

Ten years ago, a student at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB) asked one of his teachers – Prof. Ramnath Narayanswamy – “Why not a course on arts, business and ethics for management students?” Prof. Narayanswamy was impressed with the idea and turned to IFA for help in designing and offering such a programme. Since then, students at IIMB have been signing up in large numbers every year for a ten-week course called **Tracking Creative Boundaries (TCB)** which brings artists from many different fields right into their classroom. Among many others, writers UR Ananthamurthy and MT Vasudevan Nair, Hindustani vocalists Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur and Vidya Rao, visual artists Gulammohammed Sheikh and Atul Dodiya, filmmakers Kumar Shahani and RV Ramani, and performers Alarmel Valli and P. Jayachandran have presented their creative biographies, shared the ideas underlying their work, and talked about the possible relevance of artistic perspectives for the field of management. **TCB** has also introduced a host of younger artists to IIMB students including musician Preetam Koilpillai, publisher-writer Sirish Rao, theatre director Zubin Driver, designer Avinash Veeraraghavan, and poet Vivek Narayanan.

Films, performances, paintings and poetry have entered the management classroom along with these speakers. These works have been introduced and analyzed either by the artist herself or by invited critics, curators and teachers.

In this edition’s **Slant, Stance** we put a few questions to Prof. Ramnath Narayanaswamy about what he thinks have been the notable things about **TCB** – apart from the fact that it continues to be the only course of its kind in the country.

Anjum Hasan
Communications Editor

Recent projects

Theatre and film have been the focus of four recent IFA grants.

Filmmaker Kamal Swaroop has been involved in a lifelong project on Dadasahib Phalke – not an exercise in resuscitating a ‘forgotten’ figure but an attempt to infuse Phalke’s eclectic and dynamic spirit into the contemporary Indian imagination. Two earlier IFA grants helped Kamal to plan and undertake workshops on writing, film and design in order to create a screenplay for a film on Phalke. A new grant will fund him to make a documentary based on footage he has shot during these workshops.

In Kalyani, West Bengal, theatre director Kishore Sengupta and his group Kalyani Natyacharcha Kendra are rehearsing a play based on a Sankho Ghosh poem called ‘Baborer Prarthana’. An IFA grant will help the group mount this montage-like production that weaves episodes from the life of Babur and the poet with images of the contemporary political turbulence the world over.

Veteran arts filmmaker RV Ramani, whose ‘Nee Engey’, a moving portrait of the leather shadow puppeteers South India, was earlier funded by IFA, now turns his attention to the work of Chennai-based theatre group Kooth-p-pattrai (KPP). KPP is known for

And young filmmaker Bharath Murthy will merge his interest in Indian comics with his interest in film by researching the

In the Public Eye

Performance

We're delighted to report that **Cotton 56, Polyester 84**, a play on the history and culture of Mumbai's mill-workers, which was developed with IFA support, directed by Sunil Shanbag and written by Ramu Ramnathan has recently won the **META (Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards)** for Best Play, Best Original Script, and Best Actor (Nagesh Bhonsle). The play was performed as part of the awards event on March 8 at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi.

Sunil Shanbag says "For all of us from Cotton 56 the META award for Best Play is a recognition of the kind of theatre we do – a theatre of ideas, but also a theatre that is not afraid to bare its soul. The award is also important because it vindicates the tremendous support we have had from the very beginning -- from IFA, which displayed great faith, to all our friends and colleagues in the theatre across the country. "

For more on the play visit <http://www.wavemag.com.np/issue/article2049.html>

The Hare and the Tortoise, the latest production from the Veenapani Chawla-led Adishakti theatre group, was part of the National School of Drama's Bharat Rang Mahotsav in January. This IFA-funded production was described in a review in **The Hindu** as "brilliantly conceived and executed" and as a performance that "vividly brought home [how] music, dance, movement, craft forms, dialogue [can be] integrated in one performance language".

Graphic Novel launch

The just-released **The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers (Penguin India)**, Sarnath Banerjee's second graphic novel, is the result of an IFA grant made in 2001. What started out as a documentary comic book on Calcutta's street life, its popular culture, and its colonial past has eventually become an ambitious novel that uses the legend of the Wandering Jew to weave together a story about eccentric zamindars in 18th century Bengal, the foibles of the present day Calcuttan, colonial scandals and personal history.

On March 12, IFA and Penguin India organized 'The Barn's Owl Abandoned Opera' at the Park Hotel, Bangalore – a performance by actor Nakul Krishna based on the book. The overflowing crowds at the performance matched similarly large turnouts at launches in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai, and sealed Sarnath's reputation as an Indian pioneer of the graphic novel.

Resource Book for Arts Education

Many school students in the Chamrajanagar district of Karnataka have never handled crayons in their lives and are not sure what to do when asked to draw. The District Quality Education Project (DQEP) of the Sociology and Social Anthropology Unit at Bangalore's National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) has been involved for some time now in making elementary education "accessible, enjoyable and significant" in this district.

