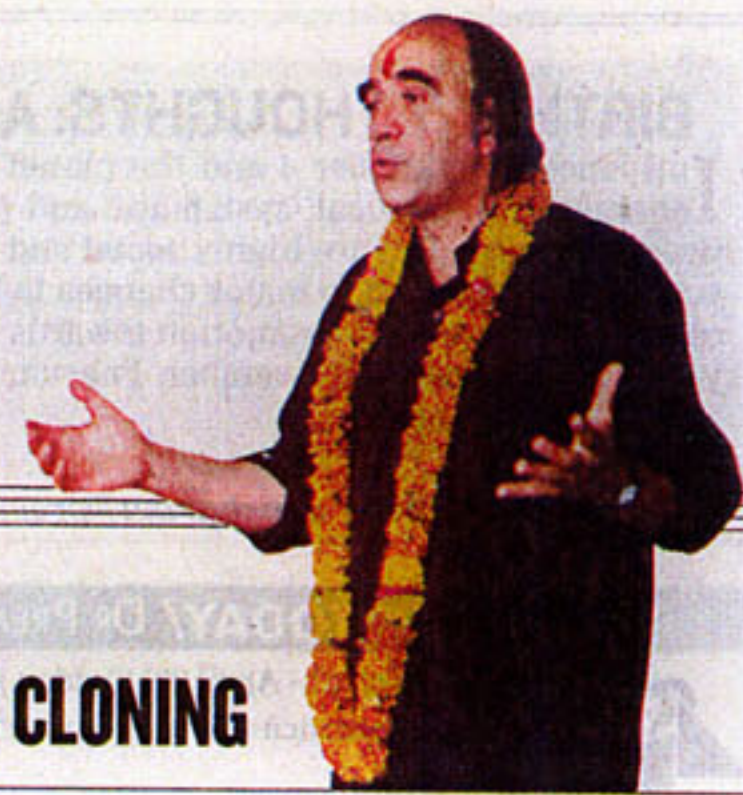


HT Jaipur Live



Marquee, p6

A CASE OF CLOWNING VERSUS CLONING

6 Monday, August 13, 2001
HT Jaipur Live

A Case Of Clowning Versus Cloning

NARESH GULATI

CLOWNING IS cloning, or so we have made it in the Pink City, thanks to some language writers. No offense intended, please. In fact, in its essence isn't cloning an imitation of the gene and doesn't the clown, the fool, the jester or the comedian indulge in imitation of the individual or a situation? So when Jean Pierre Bersnard and Beatrice Foret and their *Carvane* Theatre Association came visiting this part of India for the sixth time, we cloned the French Connection between the two Pink Cities one more time exploring newer dimensions. So here is to us from Toulouse—the other Pink City—clowning, clowning and some more clowning!

Or, so I felt during and after

that hurriedly arranged chat with Beatrice. Much against my wish to talk about the group *Carvane* Theatre, I find there is more and more of Clowning. Ah, the clones multiply fast! So while it is The Clown per se, The *Carvane* and its local clone The Carvan (are you reading, Alok Pareek?) tend to slip out of the discussion.

Director Bersnard hasn't been able to join us. He was expected to. Beatrice the assistant director is a wee bit modest, enchantingly so. And of course, tired too, having put in a hard day's session. Yet she speaks and speaks of The Clown. Well, she seems to master the clowns to in her new arena called the Ravindra Manch. And that includes 15 clowns-in-making from France and one each from Belgium and Austria. So, Clowning I gather, is

the transformation of the actor with that smallest of the masks, the red nose. Once a nosy clown, always a poking clown. But not without effect. He instantly creates the two-way bond, the bridge that people can walk on to the emotional freedom across. The freedom that lets out all their feelings, fears and joys. Yes, they can dare it with a clown, says the lady with a nose ready in her bag for the next man in.

I'm prompted to check the psychology at work. Is it because the Clown—once the countryman and the farmer—is seen as a lesser individual? But, with Beatrice not reacting particularly to this, I go on. Is clowning exclusive to France in a sense and who is it particularly attributed to, I check, even as I recall the Sanskrit tradition of the *Vidushak*, the narrator comedian, who also

HIGH DRAMA AT RAVINDRA MANCH



Jean Pierre Bersnard makes a point as Beatrice Foret looks on at the welcome organised by JKSM for the French theatre group on August 7

finds a place in the scheme of things in the play. "No. Clowning is not exclusive to France, it is an evolution of theatre shared by all societies, may be it is practised largely in France," Beatrice is modest once again.

The *Carvane* as a group has been coming to India for well over 17 years now promoting both Clowning and what she calls Forum Theatre. It was during one of these visits at Delhi that Jan Kala Sahitya Manch (JKSM) was introduced to them by a common link. Starting in 1996, this alliance *Francaise* has only strengthened by the subsequent annual visits of the group. *Carvane* now has its younger counterpart Carvan working here.

The Manch is nearer its ambition of setting up its own centre of activities, thanks to the collaboration. This of course

includes the moving theatre wing where Clowning will be used as a major tool. The land has already been procured for the centre. The *Carvane* has been undertaking activities like sale of handicrafts also in their base area in south France with the objective of generating resources for the adopted baby. The French participants of the Clowning Workshop have also paid their expenses. While JKSM members and sympathisers are taking care of local hospitality for these participants, the funds collected by *Carvane* will be released to the agency for its corpus.

Isn't that cause for neighbour's envy? A real cultural collaboration that takes care of the resource needs of a multi-discipline group and at a time when money channels are only drying up for such causes!



Members of the French theatre group Carvane seem as delighted to be back in Jaipur as the Jaipurites are as all the smiles seem to indicate! Also seen are Kamal Kishore of JKSM (second from right) and Vidyasagar Upadhyay of Rajasthan School of Art (extreme right)