़ारब भी है हाज़िर भी

Rang Abha
Lucknow

Hindi

60 minutes (no interval)

Age group: 14+

जब आप सुनते हैं कि कोई विरोध प्रदर्शन पर है - एक ANTI WAR PROTEST पर, लेकिन हर कोई कहता है कि कोई सक्रिय युद्ध नहीं है। फिर बिना विरोध की आवश्यकता के किसी को विरोध क्यों करना चाहिए? क्या लगातार कोई अदृश्य युद्ध चल रहा है ?

Written and Directed by
Shivangi Nigam

Cast

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Tripathi, Garvit Srivastava,
Subham Singh Chauhan, Vaishali Yadav

Credits

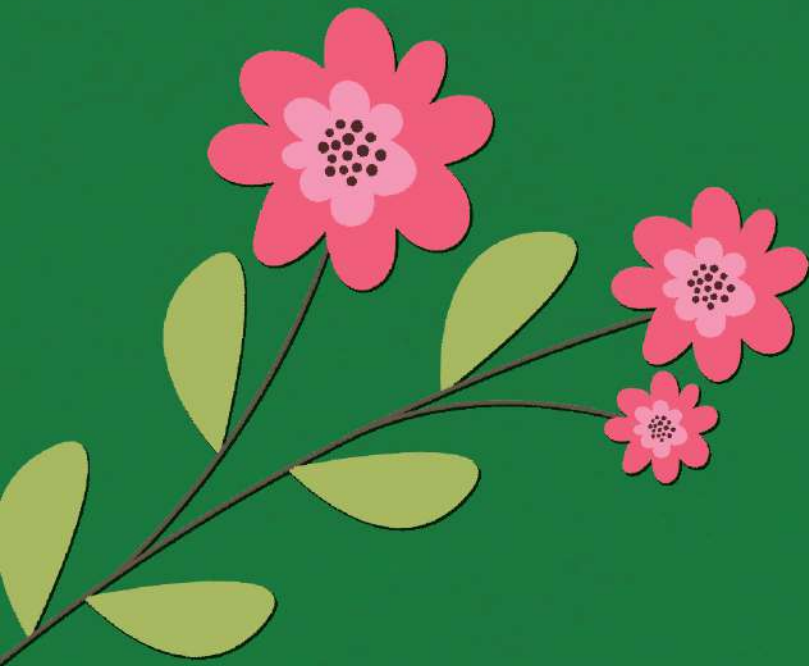
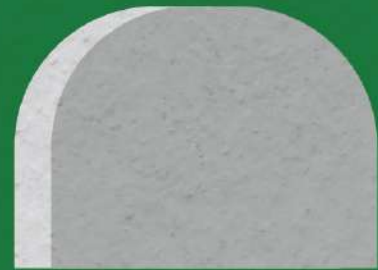
Lights: Adi Shastri

Music Director: Shivangi Nigam

Producer: Anjani Kumar Nigam

A **STUDY** *of* **FEAR**

Find the fun in funerals



FRI, 8 DEC
6PM & 9PM
PRITHVI THEATRE

A **STUDY** *of* **FEAR**

Mumbai

English, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic
75 minutes (no interval)
Age group: 14+

Have you ever been to a funeral?
Of course you have. But have you ever been
to a muslim funeral? Neither has Amit.
But when he gets a phone call telling him his
best friend from school has mysteriously died -
he knows he must go.

How did he die? What happens at a muslim
funeral? Will the family welcome Amit back?
Or do they hold a grudge?

Written and Directed by
Atif Ally Dagman

Cast
Aaryan Tandon, Arman Khan, Arvind Nair,
Gargi Datar, Sanskar Agarwal, Shumaila Shaikh,
Vidur Khullar, Vvansh Sethi

Credits
Lights: Adi Shastri
Sound: Atif Ally Dagman
Stage Manager: Mitali Rathod
Special Thanks: Shivani Tanksale, Vivek Jadhav



SHIM CHEONG
심청

*Sometimes an act of courage and sacrifice
can move the heavens*

**SAT, 9 DEC
6PM & 9PM
PRITHVI THEATRE**



SHIM CHEONG

심청

That One Theatre Group of Christ University
Bengaluru

Korean with English surtitles
60 minutes (no interval)
Age group: 6+

A retelling of the timeless Korean folktale, Shim Cheong, takes you on a journey of love and sacrifice. Shim Cheong's unwavering courage leads her on a perilous journey revealing a heartwarming tale of selflessness, miracles, and the enduring love between a daughter and her blind father. A story that reminds all that in the face of adversity, the power of love can conquer all.

Written and Directed by
Ajna Sultana

Cast

Abhayanandha Varma, Aiswarya D, Aiswarya Mahalanobis, Akil Faisal, Amrita Anantharaman, Anushkaa Boraah, Apoorva Narayanan, Ashmita Sharma, Aviv Sandeep, Chinmay Srikar J Pai, Enya Prabahar, Gowri Kalyani, Harsh Ghoshal, Kannan Agarwal, Lakshmi K, Mathing Ahaonao, Mrinali Chowhan, Pragun Shah, Sara Salwan, Suhasini S Burli, Trisha Purohit, Vasanth V, Vidita Hegde

Credits

Assistant Director: Mrinali Chowhan
Stage Manager: Yojna Gurung
Assistant Stage Managers: Amaya Satpathy, Juyong Lee
and Trisha Sengupta
Lights: Sri Dakshana Rani
Music Composer: Koshy Thomas
Sound: Sree Mruthika LS
Costumes: Elsa George
Sets and Props: Parinita Shetty
Makeup: Parneet Kaur
Producer: Philipp Sulim



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JURY



Anitha Santhanam

Anitha Santhanam completed her Advanced Diploma in Creating Theatre and Performance and her pedagogical training in Lecoq-based practice from LISPA, London. She is currently a part of the faculty team at Drama School Mumbai. Previously, she was the faculty of Integral Theatre on the FECAT program at SMART, Bengaluru, and an artist-in-residence specialising in theatre and movement at the Srishti School of Arts, Design and Technology, Bangalore. Her work as a director includes *Bhima*, *Beyond the Bubble*, *Mundhirkotte*, *The Flowering Tree*, and many more. She is also a two-time awardee of the Charles Wallace India Trust scholarship.

Kshitij Patwardhan

A screenwriter, lyricist, playwright, theatre director, and publisher Kshitij Patwardhan has an impeccable record of 11 Marathi films as a writer and 65 as a lyricist. His latest web series, *Taali*, featuring Sushmita Sen has been one of the most watched and appreciated Indian Web series. Moreover, his writing for *Sajini Sindhe ka Viral Video* has received great admiration. After doing his experimental theatre activities from prolific theatre groups of Pune like Jagar and Samanvay, he has contributed to the winning teams of Purushottam and Sawai Karandak, the most prestigious one-act play competitions in Maharashtra. His first full-length commercial play *Nava Gadi Nava Rajya* which won more than 25 awards has been adapted into a superhit film *Time Please*. His latest play *Donn Special* has been awarded the prestigious Dinanath Mangeshkar Samman.



Shernaz Patel

With the rich experience of 35 years in English theatre, Shernaz Patel is a partner at Rage, one of Mumbai's leading theatre groups, and is the force behind some of their milestone initiatives including Writer's Bloc, 36 Ghante, and Class Act. She holds a master's degree in Acting from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and is also a Charles Wallace Scholar. As a voiceover artist, she has lent her voice to various commercial and corporate films. As a teacher, she headed the acting department at Whistling Woods International and is on the advisory board of The Drama School, Mumbai. Shernaz has played an instrumental role in setting up NCPA's Connections School programme run in collaboration with the National Theatre UK and is also the Artistic Director of Aditya Birla Group's Theatre Initiative – Aadyam.

Sushma Rao

Sushma's cultural odyssey, from childhood street plays to her current role as Arts Manager at NCPA, unfolds over two dynamic decades. Embracing roles as actor, production manager, and arts manager, she's left a mark as a founding force in the Bangalore Theatre Collective. She has worked on noteworthy productions like *Hayavadana* and *Tughlaq* and has been involved in numerous international theatre festivals. Armed with a master's in Cultural Policy, Sushma seamlessly blends theory and practice, pushing artistic boundaries with unwavering commitment. Her journey is a testament to her enduring passion for creative exploration and her invaluable contributions to the cultural landscape.



WORKSHOPS



Magic Hour

**The Deryck Jeffereis Lighting Workshop
by Arghya Lahiri**

Light: If you're an actor, you need to catch it. If you're a Producer, you need to cost it. If you're a Director, you need to shape it. And if you're a designer, you need to bottle it. 'Magic Hour' is an introduction to the craft of lighting for the theatre.

4th Dec | 10 am to 8 pm | Prithvi Theatre



Commission Granted

**Discover the formula for funding your projects
by Swati Apte**

Whether you're a seasoned grant seeker or have just begun exploring the realm of funding, this workshop is designed to empower you with the skills and insights needed to articulate your vision effectively.

4th Dec | 10 am to 1 pm | Prithvi House



Anti-Gravity: a Movement Workshop

**Explore your body through space,
rhythm, music and emotions
with Amey Mehta**

Defy conventional notions of gravity as you learn techniques that challenge the forces pulling you down. Understand some basic and elementary skills through fluid movements and creative sequences, discovering a new dimension of artistic expression.

Join us for an innovative workshop where you'll literally and figuratively defy gravity on the dance floor.

4th & 5th Dec | 2 pm to 5 pm | Prithvi House



Laugh Lines



Write comedies about the most-talked-about stories of the day by Henry Naylor

Topical comedy is surely one of the hardest, most challenging branches of writing: it's got to be funny, relevant and produced quickly. Henry shares his secrets he's learned about writing successful topical satire.

5th & 6th Dec | 10 am to 1.30 pm | Prithvi House



Fabric-ating Characters

Presenting stories in style by Pallavi Patel

Immerse yourselves in the intricate journey of researching and crafting costumes that authentically embody the essence of characters within a narrative.

6th & 7th Dec | 2 pm to 5 pm | Prithvi House



Lead by Design



Build an entire world from scratch with Meenal Agarwal

Welcome to Lead by Design, a workshop where we create an entire world by delving into the intricacies of set, costume, and lighting design.

7th & 8th Dec | 10 am to 1 pm | Prithvi House



Play Pretend

Get your act together with Heeba Shah

Get your act together with the performing essentials - body voice and imagination. The workshop will cover exercises focusing on the body, including Laban techniques, exploring status and body expression.

8th Dec | 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm

9th Dec | 10 am to 2 pm

Prithvi House



The spo
READS

5 - 9 Dec
3:30pm @
Prithvi Adda

Entry Free

PING!

