

Pitch, Pitch, Pitch...GOT THE JOB!!!!



We all are always afraid to just pick up the phone, make a cold call and ask for work. This is more so for theatre people. Somehow its feeling of being rejected that one makes one, have a ego or one does not bother to pitch at all and simply ask their managers or want to outsource that to someone else. I highly recommend that theatre people simply do the pitching themselves. I am not qualified enough to talk about films as theatre is my primary genre and I consider myself a hard core theatre person. So this blog is only concentrating on theatre pitching. Many people ask me how do you get work, today I simply want to say, "I ask for work".

Ok, let me share some guru mantras (can I call myself a guru after 33 years in theatre?)

1. Keep in touch with your clients: one should always keep in touch with your clients, an occasion is the best way to keep in touch. A simple Diwali greeting or even a new greeting does the trick. We have festivals almost 200 days in a year in India, a great way to keep in touch.

2. Also give calls back to inquiries. Follow ups are extremely important if they do not answer back, relax and then get in touch with them after a few months.

3. Find a meaningful relationship with your team. For me personally I prefer if my team is based on a professional relationship rather than a warm cosy knit group. I would like

to see my actors get certificates and awards as my theatre is a company and not a group based experience.

4. Research on the internet. I use the computer at least thrice a week and make searches on topics that might get me work like " open calls" "proposals" " grants" etc and I make sure that I answer them. I must admit truthfully that for every ten proposals I write I might just get selected for one. That also I might never do but it makes me optimistic and gives me enough motivation to pitch for more work. I must add here that I also pitch for foreign courses and jobs even if I don't have the visa to the country. One should not look at those matters which can be tackled later.

5. One should make their presence felt in schools and educational institutions. Schools are an amazing place that will help you market your own brand. One can try and get visiting teaching jobs.

6. Write on blogs. I must admit here that I started writing for stagebuzz almost 26 years ago and it gives me immense motivation. I also make sure to share the blog with my friends, family and other theatre people and I get extremely excited to read their likes and comments. Find a blog to publish or simply publish in magazines.

7. Join associations and communities. Associations charge minimal and make a deep impact on networking and getting that job that you always wanted.

Do not give up my friends, make pitching a habit that you will develop. Once that habit gets developed, you will feel out of sorts if you miss out even one on your habits. Its a enjoyable task and please do it yourself, as who else knows you better, than you. Do keep sharing your ideas in the comments about how you pitched, and got your job as it will help us all including me!

An interim called slow downing

As I am embarked in theatre, I seemed to find so much joy in the lights, the sense of space of the auditorium, the high rush of euphoria listening to the claps I never wanted the pace to slow down. One year became five years in theatre which slowly even before I could realise it became a good 34 years. However as age progressed my legs weakened and so did the actors attitude towards their craft. The guru shishya parampara that I was used to had dissolved to quick theatre quick rewards and to become rusted into another group no sooner that they had rusted into mine.

I must admit that some theatre directors are used to this rusting but unfortunately I could not understand nor find how to cope with it. I found myself falling into a trap of not knowing how to deal with them into anger towards myself and others. I did not realise how badly the rush of 34 years had affected my mental space until I decided to take an interim of 8 months. My son's class twelve exams gave me good reason to go on this interim.

Imagine you are on a roller coaster ride and you have to slow down. There is great value in slowing down as it gives you perspective to look at everything carefully and deeply. You put your mind in each activity, do a digital detox, lessen on talking aimlessly and pick up skills and hobbies like playing the piano or simply basking in the sun. I wish to restart also not like a fast racing car but like an elegant ambassador of the past. There is simply no need to be the quick rabbit but being like the elegant elephant walking in deep contemplation seems much more to be my guide today. Yes this interim of slow

downing will surely help my next few years that will come ahead. I am only looking forward to that simple slow and steady life.

Why them why me...NO, YES THEM YES ME!!!!

