

Women on top

This weekend, Lillete Dubey gets her latest directorial venture underway with *Where Did I Leave My Purdah* while Nandita Das will make her directorial debut with the play *Between The Lines*. Soma Das goes backstage



A still from *Where Did I Leave My Purdah*

AROUND TOWN

CURTAIN CALL

Theatre veteran Lillete Dubey's latest play, *Where Did I Leave My Purdah*, is set in the world of theatre and cinema against a background of 50 years of history, including the Partition. It's the story of an actress and the struggles in her personal and professional life, told against a background of socio-political history. Written by Mahesh Dattani, the play is directed by and stars Dubey.

Dubey leads us in, "Mahesh and I have talked for long about doing a play set in the world of performing arts, especially theatre, since this is a world we have inhabited and loved for over three decades. Besides, there are hardly any original English plays written set against this background."

The theme and setting as well as the intimate backstage world of theatre fascinated Dubey: "What happens behind the purdah (the stage curtain), how that impacts an actor's life and how the real and stage world collide to provide humour and drama, are elements anyone can relate to. The play is a tribute to feisty, strong, passionate actresses, who have given their life to the stage and the creative spirit that drives them."

While there isn't an overt message, Dubey wants to make people aware of the world around them, make them look at things from a fresh perspective, increase their understanding of relationships and alter their perceptions a little.

Admitting that it is difficult to juggle acting and directing, she says it has become easier, over the years. "I use my fellow actors as my audience who give me feedback. Since I can't see myself, I also try to visualise scenes I am acting in from the outside."

As a director, Dubey believes that she unconsciously chooses women-oriented scripts, which boast of strong female roles.

"Since there are fewer women directors than men, it is an opportunity to put on stage plays with powerful women-related themes but I have done plays with strong male roles and stories too such as *Sammy*, *Zen Katha* and *Kanyadan*," she concludes.

ON October 7, 7 pm
AT Sophia Bhabha Hall, Sophia College Campus, Peddar Road.
CALL 23838550

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A still from *Between The Lines*

LET THE GENDER WARS BEGIN

The last time we had interviewed actor Nandita Das it was 2009, and she was ecstatic that her directorial debut, *Firaaq*, had won accolades at an international film festival. This time, Das admits that she is nervous and excited about staging *Between The Lines*, which marks her debut as theatre director. Co-written with Divya Jagdale, its cast includes Das and her husband, Subodh Maskara.

"This project is making me a bit nervous. I have only done two professional plays and contrary to popular belief, I have not come from theatre. But it is exciting to explore a new medium and play with it," she says.

Set in contemporary India, the play explores the relationship between Shekhar and Maya, a lawyer couple at loggerheads when they end up on opposing sides of a murder case. Their personal lives get impacted and their own inequalities begin to surface.

"The idea emerged from a '60s film, which was adapted for theatre. I began re-working the script with Divya. The play has undergone revisions and many of our own stories have made it into the play," she adds.

Das admits that the theme of gender inequality among 'equals' intrigued her: "The educated and affluent class assume they are sorted. But in this class, it's more subtle and deceptive, woven into the fabric of our relationships. The play peels what is said and left unsaid in a relationship."

Also, Das believes that gender impacts the play: "It plays a role in how I think and express, as it is one of my most significant identities. Being a woman I bring a perspective that could appear biased or an advantage," she concludes.

ON October 6 and 7, 7 pm
AT Tata Theatre, NCPA, Nariman Point. **CALL** 22824567