

THE PEACOCK

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Music Maestro

In 2002, the Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) organised the first ever All India Konkani Music Festival. I was then the President of KBM. In the build-up to the event, I was actually not at ease with the notion of 'Konkani Music'. Is there any music that can be singled out as 'Konkani music'? All my apprehensions vanished when I heard Pandit Bhaskar Chandavarkar say "If you have a language, you have a culture, and when you have a culture, you have a music." That one sentence of this genius put all my reservations to rest.

In the end, the Konkani music fiesta was a grand success, with legendary singers and musicians Kishori Amonkar, Remo Fernandes, Prabhakar Karekar, Fr. Peter Cardozo, Alfred Rose, and many greats gracing the mega-event. The festival not only brought glitter and glory to our culture, but also infused self-esteem, honour, and pride among the Konkani community within and beyond Goa. That interaction with the renowned Pune-based musician and musicologist has remained ingrained in my mind.

Pt. Bhaskar Chandavarkar's contribution to Indian music is immense. He played the sitar with mastery and devotion. Did the sitar love him, or did he love playing the sitar? That is a question that remains unanswered. But he did not restrict himself to any one kind of music or instrument. He firmly emphasised that *Cine-Sangeet* was very much Indian, while some classicists argued otherwise. He knew exactly where and how *Film-Sangeet* or *Natya-Sangeet* was positioned, and he tore down the contention that it wasn't truly *Indian Sangeet*. He vehemently stood by lyricists when it was argued that it was pure poetry. No musical instrument is foreign to any music, he believed. Today, the harmonium has become an essential part of Indian classical music. Vocal music was introduced to India by the early Christian missionaries as far back as the 17th century. The mandolin, which hails from Italy, was very popular in Goa, and eventually became a mellifluous tool at the hands of maestros like Sajjad Hussain and C. Ramachandra.

For the early filmmakers, who were always seeking to renew Indian film music, the musicians playing for bands in the city hotels came in handy. The major contributors were Goans, who were trained in music schools run by the parish churches in Goa. Pt Bhaskar contended that the clarinet, violin, and Hawaiian guitar were some such instruments that enriched the cine orchestra. Folk instruments were also brought in to augment the film music, by directors like Chandavarkar, who was

**Bhaskar
Chandavarkar
(1936-2009)**

Language Culture Music



one of the few connoisseurs of music who had a deep understanding of how Indian music complemented Indian cinema.

I recollect how he felt sorry that a younger generation of India was moving away from music. He would tell the story of a young lad, who lived in the US, and was on a visit to India. He expressed to have a look at his sitar, and since the young man said he had listened to the sitar and liked it, Chandavarkar opened the instrument to show him. Looking at the keys, the young man asked, "Which key do I have to press to make it play a particular song?" It was hard for Bhaskar to digest that ignorance.

I met him on at least four occasions, and every meeting was an enriching one. Once it was in Mount Abu, where I had gone for a Western Zone Cultural Centre's Governing Board Meet. It was a hot and dry evening. I entered a restaurant with my tiatrist friend, Remy Colaço, to gulp down a beer. Hardly were we seated when someone greeted me from behind in Konkani. The warm voice was of none other than Pandit Bhaskar Chandavarkar, who joined us to chat. We then talked on and on for hours. He made Remy sing, and applauded when he was done. Remy was so overwhelmed that he was almost in tears. Such was Bhaskar's humility.

Illustration by Govit Morajkar

Pragyaverse

For the Children, or Dreaming of Things Before They Happen

do you remember? all afternoon, we watch the light catch the hair on our arms. curl our fingers, cup them under brow bone, call them binoculars. a snail is as extraterrestrial as an elbow. seeds are magic. everything glitters, not just the movies. the best words jingle like tambourines. *octopus. hullabaloo. meldrop. moo.* we try on superhero, doctor, child and mother, before roles turn from outfit to outlook. remember this wonder when you sit in the dark and behold the glow of unfolding. for the next two hours, this is who you were born to become.

Poem of the Day by **Pragya Bhagat**

“I Don’t Scare Easily”

BY ROLAND MASCARENHAS

It’s Trisha De Niyogi’s first time at the International Film Festival of India, but she “doesn’t scare easily” from hard challenges. The Chief Operating Officer and Director at Niyogi Books, the acclaimed Delhi-based independent publisher, is in Panjim to take her publishing house into new territories like the film industry, acknowledging that “people are not reading enough books”.

“There is a great question whether publishing, if we don’t adapt, will survive in India. That is the big question,” says Niyogi, who is looking to innovatively build on her company’s rich legacy in illustrated books and memoirs.

