

# Jit Sarkar's BAPU Director: Samir Biswas

Playwright: Jit Sarkar

Director: Samir Biswas

Group: Mangolik, Kolkata

Language: Bengali

Duration: 1 hr 50 min.

## The Play

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was one of the prime leaders at the forefront of India's fight for freedom from British rule. He was a leading architect, who eschewed violence in every form, of non-violent civil disobedience that would influence the world. When the protest at Chauri Choura against using British goods and attires, became violent Gandhi shouldered its responsibility and called for a cease of Non-co-operation Movement and Satyagraha and began five days fast subsequently. He was arrested and interned to the Sabarmati jail for six years on charges of instigating public through his anti-establishment literature. From the jail in South Africa Gandhi wrote on Satyagraha to spread the message of peaceful protests. Madeleine Slade, daughter of British Rear-Admiral Sir Edmond Slade, was an ardent admirer of his and was inspired enough to live in the ashram. Gandhi renamed her, Mirabehn. The British prime minister, Winston Churchill cast aspersions on BAPU's attire referring him as "half-naked fakir". Followers reacted but Bapu accepted it to describe the true condition of Indians under the British rule. He was left alone after wife Kasturba, his partner and fellow-fighter in the freedom struggle, passed away. We hereby try to recreate the essential relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's vision for coming

generations in, Bapu.

### Director's Note

The entire world is now a victim to intolerance which is a painful cause of concern for us. Our vast India is in panic by acts of violence. The warmth of father – son relationship is corroding and an icy coldness is spreading across the nation. We are meant for reviving the warmth of human values whereas factors of jealousy and brutality prevail. At this crucial juncture we refresh our collective memory by invoking an inspiring life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi also called, Bapu, as a reminder to our society. This Indian activist through his honesty, dedication and perseverance handled the non-violent movement and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world winning hearts of the common masses. This flash back is a tribute to our freedom fighters.

### The Director

Born on 12th April, 1947 his career on stage started as child artist in Tagore's play, Dakghar in the role of Amal. His fascination for drama and allied arts grew with age joining a theatre group in 1962. He started his group, Mangolik on 12th December, 1968. He has also worked with other major groups like Rangarup, Chetna, Samabeta Prayash etc. as an actor and director in last 50 years. He acted in the lead role in film, Manush Bhoot and the play Bapu.

He has received the Drama Academy of India's Jyosthna Makha Das Smarak Samman and Lebedev Drama awards.

### The Playwright

Jit Sarkar has consistently scripted several radio dramas, TV documentaries, telefilms, serials and films in Hindi and Bengali ever since his career as writer began in 1982. Some of his acclaimed works are – Dayen (The Witch) and Sundari (Quest for Beauty) Hindi feature films selected in children's

film section of the 4th Kolkata Film Festival 1998 and Samporko in Bengali selected in the 9th Kolkata Film Festival 2003 under telefilm section.

## The Group

Formed on 12th December, 1968 Mangolik, is one of the few groups that have managed to sustain their creativity in Bengali theatre. Its founder, veteran actor-director, Samir Biswas has devoted his entire life to acting and designing serious theatre. They do not gather performers for their own sake rather believe in doing responsible theatre for social change and harness new talents. It seeks encouragement and inspiration from the audience. It grooms members towards struggle that is an inherent nature of theatre. The group celebrated its golden jubilee last year only.

## Cast & Credits

Bapu: Samir Biswas

Nathuram Godse: Shouvik Majumdar

Mahadev Desai: Soumya Biswas

Kasturba Gandhi: Upali Ghosh Bose

Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn): Debjani Mukherjee

Harilal: Debashish Ganguly

Md. Ali Jinnah: Samiran Mukhopadhyay

Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel: Ujjal Biswas

Jawaharlal Nehru: Partho Roy Chowdhury

Lakhan: Nanigopal Pramanik

Manu Gandhi: Sanchita Chowdhury

Abha Chatterjee: Satabdi Bose

Nayar: Sudip Chatterjee

Rioters, Revolutionaries & Ashramwasi: Murari Chakraborty,  
Adrija Basu, Tanish Chatterjee, Priyotosh Dhar, Khokan,  
Biswas, Ashim Bose, Sanatan Hari

Lights: Bablu Sarkar

Music: Shanto Adhikary

Make Up: Ramen Chakraborty

Set: Swapan Das

Watch The Director's Meet for the play

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**Probir Guha's TITAS EKTI  
NODIR NAAM**



Playwright & Director: Probir Guha

Group: Alternative Living Theatre, Kolkata

Language: Bengali

Duration: 2 hr 10 mins

### The Play

On the centenary year of Adwaita Mulla Burman, we decided to prepare a play based on his momentous novel, Titas Ekti Nadir Naam. The play talks about fishermen societies residing on the banks of Titas in Bangladesh. The play talks about Titas's change throughout years and its effect on the socio-economic structure of societies around. The love and loss of the main characters is the central attraction of this play. The play enters into climax when the fishermen society finds out that Titas is drying up. What will the fishermen do now? How will they survive? How does it really feel to lose the only means of life? How does it feel to lose a river?

## Director's Note

The plan of making Titas Ekti Nadir Naam was there since my college days. The novel had a great influence on me, and I always wanted to express those elements with my language, my way of understanding. The first attempt at this play was in Tripura some years ago. Then in 2015, I directed this play but due to some unexpected situation we could not work with the play anymore, but the urge stayed. In 2017 I remade, rearranged, and rejuvenated the play in my style under the banner of my theatre group Alternative Living Theatre. Hope my attempt at this classic piece will be acceptable to the audience.

## The Director & Playwright

Born on 5th May, 1947, acclaimed playwright and director Probir Guha embarked on his career as a street theatre activist after graduation from Calcutta University. Initially he began working in Kolkata but soon becoming disillusioned with elitism, he established his own company, the Living Theatre, in 1977 at Khardaha. In 1991, Living Theatre was renamed as Alternative Living Theatre. From then till now he has been working as a writer-director of this group of rural-urban thought. He has worked with many renowned directors of theatre and dance worldwide. He is also a lecturer and teacher at several theatre schools and universities. Guha has been a common name among Alternative Theatre activists. He has received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his excellence, along with other felicitations and awards for his contribution in alternative theatre practice.

## The Group

Living Theatre was formed by Mr. Probir Guha in 1977 at Khardaha, a suburb in West Bengal. Later in 1990 it was renamed and re-registered as Alternative Living Theatre. It was formed with an earnest resolution to break the clichéd

rules of theatre. It was determined that it would not merely entertain people, but will work towards waking them, as it believes that not just entertainment but theatre can also be the voice of the grass-root people. It dealt with difficulties of marginal people so instead of heading for the city it started penetrating into the interior of the villages and has performed in a small class room for ten years. Hence it has discarded monotonous grammatical acting and has experimented and evolved a new aesthetics of theatre where physicality is the language. Later on, it built its residential workshop and rehearsal space named Akhara at Madhyamgram, where theatre lovers from all over the world come to learn.

