



Collaborative Theatre-Making Process in Umar Ka Parwana

Aditya Pal*1, Dr. Adish Kumar Verma*2

*1 MPA Theatre Student, Central University of Punjab, India.

*2 Assistant Professor, Central University of Punjab, India.

Abstract

Rehearsal-based, improvised and collectively created theatre in which performance is developed as a collaborative endeavour through discussions, improvisation and rehearsal has become an important tool in contemporary theatre. Performance-making today is no longer the creation of a playwright and a director only; actors, musicians, dancers, designers and technical teams are all involved in the process of creating a performance. In all types of theatre, particularly folk or experimental, this collaborative process is important because scenes, movements, transitions, and dramatic structure may change during rehearsals. With this research paper, the collaborative theatre-making process of the theatrical adaptation of a folk narrative, *Umar ka Parwana*, by Vijaydan Detha, is studied. The study focuses on the development of the performance by the actors, the director, the musicians and the creative team as a whole. The paper examines the improvisation, rehearsal process, director-actor interaction, script adaptation, music and stage preparation and group creativity in the production. The study is qualitative in nature and employs a three-pronged approach of rehearsal observation, production analysis, personal interaction with the members of the production team, and creative discussion. The study concludes that *Umar Ka Parwana* was not only scripted but also a theatrical process that involved all team members in creatively making the performance.

Keywords: Collaborative Theatre, Folk Theatre, Improvisation, Collective Creativity, Rehearsal Process, Theatre-Making, Vijaydan Detha

Introduction

Theatre is an essentially communal art form. It is not possible for one person to make a theatrical production. It is only possible for a group of people together, such as the actors, directors, musicians, dancers, designers, and technical people. The collaborative nature of theatre-making is growing in significance in contemporary theatre practices as performances are developed through collaboration in rehearsals, improvisation and creative interaction. Indian folk theatre traditions have historically depended upon collective performance practices. Folk performers, singers, musicians, narrators and dancers collaborate in a performative experience. The folk theatre can often be flexible, improvised and spontaneous, whereas fixed literary drama is not. Thus, co-creativity can be said to be an inevitable element of the folk theatrical art.

The folk stories of Vijaydan Detha are significant in the context of Indian theatre as they fuse together folk imagination, dramatic tension, emotional content and cultural ambience. His narratives have great stage possibilities for adaptation into a stage performance. One such tale is *Umar Ka Parwana*, which features elements of emotion, supernatural, mystery, revenge and folklore.

This theatrical presentation of *Umar Ka Parwana* was not scripted. Rather, the production slowly took shape in the course of rehearsals, improvisation, collaboration and joint experimentation. All actors, directors, musicians, puppet performers, dancers and technical crew members worked together to design the scenes, music, stage transitions, and dramatic atmospheres.

The paper explores the process of collaborative theatre making of *Umar Ka Parwana* and how the collective creativity evolved a folk story into a theatrical performance.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the collaborative theatre-making process in *Umar Ka Parwana*.
2. To analyse the role of director-actor collaboration in performance creation.
3. To examine the importance of improvisation and the rehearsal process.
4. To study the role of collective creativity in theatrical structure.
5. To analyse teamwork in stage creation, music development, and theatrical presentation.

Research Methodology

The research used in this paper is of a qualitative type. It is a study based on rehearsal observation, production analysis, personal interaction and creative discussions relating to the theatrical adaptation of *Umar Ka Parwana*.

The research focuses on the collective development of the scenes, transitions, dialogues and theatrical structures by the actors, directors and the creative team during the rehearsal processes and improvisations. The study also examines how the preparation of the stage, the choreography of the dance, the composition of the music, and the collaborative experimentation in the production process were analysed.

Theoretical principles and concepts from Richard Schechner and other adaptation scholars, including Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders, have also been utilised in the study of collaborative theatre and performance. (Schechner and Hutcheon).