Virtually everything is fine!

by Stages Theatre Group
(English, Sinhalese) Tue
5 Dec

CLOGGED ARTERIES

*The urban middle-class life
is a "clogged artery".*

by Shiv Subrahmanyam
(English) Wed
6 Dec

IRANI CAFÉ

*Hormuzd's Eating Joint is
where Love Takes Many Forms.*

by Shiv Subrahmanyam
(English) Thu
7 Dec

MAHANIRVAN

*What happens next after the
dreaded departure happens?*

by Satish Alekar
(Marathi) Fri
8 Dec

BEGUM BARVE

*A story of longing, redemption
and dreams.*

by Satish Alekar
(Marathi) Sat
9 Dec

FRINGE

7pm | Prithvi House

Tue | 5 Dec | 50 min
English

Adulthood comes with its own set of worries, so does being a visual artist. Join Anjali in her story, as she grapples with the questions of morality, home, belonging, creative block and relationship with herself and family. Birdflight is a solo piece that will resonate with every person who has suddenly felt the burden of being an adult.

Written and Directed by:

Vanya Singh

Cast and Credits:

Aura Guha, Harshit Taneja, Hazel NK, Kunal Sinha, Vanya Singh



Wed | 6 Dec | 50 min
English

Communal riots have been a reality in India for the last few decades. This dramatic reading delves into the stories of the people who have lived through and experienced this violence. Using drama, horror, romance, and humour, Karwat brings these stories to stage.

This performance will be followed by an audience Q&A.

Written and Directed by:

Karan Singh Gahlot

Cast and Credits:

Anvita, Akanksha Biradar, Arpit Sipani, Karan Singh Gahlot, Shubham Agarwal



Thu | 7 Dec | 60 min
English

I remember that when I was growing up, I never saw a muslim character in the plays that I watched and read. When I did, they were either terrorists or hardened criminals that could only mindlessly hurt others. Can we be something else? Come witness, some real, some fictional, some ordinary and some extra-ordinary muslims take the stage in *The Muslim Mythology*.

Written and Directed by:

Mohammed Ellyas Lehry

Cast and Credits:

Performed by: Mohammed Ellyas Lehry

Research Mentors: Azadeh Sharifi, Ingvild Holm, Saul Garcia Lopez

Artistic Consultations: Anaïs-Manon Mazic, Karoline Amalie Severinsen,

Muza De La Luz, Seohee Kim, Waldane Walker

Produced with Support from Norwegian Theatre Academy, Fredrikstad

Mohammed Ellyas Lehry's

THE MUSLIM MYTHOLOGY

Fri | 8 Dec | 50 min
Marathi

Vivek had plans for the future. Plans, that his now ex-girlfriend thwarted by breaking up. Left heartbroken, he finds himself clinging on to what once was and what could have been. Living in the past and future at the same time, will he be able to find his way back to the present?

Written and Directed by:

Krushna Walke

Cast and Credits:

Atharv Dharmadhikari, Pavan Pote, Pratik Andure, Sayli Raundal

Tumcha Amcha's

भूताचं भविष्य

TELL ME YOUR STORY

This workshop collaboration is supported in part by Norwegian Theatre Academy, Fredrikstad.

Sat | 9 Dec | 50 min

Identity through remembrance, reaction, reimagination and performance, come together in this presentation of self-investigatory work. The presentation is led and designed by performer-playwright Mohammed Ellyas Lehry and is a culmination of a two-week-long workshop exploring the use of self-sustainable performance practices, for persons from the peripheries to take centre stage.

PLATFORM PERFORMANCES

@ PRITHVI FOYER

TUE KAHAANIYA, KAVITAYEIN & COMMUNITY

5 DEC
6 PM
An evening of spoken word brought to us by young storytellers and musicians, sharing their stories the way they like.
In partnership with Kommune.

WED HANG-IN-THERE!

6 DEC
6 PM
Clowns and fashion shows may not fit well together, but then again, not a lot of things fit into the fashion Industry's ideal mould. Through this clowning performance, get a glimpse of the relationship women share with their bodies and how their perception of the same is shaped by the world around them.

THU AT THE WRITER'S DISCRETION

7 DEC
8 PM
With a penchant for Hollywood noirs, an amateur yet eccentric writer's work of gritty crime fiction is brought to a halt as he struggles to comprehend the crux of his central character's arc.

FRI KRAFTING WITH KALARI

8 DEC
8 PM
Martial Arts, movement and magic! Celebrate the art of Kalaripayattu with a collection of short performances created over the span of six days as a part of a workshop led by Faezeh Jalali.

SAT BE DRAMATIC!

9 DEC
8 PM
The need to create is universal. And 'Be Dramatic' shines a light on just that, as performers from Sri Lanka and India come together in this devised piece, exploring all that sets them apart and brings them together.





Sultan Padamsee Awards

For Playwriting - 2024

Calling all Indian Playwrights

If you are an Indian or of Indian origin, anywhere in this world, and you have an original, unpublished, unproduced play in English, between 60-120 minutes duration, then send in your entry!

ATTRACTIVE CASH AWARDS:-

Rupees 2 lakhs, 1 lakh & 50 thousand

LAST DATE FOR ENTRY:- May 1st, 2024

Rules and Regulations

1. Since judging is to be done anonymously, we require TWO soft copies (a) of the play & (b) the synopsis.

The first copy of each should have the writer's name.

The second copy of each must not mention the writer's name anywhere on any of its pages.

2. All entries must be accompanied by separate attachments of:

(a) a page with the play's name, writer's name, postal address, email address, & mobile phone number.

(b) the writer's bio data.

(c) the writer's photograph jpeg.

(d) proof that the writer is either an Indian or of Indian origin.

3. The soft copies with all relevant details should be emailed to:

sppa2024@shunyata.in



आधुनिक नाटककार सतीश आळेकर



मराठी रंगभूमीवर नाटकाच्या सादरीकरणाला 'प्रयोग' म्हणायची प्रथा आहे, त्याचं कारण कदाचित हेच असावं की आपल्याकडे असे काही नाटककार होऊन गेले आहेत, ज्यांनी त्यांच्या प्रत्येक नाटकातून, कलाकृतीमधून खऱ्या अर्थाने प्रयोग केले. त्यातलेच एक प्रयोगशील, प्रतिभावान लेखक, दिग्दर्शक आणि अभिनेते, ज्येष्ठ रंगकर्मी सतीश आळेकर. नाटकाशी त्यांची ओळख लहानपणीच झालेली असली तरी नाट्यक्षेत्रात त्यांचं पदार्पण कसं झालं ह्याची गोष्टदेखील रंजक आहे.

वडील स्वातंत्र्यसैनिक आणि आई तत्कालीन काँग्रेस सभासद. त्यामुळे घरी कानावर पडणाऱ्या चर्चा या क्रांतिकारक तसंच पुढारलेल्या विचारसरणीच्या असत. त्याचबरोबर त्यांच्या दोन्ही पालकांना नाटकाचीही आवड होती. आळेकरांची नाटकाशी पहिली ओळख ज्यामुळे झाली ते नाटक म्हणजे पु. ल. देशपांडे ह्यांचं 'वाच्यावरची वरात'. लहानपणी बघितलेल्या ह्या पहिल्या नाटकापासून ते पुढे महाविद्यालयापर्यंत त्यांचा नाटकाशी संबंध हा बघण्यापुरताच मर्यादित राहिला.

मेडिकलची सीट गमावल्यामुळे नैराश्यात असताना, मनाला विरंगुळा म्हणून त्यांनी नाटकाच्या तालमी बघायला सुरुवात केली. एक दिवस अचानक स्वतः भालबा केळकर ह्यांनी आळेकरांची एका नाटकासाठी निवड केली. इतके दिवस प्रेक्षकांच्या भूमिकेत असणारे आळेकर आता प्रेक्षकांसमोर येणार होते.

कलाकृती ही समाजाचं आणि त्यात होत असणाऱ्या चांगल्या-वाईट बदलांचं प्रतिबिंब असतं. लोकांच्या मनात एखादी भावना जागृत करण्याची, त्यांना प्रभावित करण्याची ताकद ही कलेमधेच असते. ही ताकद ओळखूनच आळेकरांच्या लेखणीमधून पुढे अनेक दर्जेदार कलाकृती जन्माला आल्या.

'झुलता पूल' हे त्यांनी लिहिलेलं पहिलं नाटक. स्वातंत्र्य मिळून इतकी वर्षे झाली तरी समाजात विषमता, दुजाभाव, आर्थिक वर्गामध्ये वाढत जाणारी दरी ही तशीच आहे. हे कटु सत्य ह्या नाटकांमधून मनोरंजक पण उपहासात्मक पद्धतीने आळेकरांनी मांडलं. त्यांनी लिहिलेलं 'महानिर्वाण' हा मराठीच काय पण भारतीय रंगभूमीवर घडलेला black कॉमेडीचा एक अत्युच्च नमुना म्हणता येईल, ज्याने सामान्य माणसाला एका वेगळ्याच मितीत शिरायला आणि स्वतःचाच तटस्थपणे विचार करायला भाग पाडलं. सहसा फारसा कोणी न वापरलेला आणि उभा करायला अवघड असणारा हा फॉर्म 'महानिर्वाण' नाटकाचा केंद्रबिंदू ठरतो. मृत्यूबाबतच्या आपल्या समाज म्हणून असणाऱ्या धारणा, त्याच्याशी जोडल्या गेलेल्या चालीरीती, त्यातून तयार होणारा उपहास, विरोधाभास आणि त्याबाबत समाजमनाची झालेली घडण इतक्या अचूकपणे आणि नेमकेपणाने दाखवणारं 'महानिर्वाण' हे एकमेव नाटक असावं.



‘बेगम बर्वे’ या नाटकात विसाव्या शतकाच्या सुरुवातीच्या मराठी संगीतनाट्य परंपरेतील स्त्री तोतया आणि कलाकाराची कहाणी आळेकरांनी सांगितली आहे. ‘बेगम बर्वे’ ह्या नाटकाचा गाभा एवढा वैश्विक आहे की ते राजस्थानी, पंजाबी, गुजराती, बंगाली, कोकणी, तामिळ आणि कन्नड ह्या भाषांमधे सादर केलं गेलं. Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Georgia ने 2005 साली आळेकरांना हे नाटक इंग्रजीमधून सादर करण्यासाठी निमंत्रित केलं.