### Cast & Credits

On Stage: Aftar Ali, Bikash Bose, Arkajyoti Ganguly, Avijit Biswas, Dhiman Bhattacharya, Pritam Chakraborty, Debobrata Banerjee, Raja Biswas, Santanu Sarkar, Chirantan Chakraborty, Sujoy Chakraborty, Anasua Das, Mousumi Sengupta, Anushka Sen, Ria Das, Ankita Ghosh, Abheepsha Ghosh, Sylvia Sharma Bhattacharya, Swagata Sen

Live Musicians: Subhadeep Guha, Chakrapani Dev, Madhuparna Debnath, Sushruta Goswami

Art & Set Designer: Arpita Burman

Costume Designer: Arpita Burman

Light Designer: Sadhan Parui

Light Execution: Samar Parui

Music Designer: Subhadeep Guha

Choreography: Sanchaita Basu

Production Controller: Shilpi Sarkar

Novelist: Adwita Mullabarman

Script & Direction: Probir Guha

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# Sophocles' King Oedipus

## Director: Ashim Das



Playwright: Sophocles

Director: Ashim Das

Group: Fame School of Dance, Drama & Music, Bangladesh

Language: Bengali

Duration: 1 hr 20 mins

The Play

The abode of Cadmus was burnt to ashes because of the wrath of the Gods. After a long struggle Cadmus and his later posterity came to power one after another. At one point Oedipus came to

the throne of Thebes. But predestined suffering dragged him to the brink of the formidable sin, and execution of the Oracle came true without his prior-knowledge. The Oracle said that he was destined one day to kill his father and to become his own mother's husband. At the end of the play, after the truth finally comes to the light, Jocasta hangs herself, and Oedipus, horrified at his patricide and incest, precedes to gouge out his own eyes in despair. Then on an empty space the Chorus repeats the common Greek maxim, that 'no man should be considered fortunate until he is dead'.

### Director's Note

Staging the Theban play, King Oedipus, the first and the best one of the Trilogy, of the great master playwright Sophocles was a challenge for me. I read Oedipus and other plays more than a 100 times. In every read I was thrilled, mesmerized and spell-bound by the knitting of plots and use of the riddles, and the power of the unwritten. References to eyesight and vision, both literal and metaphorical, are very frequent in all three plays of the trilogy. Quite often, the image of clear vision is used as a metaphor for knowledge and insight.

### The Director

A graduate from National school of Drama, Ashim Das is the Director of Fame School of Dance, Drama & Music, Chittagong, Bangladesh. He is an Assistant Professor of the Department of Dramatics, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Has directed and designed more than 80 plays. He has adapted a number of classics and written some plays for children. Ashim has conducted several workshops on acting and direction, organized by Bangladesh Group Theater Federation and others. He has traveled to UK and France on the invitation of Human Rights Forum, UK, and Marie de Paris. He received the Zakaria Smriti Padok and the best director award for the play The Madwoman of Chaillot in International French Drama Festival, Dhaka.

## The Playwright

Sophocles (496-406 B.C.) born in Colonus, not far from Athens, was one of the best dramatists in his age. Sophocles tragedies gained recognition as among the best dramas written at a time when competition was at its highest. The fact that his works are studied today, approximately 2,400 years after they were written is a testament to the power of his words and the impact that his stories have on current culture.

## The Group

Fame School of Dance, Drama & Music was established in 1998 at Chittagong. In addition to other courses, it provides a year-long theatre appreciation course in acting and design, and a short course on acting, inspired by the teaching methodology of NSD. Some of the plays staged by the group include Antigone, Catastrophe, All That Fall, The Leader, The Lesson, A Trilogy (Oedipus, Oedipus at Colonus & Antigone), Raktakarabi, George Dandin, The Mad Woman of Chaillet, etc.

## Cast & Credits

Oedipus: Mubidur Rahman Sujat

Jocasta: Ashrafa Hossain

Creon: Dipta Chakraborty

Tiresias: Kamal Barua

Boy leading Tiresias: Anwesha Das

Priest, Messenger: Hasibul Alam

Shepherd: Kamal Barua

Attendant: Bappi Sikder

Guard: Md. Jahed Ali

Little Ismene & Antigone: Titly Biswas & Anvesha Das

Chorus of Theban Elders: Poly Chowdhury Bobby, Utpal Dasgupta, Bappi Sikder, Khadijatul Kubra Rishika, Sabiha Binte Jashim, Syful Sarder, Md Farhadul Abedin, Umme Kulsum Farhana, Md. Jahed Ali, Md. Farhad Hossain, Poly Chowdhry, Regan Barua

Citizens of Thebes: Bobby, Utpal, Hasib, Bappi, Ashrafa, Rishika, Sabiha, Syful, Farhad, Jahed, Farhana, Pappu, Poly, Regan, Anvesha & Titly.

Music, Light, Costume & Set Design: Ashim Das

Choreography: Tilottoma Sengupta

Music Control: Mohammed Rukan Uddin

Props Making: Amlan Barua

Mask Making : Showkat Ali

Technical Assistant: Ali Afsar Bhuiyan

Make-up: Shahenoor Sarwar

Set Making: Abdul Malek

FOH: Fameans

Production Manager: Showmen Rudra

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**Tripurari Sharma's SHIFA... THE  
HEALING Director: Teekam**

# Joshi

Playwright: Tripurari Sharma

Director: Teekam Joshi

Group: Individual, Delhi

Language: Hindi

Duration: 1 hr 35 mins

## The Play

Shifa is based on HIV+ people talking about the positivity of life, and about searching within oneself to find a new way of life. It is a play within a play where three real characters share their life experiences with the audience, not for consolation but about social stigma, discrimination, empowerment, acceptance and primarily, healing.

## Director's Note

One needs an inspiration for doing things, and I had several for doing this play. The first reason was Shri Ravi Nagar Ji, and the second was the need to fight against odds like illness, loneliness, stigma and discrimination that one sees and feels all around in society. Theatre can be inspiring, entertaining, and a platform for sharing. But sharing needs courage, and this play gives you that courage, to talk about those deeper experiences which you generally don't and can't share. This play is like opening a window on those subjects about which society has many reservations. I would like to convey my humble thanks to Tripurari Sharma Ji who gave me the permission to do it.