At IFFI, Niyogi has had exploratory conversations with producers, acknowledging the growing trend of films and OTT series founded on books, and the desire to look for new source material. For evidence, the English literature enthusiast cites Alfred Hitchcock’s eight films based on novels between the 1930s and 1950s; and the Netflix hit *The Queen’s Gambit* (2020), which saw 62 million viewers in its first month, a viewer record for a limited series.

Despite this bullish perspective, this is clearly an orientation phase for her when working with directors and producers. It’s a “relationship-driven market”, she observes, and “honestly, a lot of filmmakers don’t read. There are very few filmmakers that thoroughly read books.”

So, Niyogi makes her work “compatible” for a different audience, providing a 15-pager, including a synopsis and a storyboard. “I don’t give them [filmmakers] the full story, I give them the premise, and leave it with them, saying, ‘now tell me, how do you want to end the story?’”

At IFFI, Niyogi pitches her author’s works to agents (“I know how to make a book, I don’t know how to make a movie”) who serve it up to producers. “For the last two years I have been trying, and have not been able to crack one director directly. Through agents, however, I have cracked several deals,” she says.

Niyogi Books core business remains in publishing, particularly in regional languages to English books. The company publishes between 70-100 books a year, with a minimum print of 1,100 copies in their first run, though most average around 2,000. The books range from art and culture to history, politics, and biographies.

Despite the global push to digital publishing, Niyogi remains confident of the physical version, noting that Indians like the touch-and-feel. There

is a “resurgence in demand for illustrated books” in a post-Covid world, which has unique audio-visual content not often found during a Google search.

She argues visual support tools for text — such as QR codes — will provide a growth opportunity for the publishing industry. Publishing has to develop “experiences” and “create interest through different formats”. “You can’t read art without looking at the art...these books will live for another 20 years,” she adds.

Despite the success of Geetanjali Shree’s Hindi novel “Tomb of Sand” winning the 2022 International Man Booker and other vernacular awards, this business hasn’t translated to success for Niyogi Books. English readers have perception issues about translated works, Niyogi says. Nonetheless, she anticipates stronger translations in future stories that resonate with urban audiences and yield greater readership. It helps that Niyogi herself knows four languages, and is working on a translation role.

There is also “great interest in the children’s space,” she notes. With most current material for youngsters being international, there is a clear desire for homegrown content, she

avers. When she isn’t traveling across the country to meet with authors and translators, De Niyogi can occasionally be found at her bookstore on Kolkata’s College Street. In an ode to the city’s book-loving history, she aims to transform it into a cultural hub, with free coffee and book discussions.



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

SHORT TAKES



I really liked *A Woman is a Woman* (1961) by Jean-Luc Godard, it gave me a sense of pride to be a woman. There was an important message told in a comedic way.

Anupama M
Dancer, Kerala



I really appreciate the excellent arrangements here at IFFI. If possible I would love to attend one of Satyajit Ray’s films.

P. Armugam
Director,
Bangalore



With the on-going decline in the film industry, IFFI is the best way to revive the culture of cinema and love for films.

Aruna Singh
Student, Manipal



I am here promoting my film *Belle & Sebastian*. I hope I can meet Indian distributors and filmmakers during my stay here.

Pierre Coré
Director, France

“Animation is Infinite”

BY NICOLE SUARES

“I don’t know this guy,” quips Mark Osborne pointing to a picture of his younger self on the screen behind him. The packed audience for his masterclass on ‘Animation as a Tool of Expression’ at the Maquinez Palace erupts in giggles. Osborne then took his audience through his life in films: he co-directed *Kung Fu Panda* (2008) which was nominated as Best Animated Feature at the Oscars and directed the 2016 Cesar Award winning *The Little Prince* (2015), an adaption of the famed novella by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

In India for the second time, Osborne told *The Peacock*, “I’m definitely blown away by the scale of IFFI. It’s amazing. Especially at the Film Bazaar, it reminds me of my experience at Cannes. It’s all about the love of cinema and there’s so much energy around that.”

Osborne is in town with BAFTA-winning and Oscar-nominated producer Jinko Gotoh looking to connect with potential collaborators for their new project. A tight-lipped secret at the moment, all he reveals is, “We are mid-way through it.”

He is not as acquainted with Indian films, but finds the thought of “working with teams here definitely intriguing”. “With animation, we can work globally. It’s amazing what we can do across time zones and continents,” he says.

“It’s so depressing when people look at animation in a narrow way,” he admits, “When they see it just for kids, they also miss out on the opportunity to experience great story-telling. It is not a genre. It’s a medium of expression. It is infinite.”

Osborne says “the filmmaker must bring out their personal journey. Find out what’s meaningful to you and it’s the honesty that creates the fresh story.” He talks about how he drew from his own personal connection to the book *The Little Prince*, which was

a gift from his then girlfriend (now wife) on their second date.

