

Looking at Alternate Spaces for Performance in Delhi – NCR



Studio Safdar, 2253E, Shadi Khampur, Delhi 110008

Putting up any production can be most daunting for most theatre practitioners in India. It is customary for most

Indian directors who many times, run small amateur theatre groups to not only foot all bills but also look after the needs of the artists involved. The most challenging of this cost is that of the auditoriums. Most proscenium auditoriums in Delhi and Gurgaon can cost anywhere between 15,000 (around \$220) to 1,00,000 (around \$950) depending on its size and capacity. Furthermore, there is a long waiting list to get the required dates, most weekends getting booked almost a year ahead! Hence, the supply versus the demand is either beyond one's means or it requires tremendous patience for the group to perform.

The need for finding alternate spaces for performances hence is rapidly growing which is being met to some extent by a few in India. There are several around Mumbai but here the article will focus on two spaces created. The first one is that of the group, Rang Parivartan, in the growing rich cosmopolitan Gurgaon created by Mahesh Vasistha and the second one , the Teesri Manjil, of Ruchika Theatre group, created by Feisal Alkazi in South Delhi. It is important to focus on these two spaces, as the city of Delhi besides being the capital of India, is the Mecca of theatre training, while Mumbai largely focuses on film production and the thriving industry of Bollywood.

Delhi, has been timelessly known for its intense theatre training that is both affordable and also provides the correct knowledge to the aspiring actors. The prestigious National School of Drama is situated here, along with Sri Ram Centre, the school of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University that offers not only the masters course in performance studies but also a Ph.D in theatre and also the newly formed Ambedkar University that offers bachelors and masters in Performance studies are also located here. Besides this we also have an a diploma course offered in theatre by Indira Gandhi Open University, that is lesser than \$25 for six months, as an distance program.



Feisal Alkazi and his private rehearsal space – Teesri Manzil, South Delhi

As training in theatre is of high value in Delhi, there is a need for students to experience the stage as much as possible. It becomes impossible for students to do theatre without the experience of a stage, lights or sets. Both Mahesh Vashistha and Feisal Alkazi have found the answers and that too within their own homes! Both these thespians have created beautiful auditoriums within the upper floors of their homes. Both these spaces are intimate and are not open for the public, which in other words means is not for commercial gains but rather for training and also for holding small intimate shows for a discerning audience.

Feisal is of the opinion that one must allow theatre to enter homes and allow the audience to become a part of his large family. He says, ' Most actors have been with me for as much as 25 years and above and they have been an integral part of my life, hence I see new audiences as the same. I am just extending the Teesri Manjil, or my third floor to my family who should not be taken as some disconnected people.' Radhika Alkazi echoes much the same as she receives each one of her guests with warmth and enthusiasm and both she and her son Arman take immense joy in serving each guests fresh home made kebab rolls, biryani and wine.



Mahesh Vashist's Private performance Space, Gurgaon



Mahesh Vashistha

Mahesh Vashistha whose students have painstakingly made the auditorium with him extends his performance space free of charge to theatre practitioners not only across Delhi and Gurgaon but anyone who wishes to perform there. Both these auditoriums might seem like one as small steps but careful attention has been given both by Feisal and Mahesh regarding the technicals of an auditorium. Feisal has painstakingly thought of the lighting (having over 20 set lights including pars and LEDS and a dimmer) and the correct sound proofing of the stage. Mahesh has not only kept the lights and stage

setting in mind but has also kept the make up rooms in mind of the actors, and also has carefully insulated the place.



Akshara Theatre – Baba Khadak Singh Marg, Delhi



Kaala Dibba

Actor Factor Studio

3rd Floor, 416/2 Ghitorni Market

It is heartening to see such magic being created and to be lucky even to have open access to these performance spaces. Such free flowing needs based training venues are going to bring more thespians to do the same with their homes. This will make as Feisal wishes and does, a family of theatre and

not mere disconnected spectators who come and do not feel the intimacy of theatre due to the daunting presence of the mighty auditoriums.



Black Box Theatre, A 68, Okhla Industrial Estate, Phase 2, Delhi

The informal performance spaces have come up because theater is becoming un-affordable because of lack of revenue and astronomical cost of auditorium spaces in Delhi. Leaving you images of some of these spaces which offer hope for survival of Amateur theatre in Delhi. More about it in the next piece by Gouri Nilakantan

Editor Manohar Khushalani got Natsamrat Best Critic Award this day in 2019

The Glittering night of Natsamrat Theatre Awards. This was the most memorable moment of that year for StageBuzz Ed, Manohar Khushalani To be Awarded The 2019 Natsamrat Best Theatre Critic Award. It was indeed a fulfilling moment and an acknowledgement of his decades of consistent and persistent work as a critic for Pioneer (Column: Foot Lights), Mid Day (Culture Cocktail) and of course StageBuzz (Editor).

