

The Dichotomy of Meshi Saha

By Hope Geissler

Performers are magicians. They split themselves in half right in front of the audiences' eyes without anyone really noticing. The side they present to their audiences seems so full and whole that no one even bats an eye to the other half of them peeking out from behind the curtain. All performers are magicians. All performers are actors. There's always one more side of a performer than you're actually seeing.

Animesh "Meshi" Saha is one of those great performers. To the public eye, Saha is just a confident, sarcastic, thinks he's better than everyone else, college student with a good sense of humor. He walks around his shows and the University of Miami with Playboy shorts, a carefully selected curation of chains, bracelets and rings and his vape always in hand. Whether people love him or hate him, this version of Saha is not just an aspiring comedian, but already a successful one.

In his own apartment however, little hints of the off-stage Saha begin to shine through. Instead of shoes, he opts for his cartoon shark slippers where the colors and bottoms have been sufficiently worn out. His voice slips from booming and self-assured to calm and sincere. Saha's walls come down and he starts playing videos of him singing in highschool explaining each performance.

Whether you get to watch Saha perform or are lucky enough to get a glimpse behind the curtain, one thing is for certain, you will be entertained.

EARLY

Growing up in Port St. Lucie, Florida, Saha spent his time watching movies until he discovered Dave Chappelle and Eddie Murphy in middle school. Between film and comedy, Saha's future became very clear, he wanted to perform. In a true only child fashion, Saha desired to feel the warmth of the spotlight on him.

"I was an only child, but with Indian parents, so I didn't get the white treatment where the spotlight automatically fell on me," Saha said. "I still had to work for the spotlight."

With his new found desire for the spotlight and performing, Saha went to the only place a high schooler could go to get a taste of the limelight: the theater department.

Saha's theater career included both school plays and musical theater roles where he snagged the lead role in most productions. His favorite role was playing Dany Zuko in Grease. His talents in musical theater goes as far as a musical theater scholarship and an acceptance into Carnegie Mellon.

Saha's musical theater career got put on hold after meeting someone at a theater company when he was 16-years-old.

“I remember I had just turned 16 when I met someone in a theater company who mentioned he did stand up. I told him that I was interested in comedy and really wanted to do stand up,” Saha said. “He said ‘Call me when you’re 18 and we’ll see if I can get you in front of a mic.’”

After a long two years of waiting, Saha’s 18th birthday finally arrived..

“Literally on my 18th birthday I called him and he was like ‘Alright, get five minutes together and we’ll go to an open mic somewhere soon’,” Saha said.

And just like that, Saha’s comedy career was off the ground.

COLLEGE

“I was just an 18 year old running around going to open mics in West Palm Beach and through that I met a lot of people,” Saha said.

These people that Saha met at the comedy clubs before he attended the University of Miami helped his transition his career from West Palm Beach to the city of Miami.

“As soon as I told them I was going to Miami, they immediately set me up like ‘Listen I know someone that runs a mic here’ or ‘I know someone that runs a mic in Brickell’,” Saha said. “My first week on campus, I already had a show set up for that Friday.”

Saha wasn’t content with just performing at open mics, he tried to find every avenue at the university to do comedy which led him to Off The Wire, University of Miami’s late night comedy show.

OFF THE WIRE

“I found out about Off The Wire when I got to UM and I thought it was perfect. A sketch comedy show with a host? It’s perfect for someone who wants to be on SNL,” Saha said.

Saha joined Off The Wire his first semester as a freshman and got cast on the This is the News segment. However, Saha’s excitement over the show and being cast faded quickly.

“ I did it and the process really wasn’t great and it genuinely turned off my desire to go on SNL”, Saha said. “It put such a bad taste in my mouth that I stopped writing for a couple weeks.”

Saha mentioned that before college his main goal was to be on SNL and after Off The Wire, the desire never really came back.

“There is going to be another ‘you know who’ at SNL like it’s the same people with different, bigger positions,” Saha said. “I just can’t work in that kind of environment.”

Luckily, despite the disappointing venture with Off The Wire, Saha still maintained his love of performing stand up. After leaving Off The Wire, Saha put his effort into fine-tuning his stand up routine.

WRITING PROCESS

“I want to think that my writing process is different just because of the lack of it,” Saha laughed. “The way I write my comedy is the truth but just dragged out a little bit to make it funnier.

One of Saha’s stand up sets include being in a high school bathroom and performing stand up for a kid who is masturbating in one of the stalls.

“See the kid jerking off in the handicap stall, that’s real. That was real. But I didn’t actually do stand up comedy,” Saha said. “I was just thinking, imagine if i started doing stand up right now.”

Saha utilizes the notes app and the voice memos app on his phone for his on the go ideas that he can’t workshop right then and there.

“I’ll go in my voice notes and just put like, ‘kid jerking off in handicap stall, me doing stand up for him’,” Saha said.

Saha went through other voice notes he had saved about potential content for his sets. This list includes “getting a blaccent while he smokes but only with white people” and “situational racism being okay, but not blatant racism”.

When Saha has time, he listens through the voice notes and then builds a story from those ideas.

THE CROWD

Performing stand-up in a place as diverse as Miami comes with its own set of problems for Saha when it comes to deciding what material he wants to perform.

“In Miami, it’s really a toss up between getting a really liberal audience or a really conservative audience,” Saha said. “I always gauge the crowd by making a Republican joke where I do this Republican voice and make fun of something Republican.”

The reaction to the Republican joke gives Saha enough insight into knowing what jokes to avoid and which ones have the green light.

“Here’s the thing, Republicans will laugh at themselves, but it’s very hard to have liberals laugh at themselves,” Saha said. “So I tell the joke and if it gets very few laughs I’m like ‘okay politics is not the course of this set’.”

Outside of a couple political things in his material, Saha believes most of his content is universal to everyone.

“I don’t really believe in ‘Oh it was a bad crowd’ like the material is either funny or it’s not,” Saha said. “I’ll just rail off stories and if someone’s like ‘Oh i’m handicapped’, I’ll be like ‘I got a story for it’.”

Saha also stresses the importance of knowing the kind of people in the crowd and finding out what they want to hear.

“The thing I’ve experienced about people here in Miami is that they are very self conceited,” Saha said. “They want you to make fun of them. They don’t want to just hear about your life and your stories. They want to be involved.”

END GOAL

Saha is double majoring in motion pictures business and philosophy with a minor in business law, but his end goal is still comedy.

“I’d like to have my own show one day,” Saha said. “Like my own Chappelle show, but on a smaller scale.”

Saha also thinks he would do well creating an animated comedy show like Family Guy, South Park, or Big Mouth.

“I think my comedy is very Family Guy-esque because I’ll go into different scenarios or a whole imagine if cutaways which is literally what Family Guy does,” Saha said. “That’s just how my comedy and brain work.”

CURRENTLY PERFORMING

Saha is performing at locations throughout Miami and Florida. See him perform at places like Doms Brickle, Thank you, Miami, SLS, The Orlando Improv Club, and Sunrise theater.