Osborne is hopeful about the future of animation. “It becomes easier to choose the right kind of stories, techniques, and tools to better express the story. To me, working exclusively on the computer is a limitation. I like the idea you can combine talents, ideas, and inspiration. I love the way a CG animator can refine a performance,” he says.

That said, he knows that the creative business is a tough one: “I have to be clear in what I believe and guide the team from a strong position. It is very difficult to do that when in truth, I don’t have all the answers. You have to be able to admit when you’re wrong. The best ideas come from the team.”

The career that’s won him many accolades wasn’t his first choice. “It took me a while to get into animation,” says Osborne. “I took Foundation Arts and a bunch of classes in photography, commercial design, and an animation class. I was following my instincts. I liked it as it combined all the things I enjoyed doing. I liked making things with my hands and it became the favourite way to create and collaborate.”

By Osborne’s own confession, he’s surprised with the results of much of his work. But what some call “luck”, he says is “a combination of hard work, collaborations that creates the good energy to attract better opportunities. When I was at California Institute of the Arts and I wanted a job, I made a bunch of reels on VHS tapes and my printed resume. I found addresses of different animation companies in a catalogue and mailed off letters to 20. I wanted to increase the chances of being at the right place at the right time. You can’t just sit in the chair and hope it comes to you. You have to put in the work and increase the chances it’ll happen.”



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

SHORT TAKES



I’m here promoting my film *Udd Jaa Nanhe Dil*. It is a story of innocence and what we as adults can learn from children. I am enjoying the vibe of the festival here.

Aishwarya Yadav
Producer, Delhi



I loved that *Piaffe* is a conceptually different movie that doesn’t just capture the usual human relationships.

Arvind Rao
Retired Manager,
Goa



I am here along with my friend to support the film *Udd Jaa Nanhe Dil*. It is a bit overwhelming trying to figure out our way around here, but it’s also exciting.

Alpa Shah
Resort Rio Hotel,
London



The world premiere of my film *Distance* is being held at IFFI this year. It was shot during the lockdown in an apartment with very few people.

Lars Knorrn
Director &
Writer, Germany

Meet The Schmidts

BY JONATHAN RODRIGUES

From filming their story in the wild sea caves off the coast of Mexico to premiering their movie in the seaside paradise of Goa, the Schmidt family admits they are “living a dream”. The filmmaking family, representing their movie *Island of Lost Girls* (2022) at the 53rd International Film Festival of India, describe their experience as “rewarding” and “exciting”.

“We were thrilled to know that our film was accepted at the festival. Our friends who have been here in the past said we need to dress up smart, and show up at these press conferences and red-carpet events. And we are just enjoying ourselves in Goa – a destination that my husband and I have wanted to visit as youngsters in love,” says the film director Ann-Marie, who is married to Brian, the producer.

The couple, originally based in San Diego, enrolled their three daughters – Autumn, Avila and Scarlet – to co-write, act, and co-produce the film, which is competing for the Best Feature Film of a Director award in the International Cinema category of IFFI 2022.

Shot in Mexico, the film explores an unknown side of the country’s landscape and wildlife.

“It does upset us to see Mexico being stereotypically portrayed for crime and drugs. I can’t say I felt the pressure to put out a different narrative, because this is quite natural for us. Mexico is not a foreign destination, but a place close to home,” says Brian.

Fourteen years of marriage doesn’t necessarily translate to teamwork for every couple, so for the director-producer duo to dive together into this career required “courage” and “collaboration”.

Ann-Marie says, “There is definitely chemistry between us. He is my best friend and we have realized we work well together.” Brian completes her sentiment: “Trust is crucial. There is no space for insecurity and ego in a close-knit team such as us, who all share non-professional lives together.”

Autumn, the eldest sibling, says “As a family, of course, I feel very comfortable working with my sisters and parents. I think we all remained open to everyone’s ideas and this film is certainly a celebration of collaboration. In fact, the characters we play in the film also reflect that spirit of togetherness and bonding, as a family.”

The cast and crew describe the movie as an intense adventure-thriller, where three young sisters who decide to wander onto an adventure find themselves adrift from the coast and trapped in a sea cave filled with crashing waves, hundreds of sea lions and monstrous elephant seals. “Shooting in nature was both magical and testing. Of course, we had no control over our animal casting; but with our kids we had to make sure they had all safety measures in place when doing their own stunts underwater,” says Brian.

The curiosity around the children’s schooling schedule is understandable considering this movie has been a work in progress for the past three years. Ann-Marie says, “We didn’t necessarily shoot every day and we made sure our passion project didn’t get in the way of their education. The whole journey of filming and travelling has also added richness to what they are already studying in school, so as a parent that is quite satisfying.”