Its the first day of the new year, 2025, the time is almost 9 30 in the night and one can say that the day is over. The second day to the year is to come but it somehow always never has the same anticipatory joy like the first day. For me the second day is always " Why them why me". I always seem to feel helpless and out of sorts and always (can I add here in the past) feel out of action, and energy. Having realised that I decided on the reverse to say " YES THEM YES ME" for this whole year! Over the years I was getting increasingly negative and becoming almost a loner. I felt that the validation I give myself was more than enough than to even give a thank you to others. Forget a thank you I started avoiding family, friends, neighbours leading a life of a self created hermitage and be almost like a saint. I realised thankfully I am no saint neither are all others sinners. The feelings are just a dooming cycle which I go through within. I call myself a saint and others as sinners or simply call others as saints and myself as a sinner.

It requires a balanced mind, a quiet mind of contemplation, so do yoga, meditation, talk to a counsellor anything to break that cycle of saint and sinner created humanity. Look at being humane in humanity. Life is short, life holds more meanings than what we think or even imagine. If an person can go through these cycles of waxing and waning like the moon cant

he cut across the black hues of his mind. I want every second day of the new year of 2025 to be a canvas of calmness. A loners life is no joy, gives little peace and holds no triumphant winner. A hermit is an hermit who others might not understand. The loner will get no solace in me now for I am sure that all my second days are a big yes to them and me!

A HAMLET IN THEATRE

Prose



Its only a hamlet that we all wish to create. A sense of familiarity. a sense of being totally one and open with all, a place where no judgements will be announced and where all will be accepted with open arms. If that home can be integrated with art, music or theatre, an occupation that all are

artistically involved in it will give much more meaning to our lives. We have heard of co-living spaces and co offices why no cultural hamlets. I have seen and heard of many artists who have reached their senior years of 55 plus wanting to create that for themselves. They all not only wish to create a co habitual place but are already in the process of doing so where the entire team meets almost on a daily basis, eat talk laugh joke and create a sense of shared belonging.

I personally also toyed with the same idea however I realised that I was not capable of carrying the mantle of keeping the whole group together. Perhaps I did not have the band with or perhaps the interpersonal skills needed to keep everything and everyone tied to my core. My core I seem to have kept distant as mine and others as others. It is difficult for me then to function as I have no member universally available into my core and people came and left. So many came and left I have forgotten many and I kept on directing plays with teams of actors almost like teaching schools. Yes I miss the ideas of theatre groups with members and fun but I don't know if I am even ready to take on that challenge. I lead an insular, hermit like life and my hamlet keeps to me alone.

I am here defending those who are keeping their hamlet in theatre for they are never alone nor truly lonely (though I despite not keeping a hamlet am not lonely). Those who keep homes within the discipline of theatre always seem to be there for each other and enjoy all moments of good or bad while I have my own hidden world within all the noise. I wish all the home creators only the best as they are providing safe zones to all who will to participate and be within them. The hamlet in theatre is a ready, comfortable, warm space that needs to be lauded and appreciated.

Theatre as an Academic Discipline



I have heard many times why should a theatre person continue in his academic life when he already has a degree in performance and why should we even read a book, is not acting enough? My answer is all that is you are wrong to discount academic pursuit's in a performative genre. The value is exceedingly high. I have always maintained a life of both a performer and an academician as I know that this will give me inroads to both worlds. Whenever I decide to take a break from pure performance I immediately settle into the life of an academician, I read and write papers attend conferences and create a parallel world where discourse, debate and decisions are made in a different vein. I seem to enjoy attending the conferences many times online where I meet a totally different set of people with different set of ideas and placed in different set of circumstances. The best part is I am able to

make new friends and enjoy a new head space where I am able to read theoretical books on topics like feminism, globalisation, neoliberalism which are equally exciting.

Drama students hence must be encouraged to go beyond the script. If they engage with the material that makes a space in their heads they will truly be able to become a totally developed individual. The day the drama schools of India encourage academic papers also to be written and published by the students a new chapter will emerge in theatre and drama studies. We all will be able to talk in a new language and engage in strong academic discourses that will also put us in a category of other disciplines like history, political science or philosophy. Let us only unite in joining with our fellow academic brothers and sisters and make sure that theatre is a vivid discipline beyond its vibrant performances.