## The Director

Teekam Joshi did P.G. diploma in Dramatic Arts from National

School of Drama in 2001. He has received many awards including SangeetNatakAkadmiBismillah Khan YuvaPuruskar, Nat Samrat, IftekharAkadmi Award, and State Youth Festival Award. He has worked with the National School of Drama Repertory Co. and has been an expert faculty for NSD extension program; visiting faculty at NSD for acting, voice and speech; visiting faculty at NSD Sikkim Centre, Gangtok for acting; Actor (consultant) Kingdom of Dreams; Associate and Assistant Director for NSD students productions; Associate Director of some NSD repertory productions; expert faculty for communication skills in different private universities; Executive Director of Aaj Theatre company (founded by BhanuBharti); Artistic Director of Unicorn Actor's Studio; and Artistic Director of Flying Feather's Art Association. He has participated in many national and international festivals. Teekam has worked with eminent theatre personalities like HabibTanvir, B.V.Karant, Mohan Maharishi, M.K.Raina, BansiKaul, BhanuBharti, AnuradhaKapur, Kirti Jain, Ramgopal Bajaj, Robin Das, Tripurari Sharma, Rita Ganguly, D.R.Ankur, KavalamNarayan Panniker, John RusselBrown, WamanKendre, Prasanna, Kumar Verma, AlokChatterji, Sanjay Upadhyay, Raghunandan, K.S.Rajendran, Suresh Sharma, Bapi Bose, Ashok SagarBhagat etc.

## The Playwright

Tripurari Sharma completed her diploma in direction from National School of Drama in 1979. She is a playwright, translator and director of repute. She has written and directed various plays for groups and institutions all over India. She has conducted workshops all over India and abroad. She has also written scripts of critically acclaimed films like Mirch Masala and HazarChaurasi Ki Maa. She has been honoured with the Sanskriti award and SangeetNatakAkademi award. Ms. Sharma retired as Professor of Acting from National School of Drama.

## Cast & Credits

Sanjeev: Teekam Joshi

Chhaya: Nalini R Joshi / Nidhi Mishra

Barkha: PriyadarshiniPooja / ShradhaVasdev

Vinay: Manish Karnatak / Vaibhav Raj

Nani: GauriDewal / MuskanDua

Purush: Shaurya Shankar

Stage Manager: Harshvardhan / RajatDahiya

Reporter: MuskanDua / GauriDewal

Doctor: Akshay Sharma

Prof. Ganapati: AniruddhSagar

Students: Harshvardhan, Rajat, Akshay, Muskan, Shradha, Pooja

Child Artist: Nandini R Joshi , Lucky Lakshya

Group Actors: Harshvardhan, Rajat, Akshay, Akash, Muskan,Shradha, Nidhi, Nalini, Praveen Parashar, Nirbhay Jain, Vaibhav Raj, Nikhil Singh Bhatti

Music: LateShri Ravi Nagar

Light Design: SoutiChakraborty

Set Design: Rajesh Singh

Sound Design: Sandy Singh

Poster Image: Indira Tiwari

Poster, Brochure & Video: Happy Ranjit

Choreography: HarshitKhatana

Sculpture: AniruddhSagar

Property: Sachin Shrivastav

Production Manager: Gauri Dewal

Production Assistant: Vaibhav

Sound Operation: Shubham Paliwal

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# Pratap Phad's ANANYA

Playwright & Director: Pratap Phad

Group: Suyog Production, Mumbai

Language: Marathi

Duration: 2 hrs 30 mins

## The Play

We often get inspired by various icons but seldom an ordinary person, who is just like one of us, steps out of all stereotypes, to do something unimaginable. This is a story of an ordinary girl, Ananya, who possesses the potential to do something extra – ordinary. Being a bright student, she was always showered by praise and her confidence never seemed to cease. She was a free girl with a lot of ambitions and had also got engaged to the person she saw a future with. Everything was pretty and full of sunshine until she meets with an accident. Things start turning upside down in no time and begin to change. But she doesn't quit. What she does to overcome the obstacles becomes a story which is beyond one's wildest imagination.

## The Director & Playwright

Pratap M. Phad, born on 15th August 1980, has written & directed various one act plays and experimental plays in Marathi and Hindi. He has been awarded with the Best Play and Best Director at Malhar '03, TESP0 2005-06, Parangat Sanman '08 and various other competitions. For Ananyaa, he has been awarded Best Director Maharashtra Shasan Puraskar, 2018, Best Writer Sanskruti Kala Darpan Puraskar 2018, Shreshtha Natakakar Aacharya Atre Puraskar 2018. He has also worked and contributed in film industry.

## The Group

Mr. Sudhir Bhat formed Suyog Production on 1st January 1985. In 32 years, around 80 plays were produced by Suyog production. Moruchi Mavashi, Gandhi Viruddha Gandhi, Vyaki aani Valli, Sandhyachaya, Char Divas Premache, Sunder Me Honar, Mitra, Lekure Udand Jhali are some of the best plays of Suyog Production. Dilip Prabhavalkar, Prashant Damale, Bharat Jadhav, Vijay Chavhan, Atul Parchure, Vandana Gupte, Bharati Aacharekar and Neena Kulkarni are amongst the known personalities who have performed under this production. Suyog Production is one of the best production houses in Marathi theater industry. Ananyaa is 85th presentation of Suyog Production and in 2018 Ananyaa received 34 awards in various competitions.

## Cast & Credits

Baba: Pramod Pawar

Ananyaa: Rutuja Bagwe

Priyanka: Anagha Bhagare

Dhananjay (Dada): Vishal More

Shekhar Sarpotdar: Karan Bendre

Jay Dikshit: Siddharth Bodke

Setting: Pravin Gavali aani Mandali

Lights: Devidas Shivgan, Akshay Jadhav

Music and Projector: Prathamesh Bhuvad, Ruchir Chavhan, Sanjay Umbarkar

Make-up and Hair Dressers: Sharad Sawant, Jyotsna, Chhaya

Costume and Property: Pravin, Prashant, Nilesh

Manager: Santosh Mahadik

Producer: Rajesh Patil, Sandesh Bhat, Pratap Phad

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**G. Krishanan's ABIMANYA  
SUNDARI THIRUKALYAM,  
Director: D. Elumalai**

Playwright: G. Krishanan

Director: D. Elumalai

Group: Sri Thanthoni Amman Therukkuthu Nadaga Sabha,  
Thiruvannamalai

Language: Tamil

Duration: 1 hr 30 mins

The Play

Duryodhana's son, Lakshmana Kumaran, is eligible to marriage and Sakuni suggests he may be married to the daughter of Dhurgapuri's Lord Krishna. Duryodhana agrees and goes to

Dhurgapuri Darbar. Entering, Duryodhana asks Lord Krishna to marry his daughter to his son. But Krishna decided to first speak with his wife. Duryodhana agrees. Mangalakshmi, wife of Lord Krishna, listens to Krishna, but reminds him that he has promised his daughter's marriage to Arjun's son. Lord Krishna says that as Arjun has lost almost all his land, we must reconsider the match. They finally decide to marry their daughter to Duryodhan's son and announcement of the same intent is made. When their daughter, Sundari, hears this, she gets upset, and sends a message to Abhimanyu through Vayu Bhagvan that he should come immediately and marry her. Abhimanyu gets the message and straightaway sets out to stop the wedding.