Avila, the most-likely of the girls to pursue a career in acting, says she is getting used to the attention she gets from her friends in school. “Our friends watch the trailers sometimes and keep asking about the release date. It was tiring waiting for the release, but it was also fun working with my mum and dad, especially because we didn’t get scolded for forgetting our lines and we could recreate the script on the go.”

“And, the good part of working with family is, mommy and daddy were not allowed to be mean to us,” chirps the youngest actor on the cast, Scarlet.

Ann-Marie and Brian finished shooting over a year ago, but took their time to edit and present the finished product to the festivals, as they wanted to truly enjoy the fun and educative aspect of film festivals. “IFFI is our first festival in Asia and it feels fantastic. Being invited, to be able to present our film to a live audience and experience so many different cultures is a memory we will all cherish forever, as a family,” says Ann-Marie.

So, where next? Hollywood? The Oscars? Brian says, “Definitely not Hollywood, we have moved out of LA and want to bring up the kids in San Diego. We will continue to encourage the girls to follow their own path – if they wish to be actors, we will guide them on finding the right roles.”

“Hey, let’s not forget about our three boys – remember, they say they want the next movie to be an action thriller, featuring themselves,” says Ann-Marie, the proud mother of six.



Photo by Siddhartha Lall

Dreaming At IFFI

BY SAMIKSHA MANDURKAR

Scene Take Roll" says an artwork near the INOX theatre. When you watch the hundreds of hardworking team members coming together to bring this beautiful film festival to life, you just somehow know that behind their working minds there are other feelings and dreams too, as they view the goings-on from broader perspectives.

Over at the festival multiplex, one of the cleaning staff opens up to *The Peacock*. "While doing our cleaning chores all over here, who wouldn't like to glance at celebrities walking on the red carpet, right in front of our eyes? We never dreamed we would ever get to do this in all our lives." She has been enjoying four years of this surreal motivation as she works to keep the promenade litter-free.

"There are many handsome faces around taking my breath away! To add a little cherry on top of this, I get to interact with them!" Anushree Revanker at the help desk giggles in delight, before she is pulled back to her tasks.

Kshitija Gaonkar has been working for IFFI across many years. "Apart from getting to learn heaps of ways to do the particular tasks, I get to establish some concrete contacts with well-established filmmakers and directors, which helps me network with the film market. Over the years, I have gathered a treasure of contacts in my phonebook and life."

Hemant Parab, one of Goa's best known photojournalists, tells us that he enjoys directing the great directors attending IFFI as he coaxes them to pose better for his newspaper photographs. "These directors direct the highest paid actors, and I get

to direct them!" he says, with a big grin. "This actually boosts my morale to a huge extent. I get a different kind of satisfaction after the click."

"This is going to look great on my portfolio," said another IFFI team member. "We love to decorate our portfolios with all our mental medals we hope to achieve, and when we get through that, we go to bed with a sense of accomplishments for the day."

Shanu from RISS Security is all smiles as he turns to check the delegate pass of a film buff entering the venue. "Whether there is IFFI going on or not, I am always here at work. But the vibrancy around, and the happy faces walking on every side during this film festival definitely makes me very happy."

"I can't generally go to attend events or stay out late," confides a shy girl at the help desk. "But working at IFFI allows me to enjoy all the buzz of these glamorous events in a professional role."

That is how I feel as well. Though I am writing this debut article in *The Peacock*, my own career is in computer engineering.

When I heard there might be the possibility of ten days of glorious creative working and writing at this oldest and largest film festival in India, and to contribute to the festival daily newspaper that goes into the hands of film industry greats and illustrious visitors to our state, I too thought "that's going to look fabulous on my portfolio!"



Photos by Michael Praveen



“I Unlearn After Every Film”

BY IMPANA KULKARNI

If the actor cries, the audience cries. If the actor smiles, the audience smiles! Acting is a beautiful fraud!”

Nawazuddin Siddiqui's In Conversation session yesterday with Vina Tripathi, on his 'Journey as an actor' started immediately on a high note, satiating everyone's thirst for acting tips and life lessons, from a man who rose from a humble background to become what the IFFI website claims is “the only person in the world to have 8 of his films screened at the Cannes Film Festival”.

Nawaz confided he had to keep auditioning for 12 years until he got his break. “I had assumed that as a trained actor from the National School of Drama (NSD), I'd easily get opportunities in Mumbai. When I reached I realized, that was what they didn't want. Back then all I could think of was how to get enough food to be able to walk from Andheri to Bandra and back. My senior from NSD Piyush Mishra, always reminded us to learn to stand on our own. So I never stopped trying. Whether you have been auditioning for 5 years or 60 years, don't stop. If you hit success even after 60 years, would you not like it? If it is something you like, and you got the opportunity, you must not let yourself tire and sit down. Keep going!”