This research is of an analytical type and descriptive in nature, with a focus on understanding the role of collaborative creativity in the theatrical productions of today.

Concept of Collaborative Theatre-Making

Collaborative theatre-making is a form of theatre-making that involves the collective creation of performance as opposed to the individual. During this process, actors are not required to act out the dialogue but can also be creative participants, shaping the emotions, the scenes and the dramatic structure.

Devised theatre, physical theatre and experimental theatre are some of the theatre practices of the present day that rely largely on collaboration and improvisation. Rehearsal is a place of creative exploration as actors and directors find scenes together. Improvisation enables the performer to create movements, dialogues, reactions and dramatic moments in an organic way.

Performance is not a predetermined literary type, but rather a process that is dynamic and constantly being negotiated in rehearsal and interaction, Richard Schechner writes. (Schechner). In the same way, co-creative theatre-making turns rehearsals into a theatre-making laboratory, where the development of the performance happens continuously.

The process that took place in the production of *Umar Ka Parwana* was very collaborative. The script, scenes, transitions and dramatic atmosphere slowly changed as a result of collaborative discussion and experimentation during rehearsals.

Selection of the Story and Initial Discussions

The writing process started with the choice of the story itself. The creative team looked for a storyline that would have a degree of emotional conflict, folk atmosphere and theatrical potential. The choice of *Umar Ka Parwana* by Vijaydan Detha was made due to its dramatic scenes, supernatural elements, and emotional storyline.

Once the story was selected, group reading sessions were held in which actors and creative team members collectively read and discussed the story. These conversations were about themes, dramatic possibilities, conflicting emotions, character psychology and theatre presentation.

The process wasn't just about comprehension of the story. The creative members and actors enthusiastically exchanged ideas and interpretations. From the very inception of the production process, a collective creative environment was established through this exchange.

Director-Actor Collaboration

The working method of the director-actor changed into one of the key elements in the production process. The director did not give actors strict directions, but allowed for improvisation and interaction in rehearsals.

Actors were provided with opportunities to provide feedback on aspects of delivery of dialogue, body movement, emotional response and stage action. The scenes slowly evolved as a collaborative process between actors and the director.

The director also assisted actors in comprehending the emotional and psychological aspects of the characters. Ongoing development of body language, voice modulation, folk gestures and emotional expression. The associate director and assistant director also gave significant help and support in rehearsals, scene coordination and actor support in the creative process. (Interview with Bishal Prasad, Assistant Director, Narrator and *Gramin* Role Performer). This process turned direction from a hierarchy into a collaborative theatrical process.

Improvisation in the Rehearsal Process

The practice of improvisation was used more and more as one of the key creative tools towards making *Umar Ka Parwana*. There were many scenes that were not scripted, but rather built up in rehearsal.

Often, actors were presented with situations and emotional circumstances, and not full-fledged dramatic actions. Scenes began to take on performative structure through spontaneous reactions, movement, vocal experimentation and interaction.

Much improvisation was used in the *Tantrik* scenes. The actors tried to make a supernatural atmosphere in their way by using ritualistic gestures, body movements, vocal textures and group formations. Other elements of emotional monologues and transitions also emerged from rehearsal experimentation.

Actors were able to enter into the emotional reality of their characters through improvisation. This led to more natural, performative and emotional scenes.

There were also several dialogues that came out during the rehearsal interaction that are not literary but rather came from the rehearsal. This improvisation process also brought some flexibility and theatrical richness to the production.

(Production Rehearsal Observation).

Collaborative Script Development

The process of writing the script was a collaborative effort. No direct transposition of the original folk narrative into a set script for a dramatic performance. The script was, however, continually changed during rehearsals.

Group discussions and rehearsal interaction helped to clarify and make narrative sections into dialogue, action, and theatrical situations. Some scenes were shortened, some transitions were added, and emotional scenes were extended as per the theatrical demand.