#### Director's Note

This play is dramatized from Mahabharata's story of Abhimanya Sundari Thirukalyanam. It was performed in our rural villages. The audience would eagerly wait for Sundari's entry. Whenever we performed this play, the Kattiya Karan (Narrator), makes jokes and adds humour to the whole play.

#### The Director

At the age of sixteen, after finishing his school, D. Elumalai underwent training with two Koothu teachers, Kishtappa Meshtri and Srinivasa Meshtri. He learnt Adavu and songs from them. Later he joined Purisai Kalaimamani Subramaniya Thambirar Therukoothu group as an actor. There he learnt Adavu from Kannappa Thambiran and Sambanthan in 1987-88. He founded the Sri Thanthoniamman Therukoothu Nadaga Sabha in the year 1997. He gave training to Thalai -K-kol, a modern theatre group in Pondichery and organised the performance of Nadu Koothan there. In 2006-2008, he got trained in Therukoothu at Pondichery University. He also conducted a 10 days' workshop at National School of Drama's Bangalore Centre. He is the chief trainer for Therukoothu. He got Kalai Nan Mani award from the Government of Tamil Nadu.

## The Playwright

G. Krishnan has been writing for the last 30 years. His plays have been translated in German and French. He teaches Thabasu and Krishnan Doodhu to the village youths. Thakkayagam, Arjunan Thabasu, Lavakusha, Baratham, Sundari thirukalyam are some of his famous plays.

## The Group

Sri Thanthoniamman Therukoothu Nadaga Sabha is the leading Tamil folk Theatre group that promotes the traditional folk art form of Therukoothu. It was established in 1985 by a Group of folk theatre enthusiasts who were involved in promoting Therukoothu in the districts of Thiruvannamalai, Kanchipuram, Chennai, Vellore, Dharumapuri, Pondicherry. They have performed in the National Theatre festival (19th BRM at New Delhi) and have also conducted a number of workshops with college students, foreign research scholars and school children.

## Cast & Credits

On Stage: Ravichandran, Madhavan, Vijay, A. Ramakrishnan, M. Haridass, Ethiraj, E. Manikandan, Subramanian, Mukundan, Elavarasu, S. Rajesh, Venkatesan,

Harmonium: Seetharaman

Mirudangam: Krishnamoorthy

Mughaveenai: S. Chandiran

Lighting: E. Sukumar

Design & Props: E. Suresh

Translator & Coordinator: M. Manivanna

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# Ram Gopal Bajaj, the founder of Bharangam to be felicitated on the Inaugural



**National School of Drama's 20th Bharat Rang Mahotsav, the International Theatre Festival of India, is Back with a Bang; Gears Up to Dazzle India**

The International theatre festival of India, Bharat Rang Mahotsav, BHARANGAM, will kick off in New Delhi on 1st February, 2019 and culminate on 21st February, 2019 and will cover 6 cities in India with 111 shows and various allied events.

A key feature of the inaugural ceremony of the festival is the felicitation of its founder *Ram Gopal Bajaj*, who was the Director of National School of Drama. It was his visualisation of the idea of bringing best of theatre from India and later all over the world, to help the students of NSD to see the possibilities of theatre and also an experience for the

**audience to absorb and be enriched.**

Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM), the annual theatre festival is organized by the National School of Drama (NSD), was established two decades ago, by Ramgopal Bajaj to stimulate the growth and development of theatre across India. Originally a national festival showcasing the work of the most creative theatre workers in India, BRM has evolved to international scope, hosting theatre groups from around the world, and is now the largest theatre festival of Asia. Till date, BRM was celebrated in New Delhi and has travelled to several cities in India, presenting an overwhelming 1787 plays, and riveted thousands of audiences who basked in the glory of heart-winning stories and superior performances.

The 20th edition of BRM will include various national and international performances, and associated events such as, 'Director's Meet', 'Living Legends', and 'Master Class'. This year, the festival pays a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of the Nation', on his 150th birth anniversary and will stage plays depicting the Gandhian philosophy and the dilemmas Bapu had as a person. The 20th Bharat Rang Mahotsav also hold parallel festival in other cities including Dibrugarh (Assam), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Mysore (Karnataka), and Rajkot (Gujarat).

The 21-day long festival will stage plays in Hindi, English, and other regional and international languages. International productions from Bangladesh, Poland, Russia, Sri Lanka, the Czech Republic, Italy, Nepal, Romania, and Singapore will also enthrall the audience during the festival.

Apart from plays, the festival will also host folk performances and other traditional performing art forms, street plays by around 50 dramatic societies of colleges in Delhi, and national and international seminars discussing the

theatre scenario in India and abroad. BRM is organized by National School of Drama (NSD), an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India and one of the foremost theatre training institutions in the world.

20th Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM), the largest theatre festival in Asia, organized by the National School of Drama (NSD), is all set to bring its bouquet of plays, interactive sessions, and other cultural events to cheer up the winter afternoons of theatre enthusiasts in the city.

The inaugural ceremony will be held at Kamani auditorium on 1st February, 2019 at 6:00 PM followed by the performance of 'Karanth ke Rang', directed by Amod Bhatt. The 50-minute long performance is a medley of songs composed by late Shri B V Karanth, a stalwart of Kannada and Hindi theatres. Shri Karanth was a prolific composer of songs and scripts for theatre and directed and acted in many productions.

The festival, which enters its 20th edition this year, is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi – 4 of the plays to be staged on the life, philosophy, and principles of the 'Father of the Nation'. The festival will host 69 Indian and 15 foreign plays across India, selected after screening. Additionally, 9 folk productions, 5 plays by NSD diploma students, 1 production from the Sikkim center of NSD, 3 plays by the NSD Repertory as well as 5 invitee plays by eminent theatre practitioners will captivate the theatregoers across India.

The national capital will host 89 plays: 25 plays in Hindi, 16 in Bengali, 5 in Kannada, 2 in Marathi, 2 in Odia, 2 in Gujarati, 2 in Manipuri, 3 in English, 2 in Assamese, 2 in Malayalam and 1 each in Maithili, Telugu, Nepali, and Sanskrit, in addition to 15 foreign plays, the festival also brings 8 folk performances to theatre aficionados in the city.

The 21-day long festival this year will include plays in

Hindi, English, and other regional languages. International productions from countries such as Bangladesh, Poland, Russia, Sri Lanka, the Czech Republic, Italy, Nepal, Romania, and Singapore as well as non-verbal, folk, and multi-lingual performances will enthrall the audience during the theatrical spectacle.

The performances in New Delhi will be held at Bahumukh and Chahumukh (7:30 PM), Open Lawn (6:00 PM), and Abhimanch (8:30 PM) at the NSD's Bahawalpur House campus as well as nearby Sri Ram Centre (4:00 PM), LTG (5:30 PM), and Kamani (7:00 PM) auditoriums.