All the directors who came to teach his batch at NSD taught one common thing – to unlearn, each time. “One must start from zero. A century happens only from zero. I unlearn after every film, by going back to my village, where I am reminded of who I am and was before I became an actor. Of course, listening to my friends' abuses also helps!”

Nawaz strongly believes in the importance of training. “Any kind of performance should be of the highest quality. Everyone must train and hone their skills.” He remembers lessons learnt at NSD. “Dubeyji would say, ‘The camera will always show if you are thinking. Think of Madhuri Dixit if you have to, but don't be blank!’” He recollected how another teacher stressed the importance of timing in acting as well as life – ‘besura maaf hai, betaal nahi (offtune can be forgiven, offbeat never).’

Vani Tripathi, the moderator as well as his junior from NSD, deftly got Nawaz to unravel his acting experiences. “To me, no role is negative. All characters have their own justification for their ideology. For Manto, I had no videos, only photos and the director's inputs for reference. I had freedom to portray

my interpretation. I thought, what if ‘I’ am Manto? But for *Thackeray* (2019) there are photos and videos; people know him. I cannot mimic him. The challenge was to keep it realistic.”

Nawaz believes having fixed ideologies is detrimental for an actor. One must either flow like water or remain unaffected whatsoever. He needs the director to tell him everything about the character, and include it in the script as well. “I often get pages of dialogues, and no character description. I say, why waste two pages of dialogues when it can be conveyed through a single glance?”

He also wondered out loud, “What is the criteria for watching films?” He finds it pathetic when actors talk about box office revenues, instead of the quality of acting. One point he especially wanted to bring to light was about chaotic public shoots. “We just don't know how to maintain silence. I find it very difficult when in such a situation the director calls us and says action, amidst such noise. We aren't computers! People need to understand this.”

Nawaz' life's principles are simple. “There is nothing in my life that I got through luck. Whatever I got, is all through hard work.” He says money doesn't matter to him. “The thing about money is, you have to kick it to make it fall at your feet.” He keeps a tight circle of friends who strive to remain updated with the latest news in their field. He believes it's only difficulties that will help you rise, so they must keep coming! And finally, what does matter the most? ‘To be able to act and stand before the camera’ for Nawaz. “I don't need any wellness centre to regain my focus. My concentration is maximum when I am acting.”



Photo by Michael Praveen

SHORT TAKES



The movies so far at the festival are simply superb but trying to book specific films can be quite difficult. So I just watch whatever I can get.

Filomena Menezes Dias
Spiritualist, Goa



I'm going to attend *Have you seen this woman?*, a film from Serbia/Croatia. I am looking forward to attending the masterclasses of Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Vani Tripathi.

Lasya Nagraj
Actor, Bangalore



It is really amazing to be here in this kind of atmosphere to watch great films and I also love all the fashion and trends you see around.

Kasher Chatoo
Ophthalmologist, London



Watching *Nargesi* made me realise that we as a society haven't made a safe space for the emotional needs of people with disabilities.