The conventional shows the way to the magnified



Why does the mind capture us into escaping into augmented states, happy at first, but also that state becomes a dizzy haze. It seems like a hazy television screen. The mind is a total slave driver which makes you neither eat nor sleep. It has the power also for you to imagine amplified images, sounds and situations that can make you first untroubled but slowly engulf you in a state of shock, disbelief and dubiety to the extent you start to even question your near and dear ones who have been with you for years. The heightened, enhanced state is the true python to swallow your mind.

I am not ashamed nor embarrassed to state that this condition occurs to me cyclically. The boosted sense of state of being, the surroundings environment around seems unreal to me so much that it's only the magnified sense of the world that seems true and logical. I hear and see much more than I can imagine. Sounds of the timpani, drums and chords of a piano come in waves but they also reach to the sounds of my late mother and father who had departed from this world more than twenty years ago. I hear them all like a radio in my head.

Coming back to reality is like coming down as a long trek from

the Everest. The standard has value is what I want to argue here. Why is that I wish to leave that increased self is only to return back to the real. The conventional arising in me makes me more steady and a true wanted state. How then do I manage I am asked by many, and today I pick up my words without any sheepishness to say, I simply tell myself, " Ok its time to get down the joyride and go back home." I simply think its a home coming, pick up my apron strings and start making food once again.

Its easy to be customary, easy to be regular and habitual despite all the greater sense of self its easier to be meek rather than huge in the eyes of that jocular style. I only pray that the demons of dubiety makes us validate the accustomed as powerful, creative and advantageous to our body and mind. Its time to give way to the expected and get into the kitchen. Come on now all are hungry, dinner is to served!!

The Pearly Dew Drop Speaks



A few dew drops rests on the primroses with garden greens
It seems like glistening pearls to a few
But the drying drops knows for sure
That they are indeed not the pearly wealthy whites
But only a few drops of glistening moist moments
On the rich laden scented garden
They might be adorned. only come back may another day
If the willingness of fair weather and fade-in garden days

