



**Brahmaputra Cultural Foundation
(BCF)**

presents

a human endeavour

(a NOI production)

a human endeavour

The performance "A Human Endeavour" is an attempt and an exploration to dramatize Mary Shelley's 1831 introduction to her book, Frankenstein.

Since the text was never written or published by the author as a dramatic piece meant for the stage, it is all the more challenging to give it shape and form. The performance uses the physicality of the body as a medium, in motion and stillness, to highlight the emotional connect between emotion and action using the method of Physical Theatre / Dance Theatre / Movement Art by Shilpika Bordoloi.



shelley's introduction to frankenstein

"When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw - with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, - I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken. He

would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench forever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bed-side, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.

I opened mine in terror. The idea so possessed my mind, that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around...

Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me. "I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; and I need only describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow." On the morrow I announced that I had thought of a story."



about mary shelley

It would do well to keep in mind that Mary Shelley came from a very literary stock – the daughter of two persons of great literary distinction and hence, writing and creation was perhaps, an inherent gift in her.

Her teenage years were also the great age of tremendous awakening of alternative thought in and around Europe... Darwin, the questioning of creation, science and the church, free thought, philosophy, explorations in literature, poetry and drama.

More importantly being around and being privy to some of the great minds of that time and that era – all this would have had a profound effect on her own, highly intelligent, creative and independent mind.



It was in 1816 that she and her boyfriend (later she married him) Percy Shelley were in Switzerland and became neighbours of Lord Byron. Between their many interactions, talk invariably turned to Darwinism and ghost stories and existence of life without divine creation.

In her own words, once after she and the others had gone through some German ghost stories that had been translated into French, Lord Byron said – “We will each write a ghost story”. This then, was the beginning of the idea, which gave birth to Frankenstein.

synopsis of the play

The body is not only the physical manifestation of the living culture but also a site of cultural networks linking the practice and structures of power. In the process of creation somewhere the path becomes art.



This performance is not just an embodiment of the text as was written by the writer but a play in the context of the current socio-political climate in the world using the physicality of the body as a medium, in motion and stillness, to highlight the organic connect between emotion and action.

shilpika's note:

Stories of transformation have always fascinated me. I love the fact that in the process of transformation we are truly alive, finding a respect, worth and creating value. In the body we are always transforming, our cells are alive active and our various systems are in this process of transformation - food eaten is digested and then excreted, breath taken in mixes inside and the unwanted is released. Our mind is an immense palate of images, memories, dualities, patterns, conditioning ... this conscious process of looking deep into our thoughts and an awareness to let go, retain, detach and attach is such a discovery of the self. I love engaging with my body through movement yoga and dance. It is my expression, meditation, celebration and my process of growth and discovery. It is my way of life!



I had studied Frankenstein during my graduation time at MSR Delhi University and I loved it as a book. Much later when I was going through a phase of recovery, post a road accident and a personal catharsis, I chanced upon a book of monologues and read Mary Shelley's introduction on how she came upon this idea to write her book. Her write-up stirred me and I went deeper into it

It was to me a story of transformation...here was a young girl, 18 years old, who had a nightmare and could transform that into a powerful creative work. Her

personal life was fascinating too in such patriarchal times that she lived in as a woman writer trying to make her mar. Personally, I resonated because it was a time of deep fear and anxiety in my life and I began to research of my body to express those words of hers. A few years later as I was going through a time of personal catharsis and I re-visited and re-imagined this performance. Also, today in the times of numerous social problems this piece has evolved as an expression of our times too.

A Human Endeavour is based on Mary Shelley's prose piece that I have adapted to a dramatic piece for performance. Mary Shelley to me is any woman who has lived a nightmare of molestation, rape, violence, bad marriages, messy divorces, attempts of suppression of any kind, social injustice, prejudices body-shaming harassment, fears or anxiety of being an outcast, widow mistreatment, dowry, stigma during menstruation, slut-shaming and bearing the brunt of social rituals, etc But this woman can transform that nightmare to her advantage. She has the resilience, capacity, courage, knowledge and strength to hold on to the trauma, deal with it and emerged with power, pride, grace, beauty, wisdom, bliss and love.



A Human Endeavour is also about a humanity that is plunging deeper and deeper into crisis. We are blessed with an unprecedented technological paradise. The door is opening up to an age of supercomputers, helping us to organize our complicated societies and modified ecology, supercomputers to minimize energy waste, robots to transform work not fit for humans and thereby increasing our

lifespan and leisure time too. New medical solutions are evolving, and a time might come when we migrate to other planets as ancients migrated to new lands. However, on the flip side is the inability of humans to cope with advancement and destruct as a result ...

Our actions seem to take us even farther from the land and everything that is intrinsic to it. We are altering the courses of rivers, dumping waste into the oceans, turning up the heat, melting glaciers, burning forests and attempting to control every aspect of nature. India eager to grow and push forward into the "developed" world is all out to do whatever it takes to get there



A Human Endeavour looks at the over-reaching innovator too who fails to think through the consequences of his creation. Though in this book this character is a researcher-doctor-scientist Victor Frankenstein, here this character is any politician, creator, businessman, spiritual leader who was erred deeply in his failure to see the larger picture

A Human Endeavour attempts to share an experience and ask the questions of what we do, our actions/karma and in the process also ask who we are and how it is for us individually and collectively.

trailer

Link - <https://vimeo.com/320179508>

Password – aheth12345

touring details

SCALE OF VENUE: Mid to Large

DURATION: 60 - 64 Mins.