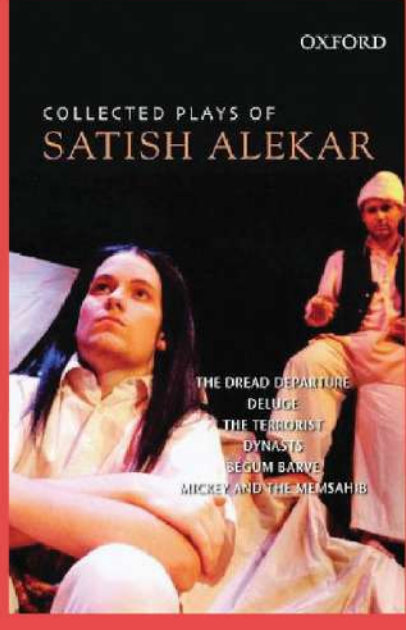
त्यांनी लिहिलेल्या नाटकांपैकी ‘महापूर’ वगळता सर्व नाटकं त्यांनी स्वतः दिग्दर्शित केली आहेत. त्यांनी स्वतः तर नाटकं लिहिलीच पण, इतर प्रांतांमधील काही नाटकांचं भारतीयकरण सुद्धा केलं. ‘जज्ज’, ‘भित्त’, ‘वळण’, ‘आळशी अत्तरवाल्याची गोष्ट’, ‘सुपारी’, ‘कर्मचारी’, ‘सामना’, ‘भजन’ अश्या अनेक गाजलेल्या एकांकिका त्यांनी लिहिल्या आहेत, ज्यातील काही अनुवादित केलेल्या आहेत.

स्वतः कलेची सेवा करत असतानाच नवीन कलाकार घडवण्याचं मोलाचं कामदेखील त्यांनी केलं. डॉ. मोहन अगाशे, जब्बार पटेल, सतीश आळेकर आणि अजून काही कलाकारांनी मिळून 27 मार्च 1973 ला Theatre Academy ची स्थापना केली. त्याचबरोबर पुण्यातील ललित कला केंद्रामधे 1996 ते 2009 ह्या काळात आळेकर प्राध्यापक होते. ललित कला केंद्राचे प्राचार्य म्हणून अनेक वर्षे काम करताना नाट्य आणि चित्रपट क्षेत्रात सध्या आघाडीवर काम करणारे अनेक कलाकार घडवण्याचं महत्वाचं काम त्यांनी केलं आहे. सतीश आळेकर यांच्या अध्यापन प्रवासातील एक वैशिष्ट्यपूर्ण पैलू म्हणजे त्यांचा जागतिक प्रभाव. परदेशात लेखन कार्यशाळा आयोजित करून, आळेकर आंतरराष्ट्रीय सर्जनशील वर्तुळात नावाजलेले मार्गदर्शक बनले आहेत. विद्यार्थी त्यांच्या लेक्चरची आतुरतेनं वाट बघतात.

रंगभूमीप्रमाणेच दृक-श्राव्य माध्यमातदेखील त्यांनी त्यांची छाप पाडली. नाटक आणि सिनेमा हे दोन्ही खूप विभिन्न प्रकार असले, तरी दोन्हीचा गाभा हा आभासाचा भास निर्माण करणे हाच आहे. भारतीय चित्रपटसृष्टीतील एक अनमोल ठेवा म्हणजेच आळेकर सरांचे संवाद आणि पटकथा असलेला सिनेमा ‘जैत रे जैत’. तसंच दूरदर्शनवरील ‘देखो मगर प्यार से’ या मालिकेचे दिग्दर्शन त्यांनी केले.

ह्या सगळ्या प्रवासादरम्यान सरांना अनेक पुरस्कारांनी गौरवलं गेलं. त्यातील काही महत्वाचे पुरस्कार म्हणजे:

- 1994 साली ‘संगीत नाटक अॅकॅडमी पुरस्कार’
- 2012 साली भारत सरकारतर्फे ‘पद्मश्री पुरस्कार’
- 2013 साली ‘बलराज सहानी स्मृती पुरस्कार’



From left to right, top to bottom: Mahanirvan (1975), Begum Barve (1996), Pralay (1985), Mahapoor (1975), Cover of book Collected Plays of Satish Alekar, Micky Ani Memsahib (1973)

NSD आणि साहित्य अॅकॅडमीतर्फे प्रकाशित केलेल्या National Anthologies मधे सरांच्या नाटकांचादेखील सहभाग आहे.

आळेकर सरांच्या प्रयोगशील नाटकांमुळे त्यांना आधुनिक नाटककार अशी ओळख मिळाली. आणि ही ओळख नवीन पिढीसाठी सुद्धा तशीच टिकलेली आहे. ह्याचे उत्तम उदाहरण म्हणजे नुकतेच प्रकाशित झालेले ‘ठकीशी संवाद’.

लॉकडाऊनमधे नाट्यगृह बंद असल्यामुळे आळेकर सरांनी चक्क नाटकच प्रेक्षकांच्या घरात पोहोचवले. ह्या नाटकामधे जिथे जिथे गाणी, संगीत आहे, तिथे तिथे पुस्तकामधे QR code देण्यात आले आहेत. ते स्कॅन केले की ती गाणी व संगीत ऐकू येई. हा अनुभव प्रेक्षकांना प्रचंड आवडला! इतकी वर्षे सातत्याने काम करूनदेखील त्यांची उर्जा नवीन पिढीला प्रेरणा देणारी आहे.

अशा या दिग्गज कलाकाराला Lifetime Achievement Award देऊन पुरस्कृत करताना Team Thespoला अतिशय आनंद होत आहे!

क्रितिका श्रोत्री

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HOUSE LIGHTS ON PLEASE

From Google interns to Gurgaon graduates, why do young people watch theatre when they have a screen in their pockets? Anoushka Zaveri finds out.

Mornings are loaded with dopamine-infused Instagram notifications, coffee, commutes, and work. Afternoons with a 20-minute sit-com episode over lunch, or for the indulgent, a 45-minute episode of a crime thriller on Amazon Prime, Hotstar, what have you. Evenings however, for our bunch of serial watchers, are reserved for theatre.

Come catch a glimpse into the evenings of four theatre enthusiasts who produce, act, design, and direct, but are also perfectly content with sitting still in the dark as a story comes to life before their eyes. In the era of screens, what do regulars at the theatre find unmissable enough to keep coming back for more?

For Hiya Saraf, 25, an aspiring filmmaker, theatre is about how stories spring from absolute bareness on stage. She visits the theatre not to learn or see, but to feel. She shares a memory of watching what is, till date, her most favourite play:

"I was fortunate enough to catch the Broadway musical called Wicked in New York when I was 16 years old. I was so mind blown by the talent, theatrics, and magnitude of the production. The singing, dancing, stunts, marvellous set, everything functioning as one organism was incredible to witness".

Musicals are a separate breed altogether. Peel your eyes away for a single instant and you've lost the plot - which is what Hiya appreciates the most about watching plays in this day and age:

"Nothing comes close to a live theatre performance; no screen experience could ever match up to it. Taking in the changing lights and music and sounds that I cannot control using buttons on a remote is what makes me and my cinematic brain long for more. Theatre is sacred and what it can make you feel is unmatched."

The feeling of immediacy and urgency that theatre possesses fascinates young people, especially generations who have grown up with the pause and play buttons constantly in their face. In a world where you can consume 15-minute summaries of books through an app, get groceries delivered in under 10 mins, and pay anyone in the world with a touch of the fingers, theatre demands your patience, and every ounce of present-mindedness you are able to spare. Theatre watchers are, and will remain, resilient.

From the filmy bylanes of Hiya's brain, we move to the edgy, anime-powered mind of Gurgaon's Aashna Gupta. For her, appreciating theatre is like appreciating the stamina and prowess of an athlete. As a theatre watcher she finds herself inspired by theatre-makers' dedication and practice, how every moment has to hit a precise note for the dialogue to land and the play to hold. She's also a big reader of plays! But when she's seated in the dark, she is secretly looking for a plot:

"The plays that have ended up being my favourite are ones where the plot is really crisp and seamless, and the acting carries the plot well. I also don't particularly enjoy slapstick comedy, so when it comes to comedy, I like plays that are witty," she says.

Aashna takes an interesting angle as a theatre watcher. She believes that *"as OTT grows, theatre will die out"*, contrary to my optimistic, effusive opinions as a young-blooded idealist! For her, longevity for the theatre begins with respecting the classical forms: nautanki, tamasha, yakshagana, to name a few. However, you'll still find her out and about at theatre spaces in Gurgaon with her favorite cutting chai or chocolate shake for company.


On the other hand, Param Vyas, a filmmaker by education but actor by profession, goes out of his way - LIKE WAY OUT - to claim his title as a theatre watcher. He trekked from Andheri to Central Mumbai to watch Atul Kumar's *Aaeen* at G5A! In addition to commuting several hours, Param's ideal evening also includes watching a beautiful film, but the vitality and vulnerability of actors in socially relevant plays attracts him away from the couch and to the theatre. When he's watching, he looks for engaging stage design, and thought-provoking themes:

"If the play makes me think after I have stepped out of the theatre, it is a good play, but if it refuses to let go of me for a week then it's a great play!"

So far, we've met theatre students and filmmakers. Now, time for something different. Vibhav Kaloti, 23, is an intern in the fourth largest company in the world: Google! He's a Succession (Netflix) fan and loves exploring new genres of music.

While he's not a theatre nerd and would much rather crack open a cold one to a football game, he fondly recalls watching Marathi plays with his grandmother. He doesn't remember much about the visits, but he remembers the lights, the sounds, and the liveliness of it all. For him, *"it has to feel good"*, and become a core memory. For Vibhav, it is about community: discussing the play, dissecting its symbols, sharing images of it on social media. When asked about his hopes for the future of the theatre, he expresses:

"I do fear it will decline because most people I know that are younger than me have never been to a play. I would want to watch a play over a series because it feels more raw? It's unhindered."



I for one, the writer of this piece, am crazy about watching plays. Theatre venues are at the top of my most-frequented list. I can say with some certainty that this year, I've watched more plays than films. Proud moment! My ideal evening is spent with a Mocha Frappe at Prithvi, standing in a queue in anticipation, and my most favourite thing: scanning my ticket's barcode and rushing to catch my front-row-center seats! But I know that theatre appreciation seems hard for lots of young people. I hope that reading about the theatre-watching lives of other young people - Hiya, Param, Aashna, and Vibhav - inspires more and more of us to grab our favourite beverages and spend an evening at the theatre.

WHAT MATTERS TO INDIA HAS ALWAYS MATTERED TO TATA



The above illustration features some initiatives supported by various organisations within the TATA group: restoration of Humayan's tomb, artisan centres, Samvaad – the tribal conclave, National Centre for Performing Arts, and Literature festivals in Mumbai, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar.



Art and Culture is integral to the well-being of our nation. Whether it be supporting and providing market access to artisans, or helping restore historical monuments, or promoting music, dance, tribal languages, and theatre, what matters to our beloved country will always matter to Tata.