Maria Thompson
Actor, London

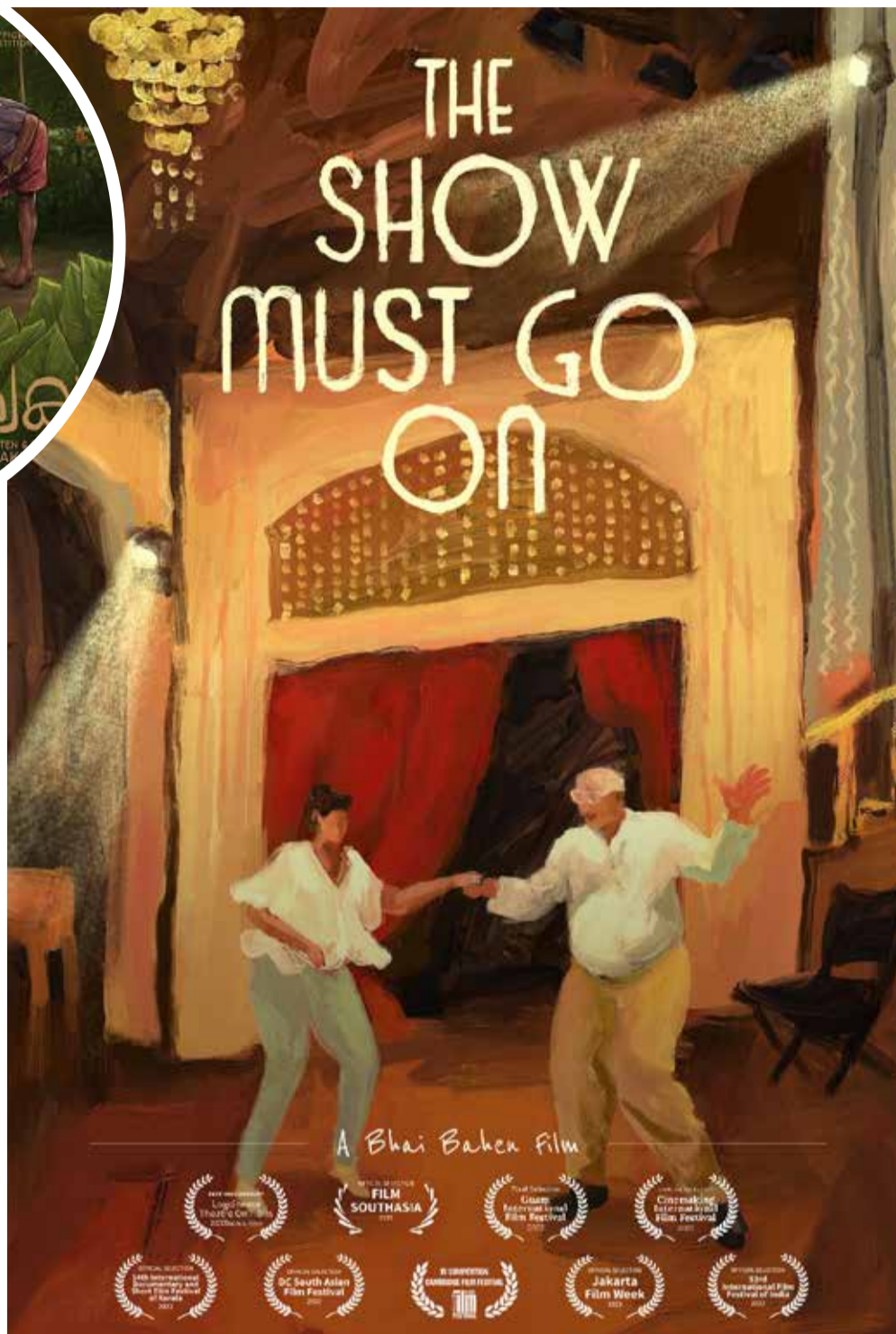
The Poetic Problem



BY RUKMINEE GUHA THAKURTA

According to the great Parisian designer of the Art Deco period, Cassandre, a poster has to contain the solution to three problems: an optical problem, a graphic problem, and a poetic problem. A poster must be designed to be visible—to stand out—as a result of a relationship between forms. That is the optical problem. It is obliged to get its message across rapidly and for this it must draw from the vocabulary of the graphic arts: the graphic problem. It is a combination of the word and the image, and its objective is to create very simple mental associations around these that must be unforgettable. A poster, therefore, has to trigger an emotion. An obsessive one that draws the viewer close to it and this, according to Cassandre, is the poetic problem.

It was only at the end of the 19th century, when developments in lithographic printing enabled colour images to be mass produced cheaply, that the poster, as we know it today, first began to appear. With the advent of printmaking in India, a new kind of art emerged as a result of Western influences and industrial techniques. In Calcutta, a hub was formed in the vicinity of the Kalighat temples consisting of migrant village scroll painters or *patuas*, wood and metal engravers, and oil painters of mythologies. These groups operated near small Bengali printing presses at Bat-tala and formed the core



of the flux in techniques and styles. In Bombay, Raja Ravi Varma, one of India's first modern artists, started a lithographic press in 1894 where he produced his famed oleographs.

Elsewhere, in France, where printmaking flourished, visually arresting posters were so ubiquitous and large in size that by the 1880s a law was passed to restrict their use and the consequent

defacing of buildings. Toulouse-Lautrec's work was a major contribution to the history of poster design establishing it firmly as an art form.

Art Deco, the generic term used to describe the decorative arts of the 1920s and 30s was inspired by avant-garde artistic movements such as Cubism and the Bauhaus. Posters of the time are among the most visually striking ever

made with emphatically modern forms, simplified typography using sans serif type, and colours chosen for maximum visual impact. Posters from this period are unprecedented in their simplicity with large blank areas that lead to a strong focus on the subject.

While browsing through the Indian Panorama section of IFFI I was particularly struck by two film posters. They stood out among many, mainly because they were illustrated while all the others used still photographs. Both can be stylistically linked to some of the periods and artists I mention above. The poster for *Veetilekku*, director and producer Akhil Dev M's film, reminded me partially of photorealism and of Raja Ravi Varma's oeuvre. In it a woman draped in a sari is represented against a landscape setting using an academic style with a gentle interplay of light, shade, perspective, and earthy colours. The Malayalam letterforms of the film title are neither elegantly written nor coloured to stand out, but they nevertheless work as organic forms designed to blend in with the large foliage that supports them. The dusky sky reflects the moody expression on the woman's face drawing us into her interiority. The tableau suggests an emotionally affecting film.