Theatre Legend Ebrahim Alkazi Passes away / Manohar Khushalani

Theatre doyen and legendary Pedagog Ebrahim Alkazi, who shaped proscenium theatre in India, died peacefully on Tuesday afternoon after suffering a heart attack, his son, Feisal Alkazi, informed us. Feisal told me the whole family was proud of his fathers humongous achievements. A career spanning 74 active years he passed away at 94.

Diary of Anne Frank – a review by Manohar Khushalani

This is recreation of a review Manohar Khushalani wrote in Dec 2000: Ruchika Theatre Group is one of the oldest surviving theatre groups of Delhi. The reason is simple. It keeps regenerating itself. The Diary of Anne Frank was one such exercise in which, Feisal Alkazi, the director of the play, used an entirely inexperienced cast, inducted from the Little Actors Club. Obviously, therefore, there would be unevenness of talent, but viewed within those limitations The show put up at India Habitat Centre last week held together due to sheer sincerity of effort and excellent performance

Kartik

The Play & Director's Note

This play has a storyline that could have been based on tomorrow morning's newspaper headlines. Using the wonderful theatrical device of three actors playing the central character of Kartik, we are able to enter his fractured world. We simultaneously see him as he was before the accident that changed his life; we also see him as he is immediately after the accident, recovering in hospital, at home and in school; as well as when he is an adult. The play brings together the present, past and future in a seamless whole. It has been a fascinating journey with the actors and my own team. We have interviewed teenagers, their parents and teachers; watched their interactions in school, home and on the metro; created improvisations; spent hours mastering the intricate choreography; enjoyed the shopping for clothes that

capture today's Delhi; and worked hard at creating over 36 characters, played by just 14 actors!

The Director

Educationist, theatre director and activist, Feisal Alkazi lives and works in New Delhi. Over the past forty years he has carved his own niche with his group, Ruchika. He has directed over 200 plays with adults in Hindi, English and Urdu. Most recently, two plays, Noor and A Quiet Desire, written by him have been produced. In addition, he has directed over 100 productions for schools all over India. Ruchika also runs a training program in theatre for children since 1997. Feisal has written 24 books as well and is a counsellor with Sanjivani. In the field of disability, he has directed 30 films and produced several plays.

The Group

The Theatre-in-Education Company (Samskaar Rang Toli) of the National School of Drama was established on October 16, 1989, and is one of the important educational resource centres in the country. The TIE Co. consists of a group of actor-teachers working-with and performing-for children. The major focus of the company is to perform creative, curriculum based, and participatory plays in school, designed and prepared specially for children of different age groups. The company holds a one month long intensive Summer Theatre Workshop for Children organized in May-June every year. TIE Co. has participated in many international theatre festivals and symposia in countries including Poland, China, Philippines and Japan. Jashn-e-Bachpan and Bal Sangam are biannual festivals organised by the company where it invites plays by and for the children from different parts of the country.

Cast & Credits

Sutradhar Kartik Manoj Kumar

Old Kartik, Gym Teacher, Shashank Manish Saini

New Kartik Mridul Anand

Mummy Aparna Kapoor
Papa, Changezi, Bhaiji Mahesh Kumar
Raghav Manoj Sharma
Himanshu, New Dancer Tasabber Ali
Nancy Jyoti Bala
Doctor Fatima, Rubina, Announcer Jyotsana
Inspector, Nurse1 Nidhi S Sasthri
Anshika, Nurse2, Vicky Soumita Kundu
Anthony, Shiny Piyush Verma
Drug Peddler, Teacher Kaleem Zafar

All Street Voices & Dancers Jyotsana , Aparna Kapoor,
Soumita Kundu, Piyush Verma,

Mahesh Kumar, Manoj Sharma, Nidhi S Sasthri

Choreographer Vishwa Kant Singha
Assisted by Sandeep Kashyap
Costume Design Shaik Sheeba
Assisted by Jyotsana
Set, Poster & Brochure Design Jagan Shah
Assisted by Kamal Kumar
Light Design Mona Chawla
Assisted by Joginder Singh, Dhirender Kumar
Light Design Mona Chawla
Assisted by Joginder Singh, Dhirender Kumar
Music Operation Sheel/Vikram Jeet Singh
Stage Manager & Property Nidhi S. Sasthri
Tailor Saroj Silswal, Akhtar Ali
Sound S. Manoharn, Pratap Singh, Subhanjan
Photography & Videography Deepak Kumar
Assistant TIE Co. B.S Rawat
Administration Staff Pirat Singh Negi, Darmiyan Singh,
Shailender Kumar,

Neha Bhatt

Attendant Md. Rashid, Pawan Kumar

Chief of TIE Co. Abdul Latif Khatana

Asst. Director Mona Chawla

Translation & Adaptation Kiran Deep Sharma

Design & Direction Feisal Alkazi