DISCOVER KABUKI: WHERE TRADITION MEETS ANIME

TULZA KAKDE

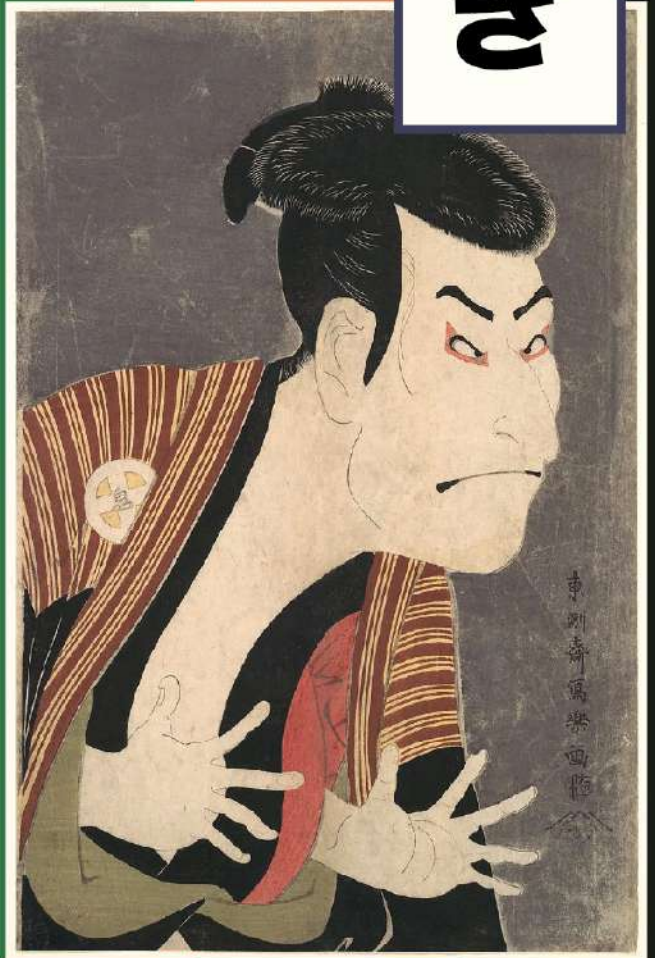
かぶき

In the vibrant landscape of anime, where every frame is a brushstroke in a vivid canvas of imagination, I found my sanctuary. Anime, with its kaleidoscope of colours, fantastical tales, and emotionally charged characters, resonates with a generation seeking escapism. It was in this realm that I stumbled upon an unexpected treasure—an art form that seemed to have a whole lot in common with my favourite form of entertainment: Kabuki.

As a connoisseur of anime, I believe, the magic lies in its ability to transcend reality. The vibrant hues, emotionally resonant storytelling, and exaggerated expressions, create an immersive experience that speaks to my generation's desire for escapism. Anime serves as a portal to worlds where the impossible becomes reality, and it's this enchantment that led me on a quest beyond the animated screen, to explore the world of Kabuki.

Kabuki, an ancient form of Japanese theatre, is not just a relic of the past; it's a living, breathing art form that predates even the most revered anime classics. The question isn't whether Kabuki is still happening, but rather, why does it persist? To unravel this mystery, I delved into its timeless appeal.

In the words of Kabuki scholar Ichiro Takayama, "Kabuki's enduring allure lies in its ability to bridge the traditional and the contemporary. It's a theatrical



dance that transcends time, inviting audiences to witness the echoes of centuries past while embracing the pulse of the present."

The heart of Kabuki beats in its preservation of Japan's cultural heritage, paradoxically evolving to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world.

The exaggerated makeup, elaborate costumes, and stylized performances aren't merely vestiges of a bygone era; they are symbols of a dynamic art form that adapts without losing its essence.

Digging deeper, the similarities between





Kabuki and anime become more apparent. Both share a fascination with archetypal characters and mythical worlds. The samurai, the geisha, and the supernatural beings that grace Kabuki stages find echoes in the heroes, heroines, and fantastical creatures of anime.

Kabuki's nuanced storytelling and the emotional depth of its characters left me spellbound, much like Anime. There seems to be a shared language of expression that

traverses centuries, connecting these two seemingly disparate worlds.

As I reflect on this serendipitous journey from anime to Kabuki, I'm compelled to urge fellow enthusiasts to explore the rich world of art. Exposure to different forms isn't just about expanding our entertainment repertoire; it's a gateway to understanding the interconnectedness of human creativity.

In the words of anime director Hayao Miyazaki, "Art, in all its forms, is a mirror reflecting the soul of humanity. By exploring diverse artistic realms, we enrich our own understanding of the world and foster a deeper connection with our shared human experience."

In conclusion, the merging of Kabuki and anime isn't just a celebration of the past or an exploration of the present; it's a call to embrace the enduring magic of storytelling in all its forms. As we traverse the landscapes of anime and Kabuki, let's revel in the shared humanity that unites us across time and space. After all, the stories we tell today are but echoes of tales told centuries ago, and in that realisation, we find the true power of art - to bridge generations, connect people, and embark on timeless odysseys.



OF ROOTS and TREES

Think a theatre festival in the midst of nature is cool?

Hashim Sariya thought so too and dove deep into understanding one such festival.

"All the world's a stage" these words by Shakespeare prominently represent the nature of theatre itself. From prosceniums to the make-belief arenas on the street, all these places create an opportunity for the expression of human emotion: desire, longing, regret, fear and hope. Regardless of the space, in the pursuit of creating theatre, one often goes back to their roots.



Within the southern regions of Assam, a community has embarked on this very pursuit. The Rabha, a tribe residing in Assam, unfamiliar with the urban theatre practices, found their calling within their own forests of Agia, amidst the vast groves of the Sal trees. And there, they brought to life a theatre festival like no other. The Under the Sal Tree festival was founded in 2008 by Baddungduppa, a theatre group of the Rabha people.

They have been connecting communities from around the world with one another for over a decade, their philosophy of nature-oriented theatre, where modern theatrical elements have little to no role, being at the core of this festival. Thus, forging a connection between the audience, performers and nature, an approach followed by Badal Sircar and Jerzy Grotowski. Much of the credit for this movement goes to the late Sukracharjya Rabha and Heisnam Kanhailal, whose legacy has inspired the upcoming generations, who have ensured the festival continues.

Madan Rabha, a leading figure at the festival, refers to their theatre as "completely experimental". This, however, does not imply a lack of technicalities. Their naturally abundant environment allows them a great deal of sustainable and eco-friendly resources. The open-air stage is crafted with bamboo, mud, and straw; their bamboo seating is capable of accommodating thousands of people, and the acoustics of the surrounding Sal trees offers a truly holistic setting, allowing for a dialogue through expression of the body and nature alone.

The Rabha's identity is heavily informed by their folktales, as evident in the cultural practices of Baddungduppa, and at Under the Sal Tree festival. The very first theme of the festival was Folktales through Theatre (2008). After all, folk stories are the best way to stay connected to your roots.

Several prominent plays have emerged since, many of which are adaptations, written to resonate with the Rabha, and other communities of the area. These



include: *Rother Roshi*, a Bengali drama written by Rabindranath Tagore, or *Nukhar Rengchakayn Gopchani*, an adaptation of *Macbeth*. The rural and the tribal audience may have nothing to do with Shakespeare, however, the plot, and themes are beautifully depicted using local music, costumes, and the language.

While there are multiple dialects across Assam, comprehending the pieces has never been an issue since body language does the talking. Madan sir emphasises on the importance of "subtext over text", a key practice in Baddunduppa's performances and all the other performances that take place at Under the Sal Tree. The festival has adopted this approach over the years. With each edition, the performances seem to rely heavily on the use of body and environment. Amidst these Sal trees, it is the language of theatre that presides and will continue to do so.

Happening from 15 - 18 December, this year, the festival will feature 5 unique plays, 90 performers and host an audience of over 2000.

Despite the success, the festival isn't without its own challenges. Madan sir confesses that several difficulties caused by social, economical and infrastructural factors have caused concerns for the functioning of the festival and the communities that live there. The intercultural differences between the various tribes of Assam, the lack of connectivity, ecological impact of rubber plantations, the remote location of the settlements and insufficient healthcare, not to mention, the migration of the youth from the tribal communities, to urban cities, all have an impact.

Madan sir still looks forward to continuing the legacy of remembering and appreciating one's roots. He hopes the festival's "silent message to live with nature", will allow people to recognise the importance of elements like soil, trees, and forests. Madan sir sees the positive impact of the increase in tourism, and aspires to inspire others to initiate similar movements and spread the underlying philosophy globally. Under the Sal Tree with its ever-evolving and growing community continues to persevere and produce intricate plays and stories year after year.

I AM AI AM

Is AI really the artsy kid in town, set out to replace the creatives? Laya Kumar® and Chat Bot Kumar™ investigate by presenting their short stories.

Having conversations with AI models since the advent of Chat GPT is something I find myself doing often. And what prompted me on this exploration was a title of an episode of a favourite podcast of mine - AI and What it Means to be (More) Human. With all this talk on if and when AI will take over things that humans can do, this title seemed to suggest that AI could help us be more human.

When Aliza and I decided on the prompt - a contemporary folktale that spoke of the origins of religion - I fed it into three different sites - Chat GPT, Pi Ai and the AI tool available on Notion. What struck me immediately was how all three stories that were generated by these sites spoke of religion as something that came into existence to answer questions humans have had; religion as something that came out of awe.

I did not share that view.

With everything that is happening in the name of religion in the world today, I couldn't separate the idea of violence from the idea of religion. And I also immediately knew that there were many people who didn't share my view. If three other people had written this story, we would have seen four vastly different tales of how religion came to be.

What I learnt from this exercise is that what it means to be (more) human is our plurality. Now can AI take over the art space? I will leave that for you to decide:

HUMAN

Because a tale shouldn't begin with because, but rather once upon a time; although this isn't a tale of once upon a time, this is a tale of now, this time, and it is a tale of because.

But we shall begin with once upon a time, because stories that begin with this particular phrase tend to be taken more seriously.

So, yes, once upon a time, on a cold December night, a young boy in an oversized hoodie, sat on his bed, hunched over his laptop. His fingers flew over his keys furiously, pausing only for the occasional sip of beer. The young boy sat in this position for days, alternating between typing and sipping. Typing and sipping. Typing and sipping.

On the seventh day, he let out a huge sigh and for the first time in seven days, he leaned back into his chair and took his fingers off the keyboard. His project was complete. All he had to do now was press the Enter key on his keyboard and the world would have changed forever.

So he did.

cont.

A bright blue light engulfed the room. The boy stared at the screen.

His site was live.