Apart from the spellbinding performances and interaction with thespians and eminent personalities from the world of theatre, the festival in Delhi will also have 2 international and 2 national seminars on theatre. The national seminars to be held in New Delhi will attend to the topic 'Is Modern Theatre Inclusive?' and will hold sessions dedicated to 'Notion of State and Representation', 'Unrepresented Form', and 'Non-Governmental Curating and Funding Policy'.

Besides, the NSD campus will be abuzz with street plays, ambience shows, and 'Theatre Bazar', a motley of stalls offering a range of products and culinary delights. The youth forum shows will comprise performances by dramatic societies of nearly 50 colleges in Delhi while ambience performances will bring folk dance and other traditional performing art forms.

In keeping with its concerted efforts to promote theatre among people and take select performances to other parts of the country, the NSD arranges parallel festivals in Dibrugarh (4th to 10th February, 2019), Varanasi (7th to 13th February, 2019), Ranchi (9th to 15th February, 2019), Mysore (11th to 17th February, 2019), and Rajkot (13th to 19th February, 2019).

“The art of theatre is the oldest and the strongest medium that conveys human emotions in a manner that defies temporal boundaries. We are delighted to usher in the Bharat Rang Mahotsav to its 20th year and have made all efforts to bring a selection of quality plays, choosing the best out of 960 submissions. There are 9 folk performances being presented in Delhi as well as invitee plays and productions in regional languages. We have tried to accommodate as many young theatre enthusiasts as we can, since the institution aim to foster the growth of young talents through the platform of BRM,” says **Shri Suresh Sharma, Director In-charge, National School of Drama (NSD)**.

“Theatre is a celebrated art form across the world and I am happy that this festival gives us a chance to witness many of the plays which have received critical acclaim globally. BRM aims at bringing together people and hence, we have spread the festival across the country so that theatre reaches more and more people. BRM has been a very successful festival attracting a lot of audience, including first-timers and we hope a similar run this year too,” says **Dr. Arjun Deo Charan, Acting Chairman, NSD Society**.

### **About National School of Drama (NSD)**

The National School of Drama is one of the foremost theatre training institution in the world and the only one of its kind in India. It was set up by the Sangeet Natak Akademi as one of its constituent units in 1959. In 1975, it became an independent entity and was registered as an autonomous organization under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It offers 3-years training program in every aspect of theatre with a special focus on the practical implementation of theories. The NSD has two performing wings – the Repertory Company and Theatre-in-Education Company (TiE) that started in 1964 and 1989, respectively.

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# The Owl and the Pussy Cat / Seema Bawa



Actors: Kavita Dang and Kumud Mishra

Director: Satyajit Sharma

*"The Owl and the pussy cat went to sea in a beautiful pea green boat..."*

Thrown together in a low-rent bachelor's flat instead of a 'pea-green boat', the odd couple in this highly amusing **Bill Manhoff** comedy, is certainly not at sea! 'The Owl', Felix played by **Kumud Misra**, a highly accomplished actor, is a self-styled intellectual author – while 'the Pussycat' played by **Kanika Dang**, is a wannabe actress and model – however, to pay the bills she entertains gentleman callers, a prostitute but not promiscuous.

Having noticed the stream of gentlemen caller at her apartment through his binoculars, the peeping owl does his 'civic' duty by informing the superintendent of the building. The pussycat with nowhere to spend the night seeks revenge by imposing on the owl for a bed. And then, through a battle of wits, words, and wisdoms they both start to 'educate' each other as well as the audience in ways they never knew they could.

The current production by Dotted Line Productions has wisely kept it simple and has not endeavored to create convoluted and over intellectualized caricatures of the protagonists. The director, **Satyajit Sharma**, an NSD Alumni with several outstanding acting and directorial performances to his credit, takes two great actors who handle some good old fashioned repartee rather well; coupled with adept handling of a witty script to put together an eminently watchable show.

The play focuses on two people who get to know each other, have sex, and eventually fall in love. As in most romantic comedies, one-liners abound and the protagonists are shown falling from their own self constructed identities. The fight in Felix's apartment after Doris barges in at the beginning is hilarious. She gets upset by his use of big words, but eventually buys her own guide to extending one's vocabulary. He is horrified by her "filthy" animal existence exemplified in his use of words like gutter slime and filth for her, but delights in the new experiences she has to offer. The two show each other new ways of looking at things and which is why Doris and Felix's chemistry works for the audience. It's is akin to what *happens* in real life. Their romance is played for laughs, but it's also sweet and touching. Felix, like most men, has to have a near nervous breakdown before deciding Doris is the one for him through a bitter-sweet dream sequence that evokes meta-theatre. As each displays their softer selves, the audience realizes they have more in common than they think. The two are in transition; looking for that obscure goal of success; he in writing, she in acting. This shared ground draws them together and reflects to the audience a very real struggle that we all experience in relationships.

Odd couples, whether of the same or different sexes have been a comedy formula for decades. The play enthralls with its at times salty language. Most importantly, Kumud and Kanika have a very definite chemistry. Though Kanika's is better delineated and in intrinsically is the more outrageous and

attractive character (being the underdog) in the script, it does not steal the focus. Kumud interprets the inherent wimpiness and prissyness of the character with a paradoxical male strength and libido. This makes for a powerful performance that converts the essentially mono-dimensionality of the character into a rather complex and conflicted one. The interlude when the wimpy Felix transforms briefly to a randy 'baby' is remarkably executed with Kumud performing from each pore of his being. Kanika has put in a lot of effort into building her character but while she is able to bring to fore the tartness of Doris, the vulnerability written into the character does not come out as well as it may have. Though this prostitute has a heart and it shows. While the play per se is not deep enough to allow for great acting, it does give scope to the two protagonists to demonstrate impressive technical finesse; the director who is apparently debuting for the group needs to be complemented for this.

In order to be memorable theater, the discovery by Felix and Doris that they are good for each other need not be revelatory in the vein of a metaphysical revelation, but should be funny. The director and his cast achieve this with ease. The humor in "The Owl and The Pussycat," depends largely on sarcasm, insult and the sort of logic that has Doris announce: "I may be a prostitute, but I'm not promiscuous." A lot of the humor of the play depends on language and the "play" thereon. Much is made of the fact that Doris doesn't understand words like despicable, aesthetic, assimilate and intrinsic while Felix who seeks to define himself through words or concepts finds them completely incapable of addressing his feelings for Doris. A comedy based largely on language and timing is always a difficult ask and the current production delivers in aces.

