

METROPLUS

## Finding the comedy in the moment



i

**SRAVASTI DATTA**

BENGALURU, APRIL 22, 2015 17:06 IST

UPDATED: APRIL 22, 2015 17:06 IST

### Members of Purple Mangoes, facilitators and clown performers from Delhi, say their performances are geared towards being interactive and playful

Contrary to popular belief, a clown act isn't exclusively slapstick comedy. Laughter and joy are the corner stones of a clown act, but it also includes various aspects.

Purple Mangoes, facilitators and clown performers, based in Delhi, are doing wide-ranging work around clown acts, taking their craft to schools, colleges and organisations and using clowning to address social issues.

They do not wear heavy make-up or big wigs, but do dress funny, and their performances are geared towards being interactive and playful. Members from Purple Mangoes, Sukhmani Kohli, Nivedita Soni and Harleen Kohli, speak of their experiences in clowning.

...reaching individually rather as facilitators. We wanted to work as a team, and that's how Purple Mangoes came to be."

"We do red-nose clowning," says Nivedita. "The idea is to bring people out from their masks." Harleen agrees adding: "When you put on the red nose, people want to touch that light moment."

Purple Mangoes is in Bengaluru to perform Ferdinand the Clown Bull, an adaptation of a children's story Ferdinand the Bull by American author Munro Leaf. Ferdinand is a gentle, young clown bull who instead of playing rough with his fellow young bulls, likes to sit and smell flowers all day. But when he grows up, he finds himself in a bull fight with a very sad and de-motivated matador.

"We have done many performances of Ferdinand, and it has been different each time," says Sukhmani, adding, "Every time a clown does new a role, the character also changes. It is all about interacting with each other's clowns. Our performances shift every time a new clown comes in. We pick a story, like Ferdinand, and do a clown act around it. We have done many performances of Ferdinand...and it has been different each time. We also focus on our individual clowns and how we can interact with the other clowns and the audience."

Nivedita, who has been exploring her clown for 10 years, teaches and performs with Purple Mangoes. "Being a clown is about being able to love and connect. When I train people, I tell the participants their purpose is not to make people laugh. When I did my first clown workshop, I thought I could be slapstick, but then I took time to find the comedy in the moment, in me. For example, if I feel afraid of being on stage, I would like to see how I can share that experience with the audience."

Sukhmani, has been engaging with community **theatre** for 13 years, and has been clowning and sharing her clown experience since 2005. She contends that clowning means being true to who you are at that moment.

"When I am discovering my clown, I have to take off my masks and identities that I put on to protect myself. To become a clown, you have to unprotect yourself and be vulnerable," says Sukhmani, who learnt clowning and discovered her clown with a Portuguese clown, Ana Maduriera, and in 2011, designed and directed Romeo, Juliet and Seven Clowns, which has played in various theatre festivals across the country.

Harleen has been practising Community Theatre for many years, and also practices humanitarian clowning. She recently travelled with a group of 20-odd Humanitarian clowns from different countries. They visited hospitals, homes for the aged, leprosy centres, among other places, to share love and spread cheer.

"We went to very sad places, including cancer wards and places where abused women and elderly people were picked up from the streets and given shelter. It took a lot of guts to

# THE HINDU

In their work with schools, organisations, and social issues, Purple Mangoes has initiated conversations. They did a workshop with Vatika Special School in Chandigarh, a school for children with hearing impairment.

“We did a clown play and worked around sign language. The children taught sign language to the audience through the performance,” says Nivedita.

*Purple Mangoes will play Ferdinand the Clown Bull at Atta Galatta, 7 pm, on April 24.*

Printable version | Sep 8, 2018 8:02:31 AM |

<https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/purple-mangoes-ferdinand-the-clown-bull/article7130224.ece>

© The Hindu