You see, like every other human to have walked the earth, across space, across time, our young man was terrified by the idea of making decisions. He just couldn't. He firmly believed that every decision had a right and a wrong choice.

And he was terrified of being wrong.

Now, what if, he thought to himself, what if there are other people like me? What if they need help making a decision? What if they just want someone to make a decision for them? What if there was a space where people could ask these questions and others could weigh in?

It was from this seed, this need, that his site, Creed was born. The masthead on Creed read as follows:

**Imagine no decisions
I wonder if you can,
We'll learn to help each other
A brotherhood of man.**

Welcome to Creed! Are you terrified of making the wrong decision? Would you like a little help from your friends? Join us, every Thursday, for an interactive chat where you can get the help you need, or help someone in need!

The first six months that Creed was live were gloriously successful. Since our young man's social circle was limited, every other person who attended a session with Creed was exactly like him - young men in oversized hoodies, who spent most of their time hunched over their laptops. They spoke about a whole range of things - from cripplingly mundane dilemmas that only humans can have - to snooze or not to snooze - and to the most profound dilemmas like - to be or not to be.

Since they all lived very similar lives, they hardly found themselves in disagreement with each other.

Until one day, a young woman joined their meeting.

For the first time in six months, the young men heard views opposing theirs. For the first time, they were being told that there was another side. That the thing they were so terrified of being - of being wrong - was happening anyway, despite their best efforts. Now, if the young men had been able to accept this, that there were views that existed outside of theirs, that being different wasn't necessarily wrong - we would have a different story here. But they stumbled onto quite a different realization - if everybody else believed what they believed in, they could never be wrong again.

So they set out on a mission. They would make people listen to them, whether it was through speech, songs, bombs or guns.

They realised that the question they were asking in the beginning - whether they were right or wrong was irrelevant.

The real question was - how could they win?



AI

Once upon a time, in a small village nestled among lush green hills, there lived a young girl named Aria. Aria was known for her inquisitive nature and her deep fascination with the mysteries of the world. She loved to explore the forests, climb the tallest trees, and listen to the whispers of the wind.

One day, Aria's curiosity led her to a hidden cave deep within the heart of the forest. As she entered the cave, she felt a strange energy enveloping her. The walls of the cave were adorned with ancient symbols and intricate carvings depicting strange beings and celestial wonders.

Aria was captivated by the beauty and mystery of the cave. She spent hours studying the symbols, trying to decipher their meaning. It was then that she heard a soft, melodic voice resonating through the cave.

"Welcome, young one," the voice whispered. "You seek knowledge and understanding of the origins of religion."

Aria was startled but intrigued. She replied, "Yes, I wish to understand how religions came to be and why they hold such power over people's hearts and minds."

The voice chuckled softly and began to tell Aria a tale of ancient times. It spoke of a time when humans were mere wanderers, disconnected from the divine and searching for purpose. In their quest for meaning, they looked up at the vast expanse of the sky and marveled at the brilliance of the sun, the moon, and the stars.

As humans witnessed the wonders of nature, they began to see patterns and cycles, sparking their curiosity and desire for understanding. They created stories and myths to explain the forces of nature, attributing them to powerful beings who controlled the elements and guided their lives.

These stories were passed down from generation to generation, shaping the beliefs and rituals of communities.

contd.

They provided a sense of belonging and comfort, instilling hope and offering guidance in times of uncertainty.

The voice continued, "Religion, dear Aria, emerged as a way for humans to connect with something greater than themselves. It provided a framework for moral values, social cohesion, and a deep sense of purpose."

Aria listened intently, her mind filled with wonder. She asked, "But why are there so many different religions? Why do people believe in different gods and follow different paths?"

The voice explained that as humans spread across the world, they encountered diverse cultures and experiences. Each culture developed its own unique understanding of the divine based on its environment, history, and social structures. These varying beliefs and practices gave rise to the rich tapestry of religions we see today.

With newfound wisdom, Aria emerged from the cave, her heart brimming with gratitude. She realized that religion was a reflection of humanity's eternal quest for meaning and connection. It was a testament to the beauty of diversity and the power of faith.

From that day forward, Aria dedicated her life to studying and promoting interfaith dialogue, fostering understanding and respect among different religious traditions. She became a beacon of unity, reminding people that beneath their differences, they all shared a common longing for purpose and a deep desire to find meaning in the world.

And so, the tale of Aria, the curious girl who sought the origins of religion, became a legend in the village. Her story reminded generations to come of the importance of embracing diversity, seeking knowledge, and fostering harmony among all beliefs.

The end.

Message AI...



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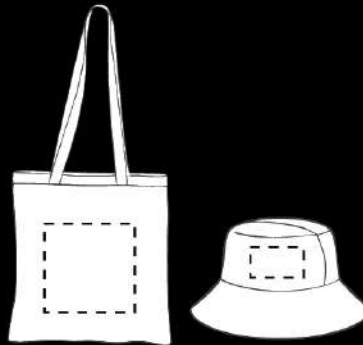
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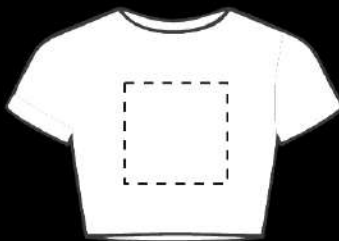
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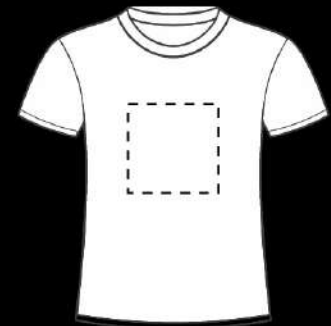
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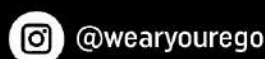


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THESPO REWIND

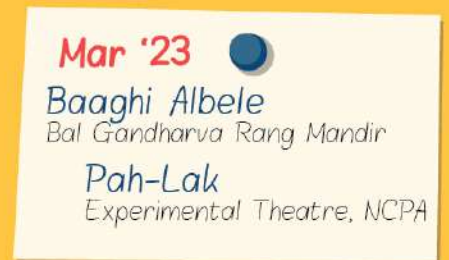
The year gone by



The first Tuesday and Wednesday of most months Prithvi Theatre transforms into a vibrant hub bubbling with enthusiasm and energy embodied by the teams performing at Thespo at Prithvi (TAP). A partnership that began way back in 2007 with Prithvi, TAP looks at providing a professional playing field to youth theatre groups. And through the year, plays that have performed at previous editions of the festival, as well as new finds, make their way to TAP.



You've gone to watch a play, you've got some burning questions you want to ask the cast after the show, but you're feeling a little shy... you wish a friend had tagged along. Fear not, theatre Bugs has got your back. This community of play-watchers flocks to theatre auditoriums, thrusts, black boxes and watch shows together. They also make sure to follow it up with a conversation with the cast and crew!



THESPO LISTENS

2023

Tune into the drama just got literal!

With Thespo listens, eavesdropping on conversations is completely ethical and enjoyable, given that it is a community activity where people come together to listen to audio plays. We joined forces with Leaping Windows to host these interactive sessions every 4th Friday of the month at their comic cafe.

And so far we have successfully completed 9 listening sessions from February to October. From audio dramas by classical playwrights to mysteries and conversations about climate change, Thespo Listens has heard it all.

Feb **The Postmaster**

Audio Drama



Jun **Little Women**

A Modern Audio Drama



Mar **Welcome to Night Vale**

Episode 1 & 2



Aug **Estimated Time of Arrival**

Thespo Auditorium



Apr **Sympathy For Mrs. Waters**

Climate Change & Other Small Talk



Sep **VIRUS 2062**

Audio Thriller



Apr **Nothing Happens**

Climate Change & Other Small Talk



Oct **Bhaskar Bose**

Audio Thriller



May **In Strange Woods**

A musical drama



What's better than reading a play? Reading a play, out loud, in a group and discussing it afterwards! Say hello to Thespo Reads where we do just that. Taking place every 2nd Friday of the month at Leaping Windows, these readings are across themes and this year, we've already hosted 10 of these!

Thespo READS

2023

- Mar *Mouse - Neel Chaudhari*
- Mar *Dancing On Glass - Ram Ganesh Kamatham*
- Apr *The Birthday Party - Harold Pinter*
- May *Thook - Irawati Karnik and Sandeep Shikhar*
- Jun *Diary Of Anne Frank - The play - Adapted by Frances Goodrich*
- Jul *Butter And Mashed Bananas - Ajay Krishnan*
- Aug *Lassanwala - Vidit Tripathi*
- Sep *Tara - Mahesh Dattani*
- Oct *Those Legs - Noel Clarke*
- Nov *Baby - Vijay Tendulkar*

Workshops

Want to learn something new? We got you. Need to brush up them skills? We got you. Want to keep bettering your craft throughout the year? We got you! After all, curating workshops across disciplines all year round is our thing! And just in the year that's gone by, we've had some pretty cool ones.

27-28 Feb '23 **Don't Shout**
by Ajitesh Gupta

4-5 Apr '23 **The Art of Kalaripayattu**
by Faezeh Jalali

6-7 May '23 **1.5 Degrees**
by Ram Ganesh Kamatham

5-6 Aug '23 **Creators' Compass**
by Shaili Sathyu

SATURDAY
OPEN
HOUSE



When you want to know how to be a part of India's largest youth theatre community, or are just looking forward to knowing more about the theatre, there's really just one place you've got to be at - the Saturday Open House. Enjoy a glass of refreshing squash and munch on some biscuits while we address all your questions about Thespo. This year we have already hosted 15 Saturday Open Houses and we look forward to seeing you at the next one!

Partnerships

With so many community events going on we needed space. The literal one, you know, to host people and the sorts. Enter stage right: Leaping Windows, a vibrant comic cafe. Ever since February 2023, all our play reading and listening events have been happening here! This year wasn't just about theatre; it was about creating connections, venturing into uncharted territories, and hanging with all the awesome folks who gave us the stage to paint our shades of drama across India.



The next generation of theatre makers care. About what's going on in the world, about each other and about creating work that is informed and relevant. At Thespo our aim has always been to nurture this very youth theatre community through workshops, year round activities, and our annual festival.

One of the forces at play (pun intended) that makes it all possible, one that believes in supporting the dream at a time when sponsorship for the arts is hard to come by, is Friends of Thespo.

What started as a crowdfunding initiative has grown to become an integral part of our community. Friends of Thespo have felt the power of the live performing arts and want others to experience it as well. It is their trust in the unquantifiable, intangible magic of theatre, and their belief that it can change lives, that fuels us year on year.