Directorial skill is amply demonstrated in terms of technique, stage craft and spatial usage. The fundamentals of good stagecraft such as blocking, body language and use of space

have a refreshing rehearsed certainty and professionalism fast disappearing from current productions. Interludes of well chosen music pieces and the intermittent use of gaps during the play deserve to be commended. This despite the somewhat inadequate lighting arrangement around the proscenium of the LTG auditorium

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## **Small is Beautiful / Keval Arora**



When listening to people speak of how difficult it is today for theatre groups to survive, and therefore of the feasibility of theatre itself, I find it difficult to share

the general air of regret that envelops such discussions. Sure, it isn't easy to produce plays on a regular basis, especially for those who intend to make a living solely off performance. But it probably never has been – at any rate, far longer than many doomsayers would care to remember. Theatre today is pushed into a corner. The sooner we accept that fact as a given condition, and make our adjustments and interventions with such shrinkage in mind, the better we will be able to renew our appreciation of theatre's strengths and possibilities. Hankering for a return to glory days is a nice theme for lazy winter afternoons, but not for the evenings when rehearsal time is upon us.

Is this an unfounded optimism? I think not; in fact, it's not even an 'optimism' in the first place. If anything, it's impatience with the habitual passivity, the automatic funereal tone of the way we think about our work. If 'the death of the theatre' will ever come to pass (the way in which there has been talk for some time about 'the disappearance of the playwright'), I suspect it'll come from the failure of its aficionados to look forward from the present. By this, I do not mean that we accept the current scenario as a value in itself, for there is no need to infect our appreciation of theatre's function with the market-driven models of today. But, we do need to see where we can go from here, rather than talk as if our future lies in returning to the past. I sometimes hear the 70s being spoken of with some fondness. But I began watching theatre in the 70s, and I don't ever remember feeling free of the same anxieties then, the way retrospection today persuades us to believe. Unfortunately, for many people, the past has always been a better place, much in the way that the dead have only good things said about them.

There is always an audience available for plays. Correction: there *will* always be an audience available for plays. In the several years that I have been attending performances, I have not come across too many instances of plays running to

absolutely empty houses. It is another matter that some plays that deserved fuller houses did not get them, while others that ought to have been less popular had spectators arriving in droves. (Given the troubled state of theatre attendance and solvency, comments on such anomalies were rarely aired aloud, being more a matter for internal envy rather than for public pride.) The point is not whether there is or isn't an audience for theatre; rather, what is our expectation of an audience – what is the minimum number required for spectators to be regarded as an audience?

It is essentially a numbers game. An 'empty house', or a 'FULL House', is a relative term, relative to the capacity of the auditorium and varying in tone according to the amount paid out as rental. Take a 500-seater, sell 50 tickets and you have a cavernous hole that depresses producers, deadens actors and embarrasses spectators by its silence. Place the same 50 people in a space designed for 75, and there is no way you can remain immune to the palpable buzz of togetherness. Performances in smaller spaces get charged in a manner that is impossible to replicate in the bigger auditoria. Amidst all this talk of dwindling attendance, why then do we insist on opting for large auditoria as our venues?

Admittedly, 50 tickets (not a terribly inspiring number in itself) is still only 50 tickets, irrespective of whether the number left unsold is 450 or 25. In the 75-seater auditorium, it still adds up to the same absolute number of spectators, and generates roughly the same amount of income; so why is this supposed to be a rosier picture? Before I am accused of dipping into the bag of ingenious tricks perfected by finance ministries to manufacture their statistics of health, let me quickly say that it is the economics of play production that makes me see in smaller venues an answer to our woes in the theatre. That is, even if we disregard the value of such space in terms of performance and spectating, there are still financial advantages to working in the 75-seater auditorium.

Smaller theatres cost much less to rent than the bigger ones. As hall rentals form a substantial and recurring portion of production expenditure, any reduction in this area will contribute substantially to financial health. What most theatre groups do when they book the 500-seat auditorium is express a hope for attractive returns; what they end up doing is investing in 450 empty seats.

Small auditoria cannot of course meet the needs of all plays. Some texts require the machinery of large stages, or the space required for big casts. Such productions will necessarily have to exclude the 75-seater auditorium from its range of options. But, the majority of plays are geared for, or amenable to, intimate stagings. Especially contemporary plays, for playwrights too have wised up to the need to cater to groups with few actors and limited means.

The other advantage to performing in small spaces is of course enough to make such venues attractive even if they were by some quirk more expensive to hire. In the small theatres, the proximity of the actor to the spectator confers an intensity and directness upon performance that is difficult to match in the anonymity of larger spaces. When I think of performances that got under my skin when I saw them and are still with me now, I am struck by how many of them were played at intimate venues: *Woyzeck* and *Adhe Adhure* at the NSD Repertory's Studio Theatre, *Nagamandala* at the Prithvi in Mumbai, *Mother Courage* at the Modern School Gym.... How much of their magic owed to the setting in which they were performed, whether that quality would have been preserved had they transferred to larger, more conventional spaces, are difficult speculations. Productions are conceptualised with physical spaces and visual relations in mind; the best actors play within the altered chemistry that proximity brings; and therefore it is naïve to think of theatre productions as manufactured items that function with the same stability no matter the shop in which they are sold.

Such intensity may not always be comfortable or desired. First time actors quickly experience the disorientation of performing in close-up, and learn to tone down volume and gesture, cull emotion of its theatricality, and re-locate their focal centre within themselves; in other words, they learn to work pretty much as actors do for a camera. Spectators can sometimes be discomfited too, especially when actors fail to work within the reduced scale – as in the case of performances at the now unavailable for theatre IHC Basement, where actors sometimes project their voices and bodies as if they are addressing back rows 75 feet away, they effectively end up bombarding the audience rather than speaking to it. But, there is no denying that special feeling of being sucked into the fiction when spectators are virtually thrust into the performance space.

This sensation is heightened in those small theatres that are not designed as the poor cousin, mimicking the proscenium methods and apparatus of the Big Brother. The real strength of the small stage lies in the flexibility that reduction in size brings – in its potential to leave seating and lighting arrangements to the director and the set designer and to let them determine the physical and visual relation best for their production, as in the Bahumukh theatre at the NSD. However, even when the audience seating area is physically demarcated and fixed (as in the case of Bombay's Prithvi Theatre and the NSD Sannukh Theatre), the fact of being seated at an informal distance, at virtually the same level as the actors (the Bahumukh) or at scattered angles (the Prithvi) makes watching a performance here very different from the regular experience. The effect of a heightened intimacy, a direct (and sometimes even private) connection with fictional space, powerfully underscores theatre's function as a persuader.

That's why it's not the same thing to being seated in the first row of a regular auditorium. If you've had the misfortune of being stuck up front, you'll know what I mean

when I say that it's possibly the worst row in the house. Great for being looked at perhaps, especially if you make arriving late a habit; but lousy if you've come to look at the show. The angle at which you have to look upwards is all wrong (especially at the Kamani), and it's virtually impossible to take in the width of the stage without feeling that you've wandered into a tennis match. (Great exercising for the neck, of course, so let's not trash the hidden benefits of the theatre?) Watching a street performance in the round does not produce a similar effect of intimacy either, though there is little physical distance between the actors and spectators, and the performance area does not call for callisthenics of any sort. I'd imagine that it is the 'public' nature of such theatrical practice that overlays all such 'proximity' with a public air.