The Show Must Go On, director and producer Divya Cowasji's film, has a poster made by Richa Kashelkar, a Goa-based artist, that is clearly inspired by art and type from the Art Deco period. Two central dancing figures, rendered with broad, uneven strokes that evoke oil paints, are the main focus amidst props and lights for a play. A rounded geometric typeface, reminiscent of Bauhaus typefaces such as the ones that were used on posters for *The Great Gatsby*, is hand-drawn for the title and placed directly above the dancing figures.

A warm palette of reds, oranges, yellows, and browns is used to cast an all-enveloping glow over the scene giving us a very fair idea of what to expect in the film. I was intrigued enough to watch it and it was exactly what the poster had primed me for—a warm, comforting and humorous portrait of a community of actors shot in *cinéma vérité* style—a perfect poster that draws us in and elegantly solves the poetic problem.

SHORT TAKES



I am eager to see how people greet the Asia premiere of my film – *Ordinary Failures*. I am enchanted by the weather and energy at IFFI.

Cristina Grosan
Director,
Hungary



The festival is a good opportunity. The only unsatisfying thing is that I could not book films I really want to watch, like *Triangle of Sadness*.

Khem Paudel
Cinematographer,
Meghalaya



I am glad I got to watch Claire Denis' film *Both Sides of the Blade* as I would have missed out on a masterpiece and Juliette Binoche's acting.

Diti Pujara
Journalist,
Bangalore



IFFI is an excellent place, not just for films but also for stories and marketing. It is an eye opening experience for what's new in India and around the world.

Lalitha Ravindran
Literary agent,
Pune

Breaking The Fourth Wall



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

BY LINA VINCENT

In 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, I began a 'Live' on Instagram; for the first time I pushed myself out of my technophobic existence, and learned how to use a new-age tool. It began with the idea of connecting with people, when we were all isolated within our bubbles. A young photographer and filmmaker instructed me to look into the little dot of the camera on my phone, to make sure the viewers would know I was looking at them, and not at my image. Subsequently, I used that important piece of advice on the correct 'gaze' in other online talks and engagements. Virtual interaction breaks that crucial distinction between private and public, when people can peek into your background and see more of your life.

In a connected vein, I remember an intimate theatre program I attended, organised in the living room of a home. The group had devised a play that allowed the actors to interact with the space and the people around,

intermittently asking them questions, and bringing their responses into impromptu shifts in the dialogue. This experimental space brought about an intense connection that is not generally experienced when one is sitting far away and the actors are out of reach.

I first became properly cognizant of the notion of 'breaking the fourth wall' with the rantings of the foul-mouthed protagonist in *Deadpool* (2016). It was a concept that I was peripherally aware of, from films like *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) and the *Austin Powers* franchise, and I just hadn't paid enough attention to it. It is not a common practise, and has been used only by a few directors. Originating in the context of theatre, the fourth wall is a technical term for the imaginary wall that exists between stage and audience. It applies also to the screen or camera in video and film. It works well sometimes, and in some cases it has been heavily criticised – as it seems to have been with *Enola Holmes* (2020, 2022).

It was mind-blowing therefore to watch Godard's *A Woman is a Woman*

(1961), in which the usage of breaking the fourth wall is spectacular, and enjoyably disruptive. Jean-Luc Godard (1930-2022) has been called the most revolutionary and influential filmmaker in the post-war period. A director, film critic, and screenwriter, he was the pioneer of methods and techniques that broke convention in the French New Wave cinema movement in the 60s, along with a few others. The master of Indian cinema, Satyajit Ray (1921–1992) said, "Godard has been both dismissed summarily, and praised to the skies, and the same films have provoked opposite reactions. This is inevitable when a director consistently demolishes sacred conventions, while at the same time packing his films with obviously striking things." (Satyajit Ray on Cinema, Columbia University Press, 2013)

With the focus on France this IFFI, audiences have been able to experience the power of Godard's filmmaking with several films on show. In *'A Woman is a Woman'* Angela, the female lead, is a stripper in a club keen on conceiving a baby with her boyfriend, who refuses;

she is also being pursued by his friend, whom she flirts with. The ensuing drama presents a great deal of absurdity and purposeful discontinuity in sound and visual, that makes a viewer stop and think, and engage with the story in different ways than usual. The fourth wall is also repeatedly broken in *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965), another New Wave masterpiece about a couple on the run. It is considered to be the epitome of Jean-Luc Godard's craft, both technically as well as in the socio-cultural context.