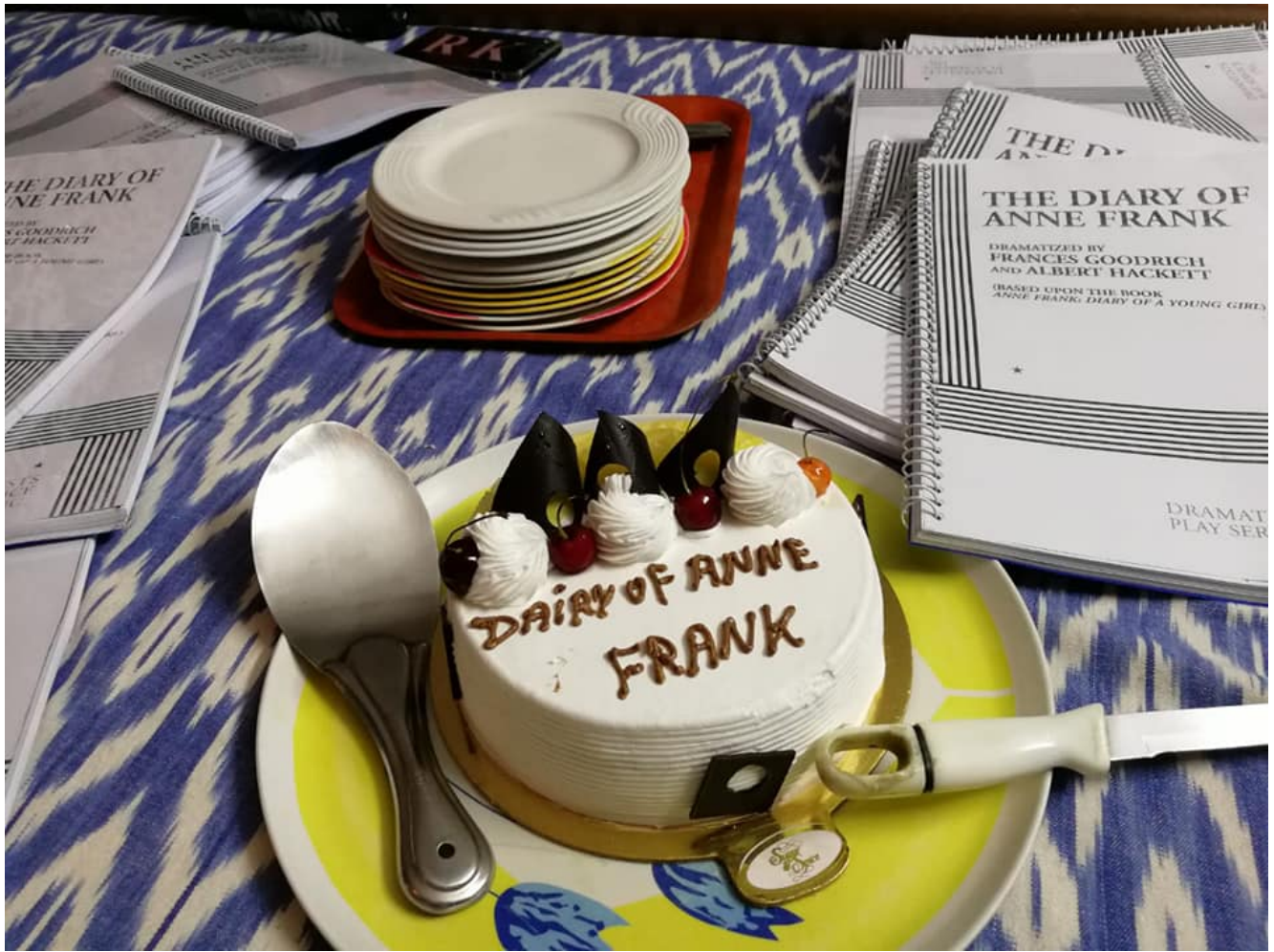
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We are forever anew



When its time to be heard, prepared to be silent
When its time to be considered, prepared to be hurt
When its time to say how many times more
Be prepared to be reminded your time might never come
In the solace that in your grave site
You will be marked forget or remembered
You will be seen as saint either a saint or a sinner
A fool or a fearless brave
With flowers at your feet or weeds
With no visiting tears or many who will place stones around
your bed
To this land we will all go one day
Become the dust where new flowers will grow
Can we be happy only to know
That on our passing by we will
Not be silenced, not be hurt, not be torn apart by inner tears
Its time my friends to see this too
Our saga will be told forever a new

Quit Being the Same, Think Out of the Box: Creating New Opportunities in Theatre



I have heard enough, same lines over and over again, there is no money in theatre, so I am doing films; I have kept enough savings and now I have retired peacefully into theatre; I make enough money in theatre to sponsor my teams travels to festivals. To all of them I really want to say, no this is not the way out its time to think out of the box. I am not claiming that I have all the answers but certainly I have gained fairly good insight on how to create new economic opportunities in theatre after almost 35 years being in active theatre production work.

I will be going through some methods I used in my case and in case anyone wants me further collaborate on more details do comment in the section below and I would be more than happy to share more details. However right from the start I want to also add that I have faced colossal monetary losses, to the extent my bank balance was to the bare minimal but that only gave me more interest and zeal to think out of the box. The

fact that the ideas failed did not stop me from looking at other methods and I shall also discuss them here. To make things easier to understand I will be looking at the 35 years of theatre I did chronologically, from ages 21 to 54.

Age 21 to 32 EARLY YEARS, PRODUCER:

The first decade of my theatre stint I realised that my shortcomings as an actor and that I would not be casted much in films, though I consider myself as an outstanding actor. My realisation was based on the tone of my skin, I am a deep brown coloured girl which I felt would be a prejudice against me. I also did not know perfect Hindi as I was a Tamil speaker. I however had the greatest skill sets in production. Name any difficult production licence, police permissions, props or sets I could procure them. As a production assistant my ranks rose to being a producer which would get me the money I needed which was enough. Besides that I also was given money for transportation and food. I started also composing music for children's plays and had a morning job both as a school teacher and a production controller in the afternoons. However age was not my side and by the time I had turned 32 the idea of going to police stations and talking to gruff constables was not comfortable and my mind was ready to embark into learning the creative part of theatre, direction. It was time to think out of the box.