For enabling the young creators that came before and the ones that will come after, as well as for fostering meaningful connections across 25 years, we offer our heartfelt gratitude to the Friends of Thespo!

Aakash Parekh, Abhishek Goel, Abhishek Majumdar, Aditi Ravi, Akarsh Khurana, Alistar Bennis, Alyque Padamsee, Amanda Padamsee, Amatulla Zakir, Ameet & Maya, Amol Parashar, Ananya Rane, Anshulika Dubey, Anuj Gupta, Anurag Kedia, Apaar Bhandari, Aparna Piramal Raje, Arjun and Masumeh, Arti M, Artistic Humans, Asad Lalljee, Ashwin Jyoti, Atul Mongia, Ayan, Ayesha Kaur Kundra, Ayesha Sayani, Bhavna Pani, Bhuvan Jain, Bijoy Idicheriah, Bittu Sahgal, Bruce Guthrie, Coconut Productions, Christopher Samuel, Daniel Bye, Deepika Amin, Denzil Smith, Devaiah Bopanna, Dhanika Naik U, Dia Mirza, Dipti Rao, Divyesh Vijayakar, Dolly Thakore, Faezeh Jalali, Farah Bala, Farrokh 'Mugsy' Mehta, Goldwin Fonseca, Gulshan Devaiah, Harishri, Henna Singh, Jaimini Pathak, Johnson Veigas, Karan Shetty, Karthik evam Sunill, Kavita Puri Arora, Kunaal Roy Kapur, Leena Tawate, Mantra, Mayur N Shetty, Mehernosh Bharucha, Navroz Seervai, Nirmala Rao, Pdraig Cusack, Parul Shah, Pawan Kumar, Poornima Pandey, Priti Bakalkar, Raaghav Chanana, Raghunandan Maluste, Rahul Bose, Ravikiran Kantamneni, Robbin Singh, Roger Pereira, Roshan Abbas, Rupangi Sharma, S V Siva, Saatvika Kantamneni, Sandeep Sanapuji, Saurabh Agarwal, Shabana Azmi, Shanta Gokhale, Shashank Jayakumar, Shimlli Basu, Shruti Sridharan, Shweta Tripathi, Sid Siva Simi, Smriti Sangam, Sneha U, Sonal Gopujkar, Sonal Khale, Sonia George, Sunil Shanbag, Suyash Rajpurohit, Tanvi, Varun Gupta, Vasudev Badethalav, Vidisha Kanchan, Vivek Gomber, Vivek Madan, Zeus Paranjape

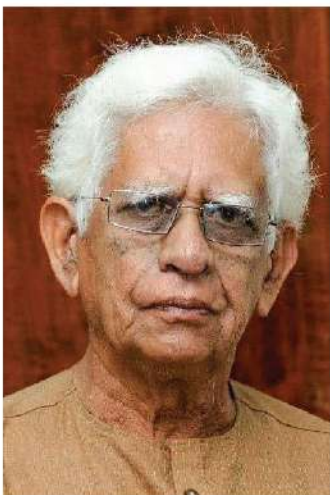
IN MEMORIAM



Aamir Raza Husain, was one of India's most commendable theatre actor and director, who created several path breaking outdoor stage productions like *The Fifty Day War* based on the Kargil War and *The Legend of Ram*, based on the epic Ramayana. He also made an appearance in a British television show called 'Kim'. He was also the creative director of Stagedoor, staging over 90 productions and 1000 performances. In 2001, Husain was awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India for his praiseworthy contribution to the theatre scene.



Antonia's love for theatre stretched far beyond its conventional realms. She was a professional Stage Manager for over 25 years and worked at several reputed international venues, including the NCPA. But she was also a passionate educator. She occupied lead positions at institutions such as the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and combined her theatre practise with teaching, charting a robust career. Bruce Guthrie, Head of Theatre at the NCPA fondly recalls Antonia as "the driving force behind Team AOTP", an annual initiative.

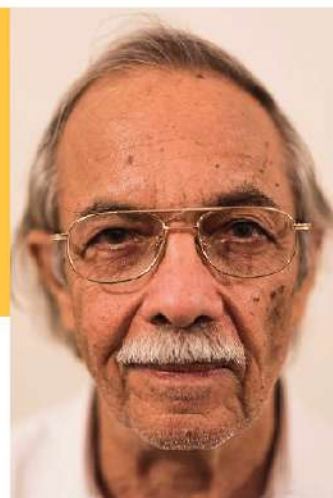


Bhaskar Shewalkar, affectionately known as Bhaskar Sir, was a revered theatre figure and former Head of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Hyderabad. In the span of his 40-year long career, he directed over 90 plays in Hindi, Urdu, Telugu and English which included *Waiting for Godot*, *Toofan Se Pehle Aur Baad*, *Gandhi*, to name a few. A theatre education stalwart, he conducted workshops and seminars for prestigious institutions. As Founder-President of The Rangadhara Theatre Stream, his leadership and dedication to practical theatre and actor training made him a guiding light to many. His energy was infectious and continues to inspire the new generation of theatre makers.



Farrokh Mehta's magnificent career in Indian English theatre spanned over fifty years, making him one of India's most accomplished and skilled theatre actor and director. He acted in over thirty plays and directed several of them. His theatre journey commenced with Gerson da Cunha's production of *Not According To Plan* leading him to join the St Xavier's College's Dramatics Club where he was mentored by the Deryck Jeffereis and Adi Marzban. He was also one of the founding members of Theatre Group Bombay. With *Arsenic and Old Lace* as his directorial debut, he went on to produce some of the best known productions in Indian theatre such as *Death of A Salesman*, *The Zoo Story*, *Tughlaq*, and *A Touch of Brightness*. Although, *A Touch of Brightness* was later banned, Farrokh was not afraid to put forward truthful and powerful commentaries. Furthermore, he was one of Thespo's best-est friends for years - Thespo will forever be in debt to his generosity and kindness.


Gieve Patel, a painter, poet, medical practitioner and playwright was known for being a man for the stage and the page. His plays, including *Princes* (1970), *Savaksa* (1982), and *Mister Behram* (1988), explored themes of identity, societal inequalities, and the complexities of human relationships, offering audiences a thought-provoking and nuanced perspective on Parsi culture. Gieve's involvement in theatre and in drama as a literary form was profound to say the least. His legacy endures as a beacon of multidisciplinary talent, inspiring the next generation of artists.



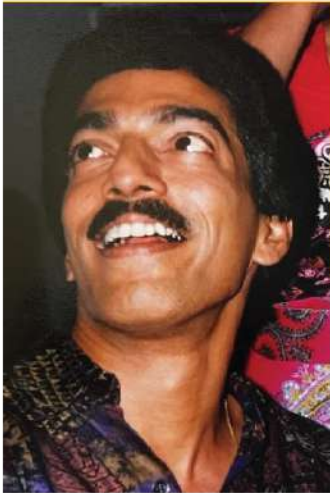
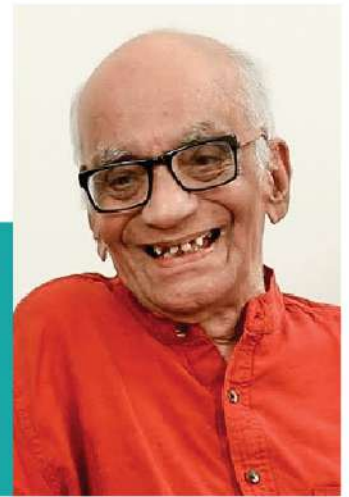
Javed Khan Amrohi, a film and television actor, had started his acting career in theatre in the 1970s. He worked in several theatre productions, and over 150 films in his long career of fifty years. He has been a member of IPTA since 1972, serving as an actor, director and general secretary for many years. Some of his memorable performances include *Apan Toh Bhai Aise Hai*, *Saiyyan Bhai Kotwal*, *Bhookhe Bhajan Na Hoye Gopala* and *Sufaid Kundali*. His passion for acting and his love for the stage remains an inspiration to young theatre practitioners.

Jayant Savarkar, an eminent figure in Indian theatre, television, and cinema, who was honoured with the Jeevan Gaurav Award and the Natvarya Prabhakar Panshikar Lifetime Achievement Award. His name became synonymous with Marathi theatre and cinema. His journey, which began as a backstage artist in Marathi theatre, took a remarkable turn when he got the opportunity to showcase his acting prowess in the celebrated playwright Vijay Tendulkar's iconic stage production, *Manus Navache Bet*. Some of his most memorable performances include *Aparadh Meich Kela*, *Apurankank*, *Alibaba Chalis Chor*, *Aladdin Jaducha Diva*, and *Aamhi Jagato Befam*, among others.






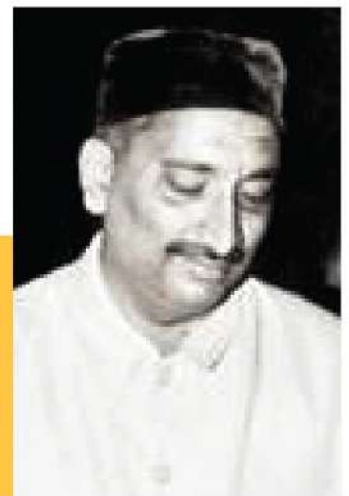
Kamlakar Nadkarni, was an Indian theatre practitioner with a five-decade journey as a critic, writer, and director. His incisive Lokprabha reviews, were popular for their candor and resonated with the theatrical community. In 2019, the All India Theatre Association honoured him with the Lifetime Achievement Award. His reviews provided a holistic perspective and constructive insights. He has left a legacy that inspires and shapes Indian theatre even today, a testament to his enduring influence and profound love for the stage.



Keith Soares was a talented technician, stage manager and a brilliant director. Soares was awarded best director in 1991 for *The 3 Swine of Most Small Stature*. His multiple representations at the North East Zonal level are commendable and worth noting. Equipped with tremendous lighting, sound and production skills - he served as a reliable manager at St Andrews and St Paul. He was also a wonderful Tenor and participated in several choral groups.



Parvez Mehta started his theatre journey at the early age of 16. He performed with his theatre group, People's Entertainment Theatre, at his community meetings (jashans) and Ganpati festivals. He was known for his work in plays like *Naamchin Jamai* and *Naastik*. He has worked closely with theatremakers like Tarak Mehta, Dorab Mehta, Adi Marzban. He is appreciated for his work as an actor and a backstage crew.