As for the theatrical elements, the creative team developed several elements collectively, including folk narration, puppet opening, *Tantrik* elements, and group transition. Actors and directors collaborated to create the structure and development of a drama.

This process highlights this script of *Umar Ka Parwana* as a “living” theatre script, not a literalized literary text.

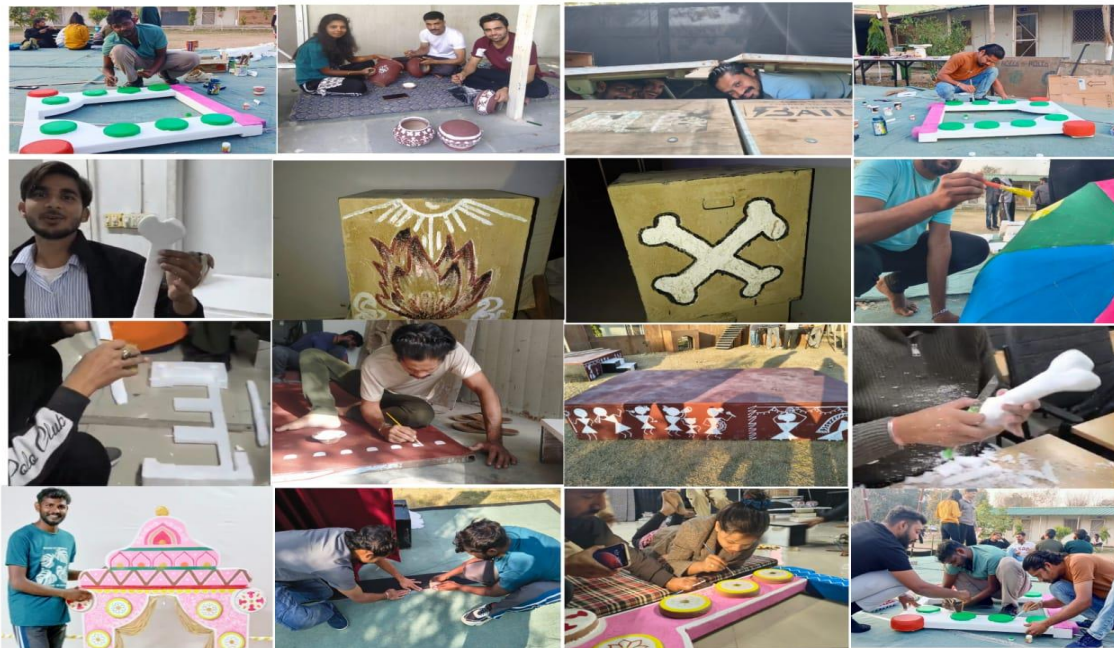


Figure 1: Collaborative Stage and Property Preparation Process of *Umar Ka Parwana*

Music Creation as a Collaborative Process

In the production of music, creation was another key part of collaborative theatre making. Rehearsals were conducted in a group to create folk songs, background music, ritualistic sounds and emotional vocal textures.

The music team and actors brainstormed songs to best fit the emotional tone of certain scenes. Musicians of different instruments like Harmonium, Tabla, Dholki, Duff, Ghungroo and Parai played their instruments with live singers.

Particular attention was paid to the *Tantrik* scenes, and horror-inspired sounds were collectively produced. All sorts of deep sounds from the vocal texture, ritualistic chanting, drum beats, ghungroo, laughter patterns and animal sounds were tried to instil fear and mystery.

Actors also participated in vocal rehearsals and singing practice. This musical process was a collaborative one, leading to good theatrical action in the production.

(Personal Interaction with Music Team Members).