Where are such performance spaces in Delhi? The SRC Basement is the first name to crop up, but that apology of a performance space merits first mention only because it's been around a long while – no longer, though: it closed down some years ago – and a home to several theatre groups. There is no other comparable space. The Basement Theatre at the IHC had begun to witness a lot of activity, but that was mainly because of a dearth of venues at that price. For the IHC Basement to have fulfilled its potential, it had needed to alter the performance space to allow multiple-entry access to actors, to install a lighting grid that covered the entire space and to install more lights of much lower wattage. I speak of all this in the past tense because today the IHC Basement Theatre is unavailable to theatre performance courtesy the objections of some municipal committee. Other spaces such as the Sannukh and the Bahumukh theatres are performance-friendlier spaces but unfortunately available only to programmes run by the NSD.

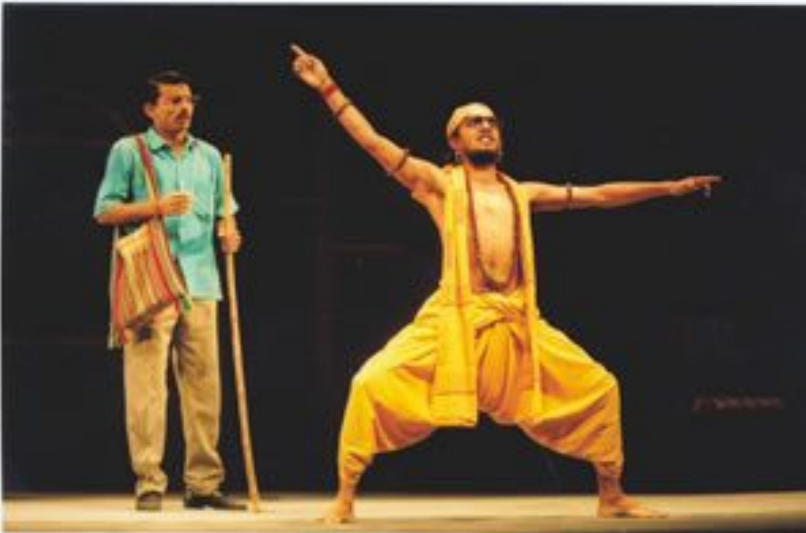
That makes this discussion on the merits of small performance spaces a purely academic one. The small auditorium, like so

much else in the theatre, sadly exists more as idea than as fact.

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## Keval Arora's Kolumn



Come admission time in Delhi University, a strange ritual involving drama is enacted every June and July in several colleges. This ritual concerns admissions where the minimum marks required for entry into various courses are lowered for candidates with a demonstrable talent in theatre. Well, not just theatre: other Extra-Curricular Activities (generally described as ECA) such as music, debating, dance, the fine arts and photography also qualify. I'll confine my comments to the situation concerning theatre, though much of what happens here is broadly true of the other activities as well.

The ritual is interesting for several reasons, not the least

of which is the keen interest shown in it by those members of the University community who do not subscribe to either its aims or its methods. For those who do, it's a gratifying time because artistic activity is now granted however grudgingly some place in the sun. For the greater majority of those who don't, it's gratification time when non-academic achievement becomes the means by which academic under-achievement can be given the go-by. And, at a time when eligibility criteria and admission irregularities are being closely monitored by the media and sometimes even mediated by the courts, the little 'discretion' that ECA admissions allow seems to go a long way indeed!

As for the candidates, it goes without saying that this opportunity is embraced gladly by those who stand to benefit, without any grumbling of the kind that 'reservation quotas' inspire from those who don't. It must be remembered though that ECA admissions have always been used by candidates as an insurance against their not getting admission into the course/college of their choice rather than as a first-choice option. In fact, if one were to go by the quality of most of the applicants, being unable to secure an admission through the general channel appears to be the main eligibility criterion! Yet, listening to these applicants introduce themselves as being driven by a great thirst for theatre, one can see that the *natak* begins well before they have mounted the stage!

That's the questionable underside of such admissions; but there are other questions, more legitimate and no less problematic for all that.

For instance, these admissions bring to a head the difficulty of evaluation and ranking. A prickly procedure at the best of times, acts of ranking becomes decidedly iffy when it involves no more than a one-off stab at serialising creative achievement and potential. Moreover, with subjectivity being both dominant practice and cognitive tool in art appreciation,

how does this intermesh with a policy of ranking which necessarily invokes the application of some kind of objective or at least commonly acceptable criteria? Also, is it possible to set up a grid of checks and balances to shape and circumscribe such evaluation?

Of course, art activity is judged one way or another all the time, by way of reviews and commentaries in the media, or through selections for scholarships, grants and festivals. But rarely do such judgements, upsetting as these are sometimes, stamp actors or grade performances with the kind of hierarchical finality that is found in the admissions process. ECA committees are known to blithely wield axes that even the most rabid of reviewers would flinch from using.

After all, the one thing that loosens a reviewer's tongue is the comforting lack of tangible consequence. The knowledge that reviews (often published after the event and therefore having a negligible impact on ticket sales, as in Delhi) are primarily cud for discussion enables reviewers to offer free and easy critical response. In contrast, the hardening of subjective opinion into summary judgements that slam the door shut on young hopefuls cannot but be a frightening responsibility. Sadly, it is rare to see this responsibility being judiciously exercised. All too often, ECA committees make their choices, unperturbed by the insufficient evidence on which these are based.

Another interesting aspect of this admission policy lies in what it reveals of attitudes towards and the space given to cultural activity within our educational institutions. (There is surprisingly little difference between schools and colleges in this regard.) At first glance, the fact that provision is made for such admissions appears an enlightened measure, for it implicitly acknowledges that artistic achievements can be factored into determining the worth of a candidate. The obsessive pursuit of better and better marks in the Board examinations has made most schools downgrade non-academic

creative activity as a secondary and even irrelevant practice. Students who spend time nurturing diverse interests and talents do, in all probability, end up with lesser marks than single-minded swotters, but they are not poorer students for that. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be true. So, what's the harm if extra-curricular talent is used, in a little reverse flow, to enhance the candidate's chances of admission, right?

No harm at all, especially as you can't remember the last time when you saw cultural practice command a premium in the marketplace. Yet, things aren't quite hunky-dory. A second glance reveals that this 'enlightened measure' is riddled with contradictions that float around unacknowledged as institutions blunder on with quaint notions of the education process. Why, I sometimes wonder, do colleges embark on these valuations of artistic worth if nothing changes down the line? It is the rare college that takes theatre activity seriously enough to offer realistic support in terms of scheduling, administrative support, budgetary grants and end-of-term honours. When institutional calendars designate cultural activity as mere recreation, it is understandable why admission processes too value and evaluate creativity in confusing terms.