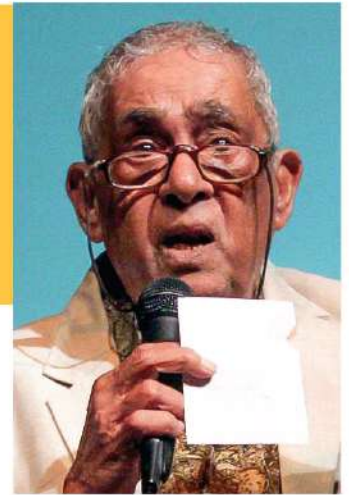


Sanchayita Bhattacharjee, a remarkable force in both the culinary and theatrical realms, left an indelible mark on Kolkata's cultural landscape. As a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef and proprietor of a cherished multi-cuisine restaurant, Sanchayita's culinary prowess was matched only by her talent on the stage. A highlight of her theatrical journey was her portrayal of the central character in *A Woman Alone*, a dark comedy that showcased her versatility as an actor. She founded 'JANUS' a black box experimental space for emerging talents - leaving a lasting impact on Kolkata's theatre scene.



Satish Kaushik, a versatile actor, director, and producer, began his journey in theatre. He has closely worked with Nadira Babbar and Ekjute in his early years. He was known for playing the lead role in *Salesman Ramlal Feroz Abbas Khan*, a hindi adaptation of Arthur Miller's *Death of A Salesman*. In 2016, he featured in *Mr & Mrs Murarilal* directed by Saif Hyder Hasan. With each performance, his impeccable comic timing and improvisational skills, left a lasting impression on audiences.

Sylvester da Cunha, a prominent Indian advertising professional and theatre practitioner, imprinted his creativity on generations. He created the iconic Utterly Butterly campaign and the beloved Amul girl. From British advertising to founding Da Cunha Associates, he etched his name in advertising history. In his theatre career, he worked extensively with Theatre Group Bombay in plays like *I Love Mumbai* and *Topsy-Turvy*, offering satirical reflections on life. He also directed and performed in an adaptation of Vijay Tendulkar's *Kamala*. Theatre was very much a part of his DNA, just like advertising.

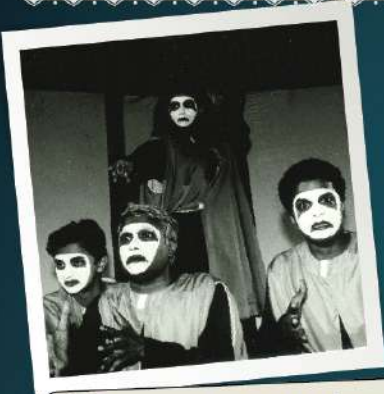


Tripurari Sharma, was at the forefront of theatre-based activism in India. She paved theatre as an intimate way of revealing and connecting with the lives of women audiences and sharing their perspective with the world. She set up Alarippu which focuses on amateur, folk theatre and women. She also been associated with the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan. Some of her noteworthy plays include: *Badlav*, *Bahu*, *Daire*, and *Sampada*, among others. Her influence transcended borders, as she represented India at the inaugural Women Playwright's Conference in the USA (1988). Recognised with the Sangeet Natak Academy Award, her legacy as a trailblazer is etched in the industry.

Uttara Baakar was one of the Indian actors who shaped the theatre landscape in India, post independence. Renowned for her powerful and versatile stage performances, she garnered a devoted following for her ability to breathe life into complex characters. She is best remembered for her role as Gandhari in *Andha Yug* - a production by MK Raina (1986). She has also been a part of several notable plays such as *Abhigyana Shankuntala*, *Chhote Saiyad Bade Saiyad*, *Mena Gurjari*, *Mukyhamantri*, *Othello*, *Tughlaq*, and *Umrao Jaan*, among others. Despite a huge career in films and television, her first love was always theatre. For her tireless commitment to the arts, she was held in high regard by colleagues and students alike.



25 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THEATRE GROUP BOMBAY!



1 They kicked off the English theatre scene in Bombay way back in 1941!

2 As far as nicknames go, they've got the coolest one - 'TG'.

3 TG's mantra, since its inception, has been to deliver quality theatre.

4 TG was originally formed by a bunch of college students coming together bound by their love for theatre.

5 Since then, they have performed over 100 productions in the last 8 decades.



6 They were the first theatre group to perform a Shakespearean play in Bombay.

7 They performed *Macbeth* in India during the 2nd World War.

8 They have never done a production of *King Lear*, even though they have done some of the most popular Shakespeare plays like *Taming of the Shrew* (1954), *Julius Caesar* (1962 & 1979), *Hamlet* (1964) and *Othello* (1963 & 1990).

9 Their productions cover all kinds of genres - from comedies to tragedies, from American classics to Musicals!



10 They took Bombay by storm with some of the most popular musicals like *Godspell*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Evita*, *Cabaret*, among others.

11 They performed in all kinds of spaces - both formal and informal.

12 Pearl Padamsee directed Van Italy's *The Serpent* that was staged in a church using every inch of the space - alcoves, altar, pulpit.

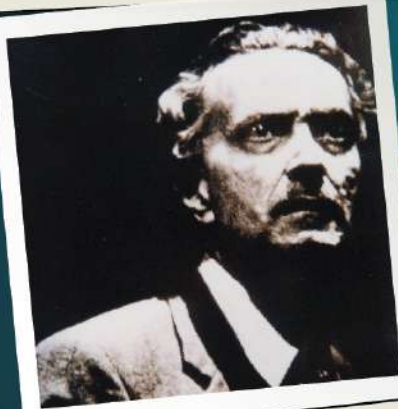
13 They were the first to design a terrace performance area.

They performed *Marat/Sade* (1969) in the main hall at Xavier's college, wherein the audience looked on from the balconies.

Death of a Salesman has been the longest running production. Revived four times since 1949.

They staged many plays by Indian writers like Partap Sharma's *A Touch of Brightness* (1965), Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* (1970), and Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* (1991), etc.

Writers like Faezeh Jalali, Gurcharan Das, Gieve Patel, Ram Ganesh Kamatham, Sneh Sapru, among others have been awarded the Sultan Padamsee Award for Playwriting.



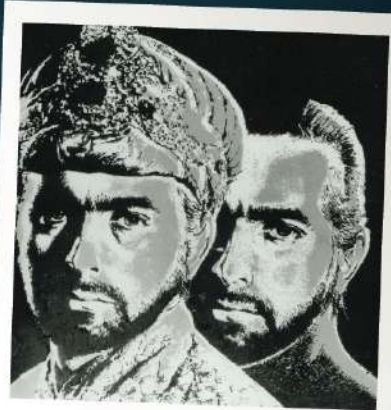
Dalip Tahil, Kabir Bedi, Ronnie Screwvala, Sharon Prabhakar, Shiamak Davar, Smita Patil, Soni Razdan, Vijay Crishna, were some of the actors that debuted in TG productions.

Alyque Padamsee, Adi Marzban, Deryck Jeffereis, Ebrahim Alkazi, Farrokh Mehta, Gerson da Cunha, Hamid Sayani, Jean Bhownagary, Pearl Padamsee, Sylvester da Cunha, among others, have been instrumental in building the legacy of TG, as we know it today.

Amanda Padamsee, Anahita Uberoi, Christopher Samuel, Devika Shahani, Punjabi, Farid Currim, Pooh Sayani, Quasar Thakore Padamsee, Raëll Padamsee, Roger C B Pereira, Sabira Merchant, Viraf Pocha, continue to be the torchbearers of the legacy of TG.

They were pioneers in stage technology inventing spotlights with Dalda tins and bulbs, using projectors as scenery and building their own dimmer boards.

Their plays had some incredible special effects, including nailing Jesus to a cross, and executions by guillotine!



The Sultan Padamsee Award for Playwriting was instituted in 1966 to promote fresh and bold writing by Indian playwrights and continues to this day.

The horseshoe table at Kulsum Terrace at which TG was formed, continues to be the venue for all TG meetings.



In 1999, TG formed Thespo to capture the power of young theatre; and TG continues to have Thespo's back.



QTP IS HIRING!



Are you born in 1998 or later?
Are you curious about all
things theatre?

THE THESPO FELLOWSHIP
is for you!

This is a hands-on
arts management fellowship.
Duration: 12 months

The programme is committed in
investing in early-career
professionals who would like to
learn the ropes of producing.

For more info:
thespo@qtp.in
+91 22 4164 2162



**APPLY
NOW!**

QTP

More than two decades ago, a bunch of college students felt a connection while creating their first ever play together. A connection that led to the inevitable formation of a theatre group. One that allowed them to find a cause they all believed in passionately - the live performing arts.

QTP believes in creating unique live experiences for art lovers. From producing plays to festivals, from managing international tours to digital conferences, from running community readings to blogs, they dabble in all the shades that arts management has to offer.

This year has been a year full of milestones. They completed a hundred shows of *Every Brilliant Thing* and toured across 13 cities. *Khatijabai of Karmali Terrace* has been going strong for the past 19 years, with performances this year at the brand new theatre - The Cube, NMACC. And finally, their all-time favourite play, *A Peasant of El Salvador* took its final bow, after a decade.

Alongside its own productions, QTP worked on various other theatre projects. They range from producing an audio play for Why Not Theatre's (Canada) award winning series *Climate Change & Other Small Talk*, to creating an immersive

performance for Gallerie Mirchandani & Steinrucke for Abir Karmakar's art exhibition. Wanting to do more seems to be a part of the QTP DNA, and staying true to that, they also presented and managed international shows like *Lives of Clay*, *Play on Words* and *Afghanistan is not Funny*.

Amidst all this, festivals were the much needed adrenaline rush that kept them going. Producing the 14th edition of Tata Literature Live! The Mumbai Litfest and celebrating the 25th edition of the youth theatre festival - Thespo, are among the highlights of the year. Additionally, QTP was also involved in the curation of the theatre programming at Serendipity Arts Festival.

This year, QTP truly added their rang to every manch they went to - be it theatre, literature, visual arts or corporate events. And a lot more excitement is in store as they gear up to celebrate their 25th year next year!

Credits & Acknowledgements

An initiative by



Venue Partners



Thank you for making Thespo 25 possible -

Theatre Group Bombay for believing and supporting the Thespo dream.

Kunal Kapoor, Lalit Sathe, Sanjay Pawar and Anurag Mishra for making Prithvi feel like home.

Kunaal Roy Kapur and Nipun Dharmadhikari for sharing their wonderful theatre journeys with a bunch of wide eyed first timers.

Priti Bakalkar and Siddhesh Purkar for curating Thespo 25 on little sleep and a lot of coffee.

Xaviers College, Sophia College, K J Somaiya College, NMIMS College, Whistling Woods International, for welcoming our rang into their colleges.

