

# COMIC CALLING

Bombay born and New York based **Radhika Vaz** is laugh out loud funny. **Rhea Dhanbhora** talks to the crazy, energy filled comedian about her foray into comedy, where she draws her inspiration from and her upcoming show at the NCPA...

>> Radhika Vaz is a performer as well as a comic writer. Follow her on Twitter @radvaz and visit [www.radvaz.com](http://www.radvaz.com) for a glimpse of her funny rants about life, love and women



New York based comedian Radhika Vaz was born and brought up in Bombay and moved around a lot — enabling her to (as she writes on her website) “embarrass myself and move on.” Her routines are witty and filled with topics which are generally considered a bit taboo. Drawing inspiration from friends and family, who, she tells us, “Do and say incredibly stupid things — so it’s an endless stream of material,” the talented comic is all set to tickle our funny bones at her *Unladylike* show at the NCPA. We find out more from this crazy comic...

**Did being funny come to you naturally?**  
I’m not sure if other people always thought I was funny but I was certainly willing to do anything to get a laugh. At some point I wanted to be a vet, a nun and a flight attendant. Clearly, none of my goals panned out but I regret nothing.

**How did you make your foray into improv comedy?**  
I had just moved to New York and was living with my boyfriend (who I finally forced in to matrimony). I must have been getting on his nerves because he suggested that I pick up a hobby. After I got over the shock that he didn’t want to spend every waking minute with me, I went looking for an acting class and the first class I took was improv comedy.

**Did people react favourably the instant you began performing?**  
Let’s just say it’s been both. I think this whole entertainment business is about talent but also a lot about timing. I have been performing for eight years now and it’s been a while so that has been difficult but I have always had supportive people around me which makes it easier.

**What are your ‘funny’ inspirations?**  
I have a tendency to get angry before I can see that something is really funny. So I suppose stuff that pisses me off would be high on the list.

**Tell us more about your one woman show, *Unladylike*.**  
The idea for *Unladylike* came from my favourite place — anger. The material focuses on the age old double standards that are put in place for us women. From an early age society tells us how to dress, walk, talk, think, be and then there are all these different (and more fun) rules for boys. Women are raised to look for approval — not just from men but from other women too. It’s bloody exhausting! So, I’m talking about the stereotypes that bother me the most.

**Will you be changing your content to suit Indian audiences?**  
No. I think Indian audiences are quite worldly, if it’s funny they will laugh, if it isn’t then no amount of cultural adjustment will help.

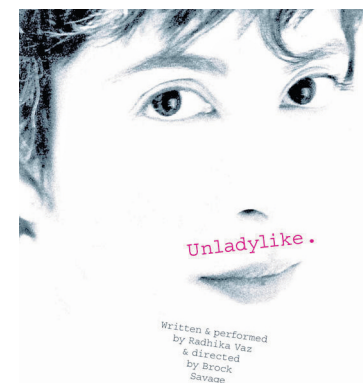
**Since you’re married, what’s it like to balance home and work with the kind of job you have?**  
My husband and I swing between perfect harmony and raging fights — sometimes in the course of an hour! Truthfully, you just bumble through it and try to work it out. I’m lucky because I have a supportive spouse but I would never say that to his face!

**You have a blog and want to write a book as well, tell us about Radhika, the writer?**  
As far as my performance material goes, I love to write with other voices and accents in my head. I am bored of what I

actually sound like so maybe that is part of it. Writing, other than my performance material comes from personal experience. I am a huge fan of David Sedaris — I want to be him when I grow up. I am not sure what my book will be about but it will be along the lines of my blog — short stories about this and that. Hopefully it will be funny, hopefully a bestseller.

**You’ve done off Broadway plays and appeared on Comedy Central too. Tell us a little bit about your other work.**  
There was a point when I thought I would focus on being an actor. I ended up doing this play where I played the mother of Ramanujan — one of the greatest mathematicians. I enjoyed it very much and was my first time working with professionally trained actors. I developed a lot of respect for the craft and also acted in some small independent films. Again, I learned a lot about what it takes to shoot a movie. Of all my ‘learnings’ as an actor I would say the most important one was, ask a lot of questions!

**Which comedians do you draw inspiration from?**  
I am mostly inspired by comedic actors. I love watching films and TV shows where



## UNLADYLIKE: THE PITFALLS OF PROPRIETY

Radhika’s one woman comedy show debuted in New York last year and was a big success. Directed and developed by Brock Savage, it explores the universal truths of modern womanhood and is written and performed by Radhika Vaz.

**WHEN** September 21  
**WHERE** NCPA Experimental Theatre, Nariman Point  
**CONTACT** [www.bookmyshow.com](http://www.bookmyshow.com)

the performance is as vital a part of the comedy as the script itself. Movies such as *9 to 5*, *Jumping Jack Flash*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* and *Bridget Jones’ Diary* are some films that were defined by the leads. I am also a big fan of TV shows such as *Little Britain* (sketch comedy) and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. As far as stand-up comics are concerned I love Bill Cosby, Kathy Griffin, Chris Rock, Chelsea Handler, Eddie Murphy... it’s a long list!

**What is it like being a stand up comedian from India in New York?**  
Ah, the moment of truth! I am not a traditional standup comic although my show definitely straddles that line. The New York audience can be unforgiving or incredibly supportive. I have certainly felt the pain and the love at various stages of my career.

**Tell us a joke.**  
Only if you pay me.