

‘Indian Ink’: Collaboration Allows for an Authentic World

By [Roxanne Ray](#)

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This is a summer of partnerships for local South Asian performance company [Pratidhwani](#). Following its collaboration with ACT Theatre to present *Dance Like A Man*, Pratidhwani is now partnering with Sound Theatre Company to present Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*, which explores the fate and legacy of a British female poet who travels to India due to her health and there encounters a male Indian artist.

Agastya Kohli, director of Pratidhwani's Drama Wing, was excited to work with another company, and Sound Theatre Company's Producing Artistic Director Teresa Thuman shares that excitement.

The idea for the play initially arose from the play's director, Andy McGinn, who suggested it to Thuman. Sound Theatre Company had previously produced another obscure Stoppard play, *Dogg's Hamlet/Cahoot's Macbeth*, so McGinn's recommendation was intriguing. Because Sound Theatre Company is interested in presenting work that stimulates the auditory sense, Thuman finds Stoppard's

work compelling. “His exploration of society through language and culture is a perfect fit for our company,” she said.

In particular, Thuman feels that *Indian Ink* is a good fit for STC’s current season. “Both of our plays for this summer are set in times of war and rebellion,” she said. “They are also spiritual in nature and hold a kind of spiritual transformation at the center.”

“For *Indian Ink*, the transformation stems from art, free expression of erotic ideals, and the oppressive culture of colonialism,” she explained. The collaboration between Pratidhwani and STC has been integral to the development of this production, wherein STC has provided the financial and logistical aspect of the partnership. “It was agreed that we would consider this a ‘cultural’ co-production in which Agastya would consult and advise through the design and casting process for the production and provide cultural support as needed,” Thuman said.

Meanwhile, Thuman is also collaborating with director McGinn in the rehearsal room. “Since I am also serving as dialect and language coach, I am deeply impressed with how easily the actors adapt to spoken sounds, sometimes creating a range of different dialects for different characters,” she said. “These actors are bilingual, at least, and their relationship with the English language is deeply shaped by this.”

As rehearsals progress, Thuman is pleased with the two companies’ division of labor. “This has worked out well because Agastya is so well connected with both the local South Asian Indian communities and the local theatre communities,” she said.

She also credits Pratidhwani with helping to develop the pool of local acting talent. “I believe that this is probably one of the few, if only, non-professional productions of this play that is even possible,” she said. “Most producing companies could only consider this play for production if they had a corps of professionally-trained, ethnically-authentic actors for the roles.”

But the partnership of Pratidhwani and STC allowed this corps to be assembled from scratch, Thuman said: “With what Agastya has created, we are able to gather actors who are growing in their talent and experience to utilize for the needed authentic world of the play.”

‘Indian Ink’ runs from August 13 to 30, at the Seattle Center Armory’s Centre Theatre, 305 Harrison Street, Seattle. For more info, [click here](#).