Dance Rehearsal and Group Coordination

Teamwork in theatre making was also evident in the dance rehearsals. New dance steps, folk dances and dance formations were continually evolved and adapted during the rehearsals. The musicians played together in harmony, synchrony and stage coordination. The use of folk props like matkas was used in the dance portion to enhance the visual folk ambience. The *Tantrik* dance sequences

have evolved through experimentation in the realm of ritualistic movements of the body, symbolic gestural and group formations. Artists have developed the visual coordination and the collective movement structure through repeated rehearsals. This choreography was a constantly evolving process, developing from interaction during rehearsals and not being set in stone from the outset.

Stage Creation and Teamwork

The process of creating the performance space was one of the most powerful examples of collaborative creativity. Given that the DPFA black box theatre was too small to use for the performance, the team decided to make the DPFA lawn theatre into a theatrical performance space.

The beds of the hostels were put together collectively to form the platform for the stage. Team members collaborated in creating the stage structure, installing black wings, and setting up the theatrical space.

Many props, stage paintings and set elements were collaboratively created by the on and off-stage team members. In addition, the lighting crew collaborated with the actors and directors to adjust stage lighting based on blocking and dramatic needs.

This obviously showed that theatrical production is not limited to acting or script but is a team game and collective labour. (Production Space Creation Observation, DPFA Lawn Theatre).

Challenges in Collaborative Theatre-Making

There were also some difficulties in the collaborative process. Actors were from various states and linguistic backgrounds, and it was difficult for many of them to learn the Rajasthani accent.

There were frequent rehearsals and repetition needed to ensure coordination and synchronisation amongst large groups. In addition to the above, there were difficulties with scheduling rehearsals, music coordination, scene reorganisation, and emotional continuity during the production.

Adding to the technical challenges, conditions for outdoor performance were also challenging. But the team effort was instrumental in having them solve these issues together. The rehearsal process built trust, communication and creative bonding among performers and creative members.

Findings

The study clearly shows that *Umar Ka Parwana* has been created in a collaborative manner and has not been scripted. The performance has been influenced by improvisation, rehearsal experiments, group discussions and interaction.

Actors not only played their roles; they actively participated in the development of the scenes and in experimentation in the theatre.

It was the product of music, dance, stage creation, transitions, and dramatic atmosphere with collective teamwork. The process of joint production brought flexibility, creativity and theatrical richness into the production.

The study also demonstrates how collaborative theatre-making enhances artistic communication and can create a place for creative exploration in rehearsals.

Conclusion

This research paper ends up stating that the theatrical performance of *Umar Ka Parwana* was not only a scripted performance, but rather a potent study of the collective production of theatre. The performance was created by actors, directors, musicians, dancers and technical staff. Important aspects of scenes, emotional moments, dramatic transitions and the theatrical atmosphere were created through improvisation, rehearsal, experimentation and creative discussions. The collaborative process of production was flexible and constantly developed. The study also shows that the process of collaborative theatre-making is very important in the modern theatrical practice, as it brings a transformation in the theatrical role of the actor from being a mere performer to a creative actor. The making of *Umar Ka Parwana* also reminds us of the role of collaboration, risk-taking and a collective imagination in the adaptation of folk tales for modern theatre. Last but not least, the study finds that a literature-based folk tale can be creatively developed into a lively theatrical performance by a group of artists working together and experimenting through rehearsals.

References:

- Detha, Vijaydan. *Baatan Ri Phulwari*. Rajasthani Granthagar, Jaipur.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge, 2006.
- Prasad, Bishal. Personal interview as Assistant Director, Narrator, and Gramin Role Performer of *Umar Ka Parwana*. 2026.
- *Production Documentation*. Department of Performing and Fine Arts (DPFA), Central University of Punjab (CUPB), 2025.
- *Personal Interaction with Music Team Members of Umar Ka Parwana*. 2026.
- *Production Rehearsal Observation*. Department of Performing and Fine Arts (DPFA), Central University of Punjab (CUPB), 2025.
- *Production Space Creation Observation*. DPFA Lawn Theatre, 2025.
- Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Routledge, 2006.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2002.
- Stam, Robert. *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.