One of the goals of the arts-in-education component of this Project (funded by IFA) has been to create teaching materials and train elementary school teachers to use the arts in the classroom. On January 5, an **arts teaching resource book in Kannada** authored by Jane and Roshan Sahi with inputs from the DQEP team, was released at a function in Bangalore by the Secretary, Primary and Secondary Education, Government of Karnataka, Mr. T.M. Vijaybhaskar. IFA is exploring the possibility of funding other institutions involved in arts education to translate this resource book into the languages they work with.

Jagan Shah's seminar

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan event **Our Events**

The master of the sarod and IFA patron Ustaad Amjad Ali Khan, and his sons Ayaan and Amaan Ali, perform in support of IFA at the Taj Banjara in Hyderabad on the evening of December 21.

Announcements

Kalyani Natyacharcha Kendra's **Baborer Prarthana** will premiere at Academy of Fine Arts Auditorium, Kolkata on April 5 at 6.30 pm. Another show is scheduled for April 7 at the same venue.

Adishakti's **The Hare and the Tortoise** will play at Rangshankara Theatre, Bangalore, on April 13, 14, and 15.

Slant, Stance

Prof. Ramnath Narayanswamy of Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore gives us views on why an arts course for management students is a very good idea.

1. IIMB has been offering "Tracking Creative Boundaries" for a decade now. What do you think has been the single most valuable thing about bringing artists into a classroom full of budding managers?

Ramnath Narayanswamy: Hmmm! A sense of wonder, astonishment and curiosity of how much the world of the arts has to offer to the world of management and the world of management to the world of the arts. Over the years, I am persuaded that TCB actually helps to widen the intellectual canvas of aspiring managers by bringing them in contact with the world that they are unlikely to engage in their professional lives.

More often than not they appear to appreciate the course years after they graduate from the institution and while this used to surprise me in the early years, it does not now. On the contrary it is perfectly understandable. TCB is course where the experiential component is very high as opposed to class room learning which is normally driven by literature in the form of readings and case studies.

2. IFA has helped to design and offer TCB since its inception. What do you think accounts for the success of this unlikely collaboration between an arts philanthropy and a management school?

RN: The credit really goes to the IFA and less to ourselves. Ten years ago when the IFA was involved in the Theatre Development Lab involving about a dozen theatre groups from all over the country, some the groups had expressed a need to incorporate some managerial inputs in their working. I was asked to attend a five day workshop in Pachmari where the idea of introducing a course in creativity was first conceived. The other source was my students. I had received some feedback from a number of them to introduce a course on the arts, business and ethics. This impelled me to seek the IFA out and ask for its help.

3. The focus of the course has been on inculcating a creative approach to problem solving in the field of management. Have you found that your students are also interested in the exposure to a range of contemporary artists and their art? How significant has this sort of learning been?

RN: That our students have enjoyed the kind of exposure they get from various art expressions, there is not the slightest element of doubt. A number of them have a keen interest in music, photography, cinema and dance. The course also challenges them to re-examine their idea of management and the elements that contribute to creating an effective manager. One compelling idea that stands out in TCB every year is that risk-taking is an essential ingredient of managerial practice. Aspiring managers often tend to insulate themselves against risk. One cannot really blame them as practicing managers are susceptible to the same charge! Self transformation is another.

4. What is your vision for TCB as it enters its second decade?

RN: I have done a fair bit of tacit thinking on this subject. Perhaps we need to spin a new and different course of Arts Management? That is to say, identify a set of themes that are common to the arts and bring them together as an elective course. The objective of the course would lie in articulating the challenges in the arts and sensitize managers to engaging them.

Tracking Creative Boundaries (TCB) is organised within a time frame of ten weeks with two sessions each week devoted to bringing artists from diverse art expressions to share their creative autobiographies with potential managers. It is an elective course in the Indian

Institute of Management Bangalore offered to MBA students in the second year of their course. It is a product of collaboration between the IIMB and the India Foundation for the Arts. It was offered for the first time in 1996 and is currently running its fourth avatar at the IIM.

When we inaugurated TCB a little more than three years ago, we were prompted by a desire to (a) expose our students to the creative process, (b) inculcate in them a respect for creative approaches to problem-solving in their respective vocations, and (c) help them tap their own creative energies by involving them in a dialogue with artists from varied art expressions who are deeply embedded in their professional pursuits.

We began TCB this year with a design that was different from the three years that had preceded it. In the first year (1996), the course was anchored almost completely on creative biographies. The second year (1997), we decided to combine creative biographies with workshops on drawing, improvisation and design and the latter was subject to evaluation. The third year (1998) we decided to combine creative biographies with sessions on the form and language of different art forms that were designed to sensitise the audience to issues embedded in the artistic vocation of the autobiographer.