Age 33-45 PROFESSIONAL CREATIVE FIELD:

I consider myself extremely lucky that the "actors bug" had not bitten me and I became totally interested in theatre direction. I also am lucky that films never seemed to attract my eyes and even today I watch few films (I am not trying to downplay the value of films, I am just trying to put the value of theatre high). I was fortunate to get a scholarship to study theatre in Miami university and I jumped at the first chance. I learnt all I could there and decided to come back to India as I felt this learning will surely help me in India. I returned back to India in 2006 and formed my own company

Platform fir Action in Creative Theatre. My company did exceedingly well as we also got into corporate theatre and annual day programs. and the purple umbrella theatre festival for children and we were billing at almost 5 to 8 lakhs per month. We rose from a team of two (me and my founder Neeraj) to a team of almost 5 with a dedicated office. However my health was always a set back and despite us trying to find another artistic director for the company it became impossible so we had to downsize our work. Yes, it was time to think out of the box.

Age 45-51 SCRIPTWRITING and ACADEMIC WORK

Miami University had taught me the value of always keeping the academic factor alive in me. Being in an academic space gave me the opportunity to network with scholars and organisations all over the world, Dubai, Serbia, Japan Georgia America. I wrote and published papers and also got the chance to write for Indira Gandhi Open University and establish myself as established Academic writer. I now was ready to write scripts and I started experimenting with writing. I also was still doing direction till the pandemic! Gosh! Its time yes to think out of the box!

Age 51-53: SCRIPTWRITING

The pandemic really gave me a huge opportunity as a script writer and I was the script writer for almost 90 short youtube video films. Finally I also directed a film " to know what it feels like!" and I can say "I fainted in just two days of work"! Is films for me that's for time to say but yes script writing was a lot of fun despite the pandemic I was making money and was also able to support a team. But as we all know good times never last long and after one year my contract ended abruptly as it happens in all corporate sectors. Now what, think out of the box ,girl! Go for it!!

Age 51-53 NEW VENUE FOR PERFORMANCE REINCARNATION AS A

DIRECTOR

I always felt that my plays should be performed in Delhi and perhaps I will be known only as a skilled director if I perform in Delhi. I went in with a vengeance and the intensity was almost two plays. I played hard, put up costly sets lights did the works, but did it give me money?! Hahahah...ZILTCH I was broke by the July of 2024. I poured it all in and I am not sorry I did so since I did some effective plays. But with a zero Bank Balance it was time to think ahead!

Age 54: FESTIVAL CURATION

The time to find a bigger box came! I was very fortunate to have got selected for the South Asian Festival Academy Cohort which has taught me the value of festival creation. Yes I know I will be donning a new hat now, the box is yet to be opened its big and tedious and I have no clue what lies ahead! I am however excited by this phase too.

I have been totally candid in my journey with all of you readers and I welcome you all to partake in your stories with me! Some might not agree with me while some may, all I want to say is think out of the box you never know what is inside...

The Hearing of a Home



A Small Cottage near the Greens
With Neighbourly kind voices that were once Seen
Oh has Life Ever Been?
That Standing Stillness of Home?
Not to Move out, Not to Move On
The Standing Sense of Home
It's the Scent of Home, the Sense of Home
The Sense of Hearing, the Sense of Greens...
That Beckons my Mind to Stay in this Hearth
As within the Steady Hands of a Clock Time Unseen
For I Wish not to Forget...not to move on
Not to move out
For that Sense I Belong to that no one Unseen
Are the Living Beats of time enough for me?
Yes, the Beating Steady time Beats are enough for me
Loud, Strong, Clicking, Sounds
Loud Enough to be Heard Forever by Me...