The real problem, therefore, with this process is not, as is commonly argued, chicanery or the underhand attempts to buck the system – great Indian malady that: “have system, will buck!” – but that it lacks clarity of purpose. It is far easier to tackle the depredations of corruption or nepotism than it is to tackle the mess created by a muddle-headed approach to sports and cultural activity.

An instance of this mess is the divergence in the methods employed by different colleges to select candidates. The fact that there are no University guidelines for such admissions doesn't help because it leaves college administrations free to flounder. In the absence of tested procedures, the time spent

on evaluating an applicant's artistic ability varies enormously. At some colleges, theatre candidates are disposed of with brutal efficiency in a flat 10-15 minutes each: 5 minutes for a brief performance of a prepared piece and the balance for displaying their general knowledge ('name three Indian dramatists') and their certificates to an interview panel. On the other hand, at another college that I shall leave unnamed, some 40 candidates are processed through several elimination rounds (comprising prepared pieces, extempore performances, text-analyses, solo and group improvisations, and interviews) that add up close to 30 hours over 2 days.

Unlike a casting audition where the playscript provides some framework for selection, general testing for talent in drama is fraught because of the absence of clear-sighted goals, the procedures by which these can be sought, and a level playing field where applicants from different backgrounds and schools are played off against one another. For instance, does one or does one not distinguish between applicants who have studied in schools that possess a reasonable equipped auditorium, employ a drama teacher and place theatrical activity in the weekly timetable and those whose schools have no time or money for such things? This is probably why admission committees rely on applicants' certificates and brief presentations as a safe option. This procedure has the merit of appearing so objectively quantifiable that its inadequacy never ever comes to the fore.

Relying on certificates merely transfers the problem elsewhere, for then how does one assess the worth of such certification? In the absence of recognised inter-school drama festivals or training institutes, the drama certificates that most applicants produce relate to internal school activity, often indicating no more than the school's initiative in matters cultural. This is a far cry from the creditworthiness of certificates produced by sportspersons to gain concessional

admissions into colleges. With several tournaments organised for different age and proficiency levels in which students of different schools compete on relatively more level playing fields, sports certificates are fairly reliable indicators of achievement and potential – reliable enough, in fact, for forgery to have become a regular proposition!

It is equally risky to judge these young candidates by their prepared pieces alone, for it may be someone else's ability – an adult teacher/director through whose hands the candidates have passed – that gets judged. (Of course, this cuts both ways when you consider the quality of drama instruction available in even our best schools.) Another problem is that these presentations often drip with mechanically heightened emotion – in the mistaken but understandable conviction, given the all-pervasive television soaps in which whole generations are being rinsed, that powerful acting is always exhibitionistic in intent. Finally, the 'prepared piece and certificates' formula is inadequate because it merely ascertains, however dubiously, the candidate's past achievement without assessing her future potential. Admissions determined through these criteria end up looking like rewards for work already done, like certificates of merit that conclude rather than initiate a new activity. Surely the purpose of special admissions is the benefit that the college aims to derive from the student's stay at the institution. What is therefore needed is a selection process that offers a more accurate picture of the candidate's potential to work in the college – a process that tries, in a manner of speaking, to get beneath the skin, with the aim of observing individuals at work rather than superficially evaluating the packaged product that they make of themselves.

Such a process will still acknowledge past achievement, but only to the extent that it throws light upon the candidate's potential. It will focus on assessing individual creativity by challenging it through the unpredictable structure of solo and

group improvisation exercises. Apart from checking the candidate's ability to work within a group, to accept direction and to critically analyse his own creative choices, the fact that all this takes an enormous amount of time will also make this process a test of stamina. The pressure to be creative under conditions of tension and fatigue is arguably the best test of performance ability, though one has to be careful not to overdo such terms of endurance.

Finally, the efficacy of any selection procedure, even the most enabling one, depends upon its rationale being understood and its implications worked out. The selection process's emphasis on 'potential' and 'usefulness' rather than 'past achievement' means that in the case of over-qualified candidates, some hard decisions have to be taken. Some years ago, the son of a renowned violinist, a budding violinist himself, was granted an ECA admission at the college where I teach. But, between his classes and his tours with his father, he had no time left for playing in or for his college, and finally graduated from the institution having graced it with his instrument just a couple of times during that period. In drama too, many applicants today pop up with some experience of having acted for television. That sounds impressive alright, but this can be a real pain in the neck. For, not only are such candidates infected by the work ethic of the television studio, their commitments to the small screen leave them with little time for participating in college drama activity. Only colleges which bask in the reflected glory of their alumni welcome such stars. Others, with work goals defined in the present, continue their work with ordinary mortals and realisable potential.

Potential for what, is another question altogether. The academic year begins well with ECA admissions, but a couple of months down the line cultural activities get treated like the proverbial stepchild. For sports, there is a hectic University calendar; culture gets left to college students and their

fizz-drink sponsors for whom culture is confined within Ramp Displays (ubiquitously christened Fashion Shows') and Rock Shows. (The University does have a Culture Council in place but that is badly in need of some counsel and resuscitation.) Sports budgets are large and inviolate; ECA budgets are less than a tenth and constantly eaten into. Sports activities are run by faculty members appointed for the purpose; cultural activities are supervised, if at all, by regular teachers on a voluntary basis.

It is therefore not unusual to find that the categories under which the ECA admissions are made have precious little to show by the end of the year. Lack of accountability is in fact built into the system with teachers not being directly responsible for ensuring that the ECA students work, in the same manner in which they are accountable for taking classes or finishing their courses. In such a context, it is not out of place to wonder why colleges go through the trouble of having these admissions in the first place. The answer, I'm afraid, is not flattering at all.

If this is an unrelievedly depressing picture, let me point out that all cultural initiatives in the University have not collapsed. It is merely the system of the ECA admissions that has not delivered, not because it has been hijacked by vested interests but because the anxiety to *appear* just (more than the desire to *be* just) has led to the selections being carried out in thoroughly unimaginative fashions. Meanwhile, plays have been staged, instruments played, sketches made and photographs displayed, often on the strength of students who have not had to declare their artistic talents in order to gain admission.

Interestingly, the ECA admissions have worked when college administrations have not shied away from acknowledging the subjectivity of the selection process, and have insisted merely on it being an informed, committed and transparent subjectivity. In that lies the only insurance against possible

abuse of such 'licence'. Testing has to be entrusted to those teachers and senior students (and alumni) who have formulated projects for the year and will be responsible for carrying them out. An audit of each year's activities will also prove useful. Finally, as in so much else, the viability of the system boils down to the integrity and commitment of the persons involved. There is no getting beyond this basic fact. At any rate, are these not crucial ingredients in any form of cultural practice?