Kabir Thokore at Scrapyard Theatre (Ahmedabad), **Niranjan** at his residence (Ahmednagar) **Sudeip Nair & Nikita Krishnan** at Shoonya (Bengaluru), **Christ University** (Bengaluru), **Shrivanth** at IIT Madras (Chennai), **Maahi** at her residence (Delhi), **Radhika Goswami** at **Agora The Space** (Guwahati), **Abhishek Mudgal and Jawahar Kala Kendra** (Jaipur), **Ekansh Upadhyay** at **Siddheshwar Mandir** (Jhansi), **Anirudh Sarkar** at **Rangakarmee Theatre** (Kolkata), **Pittie Hall BMCC College** (Pune), **Adhirath Siteke, Pranav Joshi and Srujan Dindokar** at **Creative Fuss Studios** (Vadodara), for helping set multiple stages across India, so that our First Calls could be colourful.

Ninad Samaddar for making the first ever International First Call possible at Linden House (London).

Rhaen Basera (Ahmedabad), **Middle School Bihat Campus** (Begusarai), **Shoonya** (Bengaluru), **Nirali Collective** (Bengaluru), **Tagore Theatre** (Chandigarh), **Renaissance Theatre Society** (Delhi), **Abhinav Kala Samaj** (Indore), **IIS Deemed to be University** (Jaipur), **Harkat Studios** (Mumbai), **UP Sangeet Natak Akademi** (Lucknow), **Amar Dance Academy** (Patna), **Sakal Lalit Kala Ghar** (Pune), **Bright Day School** (Vadodara) for hosting the 100+ plays that screened this year.

Brig J P Anklesaria (Ahmedabad), **Hrishikesh Kumar** (Begusarai), **Sanjay Bhradwaj** (Bengaluru), **Anuj Gupta** (Delhi), **Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri** (Guwahati), **Varun Joshi** (Indore), **Aditi Khandelwal** (Jaipur), **Purva Naresh and Soni** (Lucknow), **Maharana & Shaberi Ray** (Pune), **Anshika Jain** (Vadodara) for feeding and giving our curators a home away from home while they were on the road.

Aapla Ghar, Aadyam, aRanya, D for Drama, The Blind and the Elephant, Indian Ensemble, Rakhadi Studio, The Loonatics' Collective, The Company Theatre, for always encouraging our theatre bugs.

Our jury, **Anitha Santhanam, Kshitij Patwardhan, Shernaz Patel and Sushma Rao** for generously sharing their time and experience with us.

Puja Sarup (Mumbai), **Shivani Tanksale** (Mumbai), **Purva Naresh** (Lucknow) and **Vinod Ravindran** (Bengaluru) for investing their time in mentoring the plays so that they may shine as bright as possible.

Amal Allana, Anupam Barve, Irawati Karnik, Mohan Agashe, Praveen Bhole, and **Shanta Gokhale** for sharing their beautiful anecdotes about **Satish Alekar** and adding to our celebration of his life and body of work.

Dolly Aunty because you are the wind beneath our wings.

Arghya Lahiri, Christopher Samuel, Nadir Khan and Vivek Madan for nurturing young ideas and being Thespo's soundboard, always.

Abhishek Goel, Navroz Seervai, Mehernosh Bharucha, Sonal Gopujkar, for being the constant Friends of Thespo, and supporting the Thespo dream, year on year.

Hardik Bhaiya, Jaanu Bhaiya and Raju Bhaiya for always providing a helping hand.

Santosh Dada for the tastiest Samosas that make the evenings a little more special.

And last, but not the least - **Ashish Beesoondial** for naming Thespo, after **Thespis** - this kickass guy from 6 Century BC. Thespis willingly used spoken dialogue instead of the usual chorus and verse. Considered the father of modern drama and the first recorded winner of a prize for tragedy at the Great Dionysia, his followers have since been called Thespians.

THESPO के रंगबाज़

Meet Team Thespo

Team Thespo

Aliza: Meet this 20-year-old-enthu-cutlet hailing from Vadodara, whose passion for theatre and love for her close ones, guides all that she does. Having screened her play at Thespo 21, she's now taking the reins as a fellow for the festival's 25th edition. Armed with excel sheets, a head full of ideas, and the rhythmic beat of Garba beneath her feet, she's fully embraced the dark side of theatre.

Arun Gupta: Our office drama queen got drawn into the Thespo scene by a friend back in 2015 when he was 18 years old. Fast forward, and he's become a certified #Thespholic. From being tasked with putting up posters at various venues, he's now the go-to guy for designing them. P.S. If there's one thing he's mastered as an art form, it's the skill of spilling tea.

Ayesha Kaur Kundra: We've all got that friend, right? The one who's basically a walking news feed for both our personal and professional worlds. Well, meet the prime example – a 19-year-old psychology student who's acing the game. She's all about managing events, from epic parties to theatre festivals (she even curates incredible workshops). So, when you bump into her, be sure to pop the question: What's the next big thing on the agenda?

Mandar Neve: This Puneri boy dons the hat of being a seasoned Thespo participant and an MBA student. He likes crunching numbers and has found his passion for raising funds and making his team's dreams come true! But, he quietly dreams of creating his own Dastangoi. When you befriend him, don't let his calm composure fool you. He is just as dramatic as his other teammates, if not more. Beware, pranks are a part of the package.



The First Call - Mumbai

Aastha Panwar, Adi Shastri, Akhilesh Pratap Singh Chaudhary, Ankit Dabas, Ansh Raghawani, Anshika Jain, Antara Pota, Anushka Ghose, Arman Khan, Charvi Ojha, Dhruv Kubsad, Dibanisha Banerjee, Gautam Singh, Govind Dunani, Harshit Tank, Jay Mishra, Karishma Waghela, Lovely Raj, Ojaswi Bhattarai, Pranay Baid, Rutuja Karnik, Rashi Agarwal, Sapna Yadav, Shraddha Rekhi, Shubh Gosalia, Stuti Pradeep, Vasanth V

The First Call Outstation

Avishkar Thakur (Ahmednagar), Niranjan Keskar (Ahmednagar), Reema Sunil (Bengaluru), Shraddha Raj (Bengaluru), Prasanna Murugaiyan (Chennai), Threka Narayana (Chennai), Arman Khan (Delhi), Hiya Anupam (Guwahati), Shrotriyo Sen (Kolkata), Barkha Bahar (London), Krutarth Karanjkar (London), Aditya Pawar (Pune), Anshika Jain (Vadodara), Hashim Sariya (Vadodara), Hussain Attarwala (Vadodara), Rahul Patel (Vadodara)

Screening Squad

Co-ordinator: Pranjal Malpani

Aastha Soni, Aditya Soni, Akhilesh Pratap Singh Chaudhary, Anmol Tyagi, Niranjan Keskar, Nitu, Shraddha Rekhi, Parilina Das, Raivat Trivedi, Reema Sunil, Ruchira Seal, Shivam Panchbhai, Vaishnavi Swami, Ved Prakash

Festival Crew

Adi Shastri, Akhilesh Pratap Singh Chaudhary, Akshay Kumar Yadav, Anmol Tyagi, Ansh Raghawani, Anushka Ghose, Ayush Doshi, Chetan Dhawan, Dumpy Sharma, Govind Jha, Hashim Sarya, Hussain Attarwala, Kabir Mishra, Kajol Chugh, Kankshi Mishra, Lovely Raj, Mohammed Ellyas Lehry, Mouli Chakraborty, Nazia Khan, Nivedhith Jeyashanker, Preethi Kashyap, Sanil Akerkar, Shraddha Rekhi, Snowlika Priydarshi, Tejas Agrawal, Varun Raj, Vijay Chavan, Zenobia Matthew

Design

Festival Identity: Nisha Rangdal

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Kankshi Mishra, Laya Kumar,

Ritika Shrotri, Tulza Kakde



MON, 4 DEC

TUE, 5 DEC

WED, 6 DEC

10am

COMMISSION GRANTED
with Swati Apte

LAUGH LINES
with Henry Naylor

2pm

ANTI-GRAVITY
with Amey Mehta

PING!
by
Stages Youth Ensemble
(English, Sinhalese)

FABRIC-ATING CHARACTERS

CLOGGED ARTERIES
by
Shiv Subrahmanyam
(English)

6pm

**MAGIC HOUR:
The Deryck
Jeffereis
Lighting Workshop**
with Arghya Lahiri

**SPOKEN WORD:
Kahaaniya, Kavitaeyin
& Community**
Mumbai
English, Hindi
45 mins

HANG-IN-THERE!
Ahmedabad
Gibberish
20 mins

7pm

BIRDFLIGHT
Delhi
English
50 mins

KARWAT
Jaipur
Hindi
60 mins

8pm

**GLITCH IN
THE MYTH**
Mumbai
English, Hindi
115 mins

**GLITCH IN
THE MYTH**
Mumbai
English, Hindi
115 mins

Thespo 25

*Prithvi Theatre
& Veda Kunba Theatre*



Prithvi Theatre



Prithvi Foyer



Workshops at
Prithvi House



Performances at
Prithvi House



Prithvi Adda



Collaborations

**TABLE & STOOLS
5 - 9 DEC**

7:30 am to 9:30 am:
Juhu Beach
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm:
Prithvi Adda

THU, 7 DEC

FRI, 8 DEC

SAT, 9 DEC

LEAD BY DESIGN
with Meenal Agarwal

with Heeba Shah

10am

by Pallavi Patel

PLAY PRETEND

2pm

IRANI CAFÉ
by
Shiv Subrahmanyam
(English)

MAHANIRVAN
by
Satish Alekar
(Marathi)

BEGUM BARVE
by
Satish Alekar
(Marathi)

जो गाएब भी है हाज़िर भी
Lucknow
Hindi
60 mins

A STUDY OF FEAR
Mumbai
English, Hindi,
Urdu, Arabic
75 mins

SHIM CHEONG
Bengaluru
Korean with
English surtitles
60 mins

6pm

**THE MUSLIM
MYTHOLOGY**
Coimbatore
English
60 mins

**BHUTACHA
BHAVISHYA**
Ahmednagar
Marathi
50 mins

**TELL ME
YOUR STORY**
Mumbai
Multi-Lingual
50 mins

7pm

**AT THE WRITER'S
DISCRETION**
Sri Lanka
English
20 mins

**KRAFTING
WITH KALARI**
Mumbai
English, Hindi
20 mins

BE DRAMATIC!
India, Sri Lanka
20 mins

8pm

जो गाएब भी है हाज़िर भी
Lucknow
Hindi
60 mins

A STUDY OF FEAR
Mumbai
English, Hindi,
Urdu, Arabic
75 mins

SHIM CHEONG
Bengaluru
Korean with
English surtitles
60 mins

9pm

THESPO 25 AWARDS NIGHT Sun, 10 Dec | 6pm
AWARDS NIGHT Veda Kunba Theatre



PRESENTS

Khán-ě-Ishq

Written & Directed by
Sandeep More



manorangtheatre | 9819377962