FORMAT: Mostly non-verbal. Partly in Assamese and English

MIN. PERFORMANCE AREA: 30'w x 20'd

COMPANY MEMBERS: 11 performers | 2 Tech (1 Light | 1 Sound) | 2 Backstage | 1 Singer |
Total: 16 people

ACCOMMODATION: For 16 people for 2-3 nights depending upon the schedule and distance from the base for 1 performance. Each additional performance will require 1 additional night of accommodation.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION: Technical specifications as mentioned below. All lighting / sound hires and projection are the responsibility of the local venue.

DAYS IN THEATRE: Day before Get in, Performance day, Strike on same evening.

AGE SUITABILITY: Suitable for 13+ year olds

stage | general requirements

Stage Size: 13 M (W) x 12 M (D)

Floor: Wooden Flooring. Floor should have no nails, splinters etc. Floor material will be carried by the group, put on stage and then dismantled once performance is over

Backdrop: White and Black Cyclorama. NO advertisements/ logos on any part of the stage including backdrop/ wings/ underside of stage

Wings: 3 Black Wings on each side (4 Ft Wide X 10 Ft High covered with Black mask)

Green Room: 1 for Ms. Shilpika Bordoloi | 1 for Females | 1 for Males. Quick change rooms required on both side of the stage.

Rake: Stage to have NO RAKE. Should be marked as per water level

Entry | Exit: To be marked with glow | white tape. Staircase on both side in case of outdoor built up stage

Others: Ironing Board | Snacks | Bottled Water | Tea – Coffee | First Aid Kit

technical requirements

Light

QUANTITY	PARTICULARS	SPECIFICATIONS
3	Sharpys	
24	Par can	
10	PC	
5	LED	
1	Strobe	
2	Smoke / Haze Machines	Good quality liquid
1	Projector	5000 lumens
1	Light Board	As required
TBC	Generators Power Supply	As per the load

LIGHT PLAN - Available upon request.

Sound

QUANTITY	PARTICULARS	SPECIFICATIONS
1	Headphone	
1	Microphone	Sound for live music
1	Cordless mike	For vocalist
3 pairs	Monitors	1 in control room, 2 on stage
5	Foot Mikes	1000 watt
2	Jack to Jack cables	6.5mm, For sound card
1	Mixer	Minimum 6 channel
1	Amplifier	
1	Front speaker	
1	Back speaker	As monitor
TBC	Laptop	Sound source will be laptop
TBC	Sound Console	As required

shilpika bordoloi

Brought up in Jorhat, Assam, Shilpika Bordoloi's initiation to dance started very early. At the age of three, she began her training in the Indian Classical dance form of Manipuri under Guru Rathindra Sinha and later on with Padmashree Darshana Jhaveri. Then she went on to study Bharatanatyam under Padmashree Leela Samson, and later worked in her company, Spandan from 2003-2004. Gradually, she went into the world of Martial Arts and is trained in Chi-Gong, Martial Arts (Chinese and Korean) including Tai-Ji-Quan

under Sensei Rashid Ansari along with Voice and Theatre Movement.

She holds a master's degree in English Literature from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi.

She has spent considerable amount of time, travelling along



the river Brahmaputra and researching on her multi-media project called "Katha Yatra". She is a visiting faculty to National School of Drama (NSD), NSD (Theatre-in-Education Wing) and School of Film and Television (SIFT). She is also actively involved in yoga and is a certified yoga teacher providing workshops to people of different backgrounds.

Shilpika has received India's most prestigious National Young Artist Award. She has been conferred the Sangeet Natak Akademy Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar in 2015 for contemporary/experimental dance. She is the founder member of Brahmaputra Cultural Foundation and has created a Centre of cultural exchanges called NOI at Jorhat, Assam. She is the playwright, lead performer and director of A Human Endeavour, a play which has also been showcased by the National School of Drama as part of its Bharat Rang Mahotsav 2020.

brahmaputra cultural foundation

Brahmaputra Cultural Foundation (BCF) is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 2013 whose mission is to preserve and promote cultural traditions of North-east India and showcase the best practices in the field of performing and visual arts from all over the world.

The Foundation aims at striking a balance between the flows of traditional and modern knowledge and addresses the social, cultural and developmental conflicts. Cultural exchanges, residencies, workshops, research-based work have been the core areas so far. Through its NOI Center, it teaches dance, folk songs, music, theatre, folk instrument making, and Yoga. BCF has produced Shilpika's work such as Majuli and A Human Endeavour, both of which have received widespread recognition. BCF also runs community-based initiatives on arts and culture in nearby districts. It has plans of opening a larger institution in Kaziranga, Assam.



credits

Direction | Playwright | Choreography | Costume | Performance: *Shilpika Bordoloi*

Musician | Sattriya Dance : *Paramananda Kakoti Borbayan*

Light Design | Production Assistant: *Ronal Hussain*

Music Design | Operation: *Arnab Basista*

Assamese translation: *Promud Borah*

Backstage: *Adith AK*

Production: *Ankur Pegu*

On Stage: *Bulki Kalita, Utpala Das, Shyamalima Dutta, Anahita Amani Singh, Dipankar Sabukdhara, Debojit Dutta, Srimanta Borah, Monjil Kalita, Sunil Bora, Nilansh Trikha*

contact

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