In our times, I'd like to think of breaking the fourth wall in a wider, symbolic sense. The world is in dire need of innovative thinking about the massive issues raised by climate change, conflict, and migration. There is a necessity to leave behind conventions, do things differently and without fear – if not in fantastic Godard style, at least halfway there. Reflecting on the sometimes pervasive atmosphere of suspicion and hatred that is an aftermath of political and social hierarchies, we need to reach out across barriers, connect, build synergies, share and embrace across ALL walls.



50 Shades Of Grey

The First Smart City

Indians have become used to thinking about Panjim as the tiny capital of the country's smallest state, on the periphery of the giant subcontinental polity that is most likely already the most populous country in the world (official projections say the milestone will occur a few months from now in 2023). Do not be deceived by the contemporary statistical insignificance, however, because this lovely riverfront city is profoundly imbued with unique social, cultural and economic contexts that set it apart in world history. And when 'Nova Goa' (as it was first known) was purposefully established 180 years ago, it was centrepiece to an extensive maritime empire extending from Macau to Mozambique, and beyond to Europe and the Americas.

So many things we associate with modern India happened here before anywhere else: the first municipality, the first public library, the first school for girls (two years before Savitribai Phule's much more famous institution in Maharashtra), the first medical college (in the same imposing building where the International Film Festival of India is headquartered), and the first planned city built on a grid.

What you need to know – and always remember above all else – is that Panjim is the civilizational statement of self-confident and assertive Goans who had already achieved the upper hand in the balance of power within the erstwhile Estado da India. Nothing quite like this happened in any other part of the world.

In this regard, Richard Burton's biliously funny 1851 travelogue, *Goa and the Blue Mountains: Six Months of Sick Leave* is most instructive. Written when the archetypical Victorian imperialist was just 26 – it's only the first of at least 40 more books including the first translation of the *Kamasutra* into English – this highly entertaining text bristles with umbrage about how badly

the Portuguese had supposedly bungled race relations, with dangerous implications for other Europeans. "The black Indo-Portuguese is an utter radical," fumes Burton, "he has gained much by Constitution, the "dwarfish demon" which sets everybody by the ears at Goa. Equality allows them to indulge in a favourite independence of manner utterly at variance with our Anglo-Indian notions concerning the proper demeanour of a native towards a European."

What the Raj-era racist is referring to is the host of liberal reforms initiated by Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the First Marquis of Pombal, who was chief minister to King Joseph I in the 18th century. Influenced by Enlightenment thought, he purposefully smashed the existing feudal hierarchies, and wrought total change in Goa by replacing the entire judiciary and civil administration, and expelling the all-powerful Jesuits. This new paradigm ushered American and French revolutionary political thought into South Asia, along with the universal aspiration for "liberté, égalité, fraternité." That is when Goans – not all, but many – became full citizens, and the first Indians to vote for their own representatives in parliament.

The rise of Panjim is the defeat of Old Goa, and also perfectly encapsulates the bigger and broader defeat of the colonials within the framework of their own titular possession. From this point in, the contours of the state remained fixed, but Goans remade culture and society to suit their own preoccupations. Hinduism surged back into the public sphere, and every form of cultural expression flourished: art, music, architecture, cuisine. All this is writ both large and small in the city around us, and further expressed

in several signature public artworks. The lovely illustration accompanying this column – by 22-year-old city resident Chloe Cordeiro – pays tribute to an especial favourite, which you can encounter just minutes upriver along the Mandovi waterfront.

- VIVEK MENEZES



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro



23rd
NOVEMBER
2022

IN CONVERSATION
'CHANGING PHASE OF ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY AND HOW TO BREAK INTO THIS INDUSTRY'
11:00 - 12:30

Moderator: Komal Nahta

Speakers: Kabir Khan

Mahaveer Jain

Luv Ranjan

Aanand Rai

Ananya Birla

IN CONVERSATION
'HOW TO CARVE YOUR NICHE'
15.00 - 16.30

Moderator: Himesh Mankad

Speakers: Varun Sharma

Mrighdeep Singh Lamba

MASTERCLASS
'PERFORMING FOR SCREEN AND THEATRE'
17:30 - 19:00

Moderator: Pankaj Dubey

Speaker: Anupam Kher

THE PEACOCK QUARTERLY
IS ON **SALE NOW!**

HEAD TO THE FESTIVAL
QUADRANGLE TO GRAB YOUR
COPY, WHILE THEY LAST.

For today's striking and very beautiful cover, Praveen Naik situates our favourite bird against the multimedia background of sloping terracotta-tiled rooftops that characterize old Goan houses, as well as the iconic *soldado* rooftop figurine that – most experts agree – originally signified the occupants included someone in the military.

