

Meet Sorab Wadia from “The Kite Runner”

By: Chhaya Sanghavi



Sorab Wadia is the kind of man who can draw anyone to him. Intelligent, attractive, goofy, down to earth and funny, Sorab is an absolute gem of a person to know. I had the pleasure of meeting Sorab Wadia in Tampa while he was on tour, performing in the one man adaptation of the book “The Kite Runner” written by Khaled Hosseini, at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center. Armed with a stool for the stage, Sorab plays nine characters, switching from one character to another effortlessly and keeps his audience completely captured for the whole hours that he performs.

CM: Please tell us a little bit about you and what brought you to the US.

SW: I did a little acting as a kid and teen while in school. I was a pianist. I have been in theatre, piano, acting, opera. Both of my parents are artists, designer and musician – so, arts has been at home and all around me as I grew up. I loved High School in India but was not too crazy about the university system, a lot of my friends did their BA in psychology!

I have been in the US since 1989, I came here to go to school at Johns Hopkins University’s Peabody Conservatory to study music.

CM: How tough is it being an actor?

SW: Well, it is tough. The most important question I have to answer is—Are you Happy? Life is tough in New York. Someone is always going to be prettier than you, browner than you, thinner than you, faster than you. My parents have always been very supportive and the only thing my dad ever asks of me is if this is what I want and if I am happy.

CM: How did you get into acting?

SW: It all began because I wanted to do something in music. I was fascinated by opera. My voice is better suited for Broadway musical theatre and from there I transitioned to theatre and started acting in plays. No one casts me in plays when they are looking for an Indian. Probably because I am not brown enough or don’t look *desi* enough. I did get a part in the movie, New York, with John Abraham, where I play a Middle-Eastern (surprise!!!) guy spying on him.

CM: How do you get roles?

SW: Well, the casting agent gets you auditions and that’s how you go about it. However, I did not get “The Kite Runner” role because of my agent. For some reason I keep getting cast as a Middle-Eastern character. Now I am thinking about learning Arabic. I already speak German, Italian, Gujarati, English, French and Hindi. I did not make Bombay Dreams because I am too fair. I auditioned for a good role for New York, but I don’t speak very good Hindi and that did not go through. Let’s see if my scene makes it in the movie. I was also in a movie with Alec Baldwin and Sarah Jessica Geller, but it did not hit the theatres and went straight to DVD.

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CM: Is "The Kite Runner" different from other roles?

SW: It is totally different. Acting in this play is like running a marathon, it keeps you in shape, it is so deeply ingrained, you make them laugh, you make them cry, you make them open their eyes! It is very rewarding. For example, last night after my performance, an old woman just came up to me, shook my hand and held it.

CM: Do you see a lot of Desis in your field?

SW: These days there are more and more *desis* in the theatre. Especially the Indian Americans that have been born and brought up in the USA.

CM: I am sure it is different being a Desi?

SW: Oh, yes. There are fewer roles out there for me but on the other hand, I also have higher chances of getting the role.

CM: What would like to do if you could do ANYTHING at all?

If I could I would see every country on earth. I love to travel. This summer I am going to six countries that I have never been to. When I travel I can't do 3-4 places in a week! I really like to spend time in new places and learn and live the local customs and culture.

One day I want to be the lead on a sitcom and have nice long run for ten years, or get a movie, go for a shoot to a new location and absorb the life and the local culture. It is impossible for me to find my sitcom unless I write it!

People say that I should write, I can tell a great story but when it comes to putting pen to paper, I can't think about writing a story or a play.



Sorab Wadia on Stage
"The Kite Runner"