
Aladdin

Feisal Alkazi has been working with children through workshops, training programmes and presenting short and full length plays under the auspices of Musical Theatre Workshop.

In *Alladin* which he produced for Studio 1, he used adult actors to enact the Arabian Nights story of *Alladin and the Magic Lamp*. One expected Nissar Allana, who always creates huge acting spaces both on proscenium stages or basement theatres, to create a world of fantasy. But he created very simple sets which appeared more an apology than decor for such a play.

Feisal's actors, however, compensated with their acting prowess. Raj Kamal as Alladin, Meera Jain as Mummun, Arun Sehgal as Sultan and Ramesh Manchanda's Magician caught the spirit of the play and caused great fun for the children in the audience.

J.N.K.

Adhe Adhure & Tughlaq

Once again the same *Adhe Adhure*, and the same *Tughlaq*. Both these works are high points in dramatic literature. Both have been translated and staged in many regional languages. Some people have started questioning Rakesh's relevance today. But *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (Rajinder Nath-Shri Ram Centre, Delhi), *Lehron Ke Rajhans* (Qadar Ali Baig-New Theatre Hyderabad), *Adhe Adhure* (Shyamanand Jalan, Padatik, Calcutta) provide an effective answer to the doubting toms. Rakesh and Jalan worked together on some of the scripts. Jalan produced all the three major plays of Rakesh, acted the main parts in *Ashadh* and *Lehron*. Played the lead in the English version of *Adhe Adhure*. There still remained undiscovered depth in the play. This new production appeared to be an effort to discover these undiscovered aspects. There is some

freshness about this production which appeals even after the unforgettable productions by Om Shivpuri, Satya Dev Dube, Shriram Lagu and Amal Allana.

This was the first time that an actor or a director was able to bring out the contradictions in the character of Mahendra Nath. Normally he is played like a spineless, hen-pecked creature but in this production his viciousness and violent temperament came through. Jalan's Singhania is not an uncouth caricature, but a very clever person. His Jagmohan is not a fashionable playboy but more like an opportunist artist, and Juneja is a very sharp businessman. Jalan's solicitor (his actual profession) overpowers Savitri much against the wishes of the author or even the director. Jalan has clearly demonstrated the outward disparity and inner similarity of various characters. An ample proof of Jalan's acting abilities.

Chetna Jalan as Savitri was good in parts. She tended to become hysterical and melodramatic in most of the scenes. She could not bring out the inner conflict and anguish of that character. It was a superficial performance. Jagriti Ruparel as Binni was a one dimensional character. In the first half she did not impress at all. Rashmi Bhattacharya (Kinni) was generally good but she could not come anywhere near Dishantar's Richa Vyas. The Director used triangular compositions with great effect. Silences were also very cleverly worked out to create dramatic moments. Due to imbalanced acting the performance could not achieve great heights but it became an important production due to Jalan's new interpretation of characters and his own acting ability.

New interpretations and new approach to an old script give meaning to any new venture. Probably this was the reason director Madhwane tried to focus attention on the minor character Azam in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*,

produced for Chingari. One had known Tughlaq as a cynic, mad, a day-dreamer but one was flabbergasted to see him as a clown in this production. Overt gestures to suggest sex-relations between Tughlaq and his stepmother might look interesting on stage but history or the playwright never intended or allowed this. Anand Prakash's three storey set design was not aesthetically pleasing or otherwise functional. Chaplin-like acting might suit a Moliere play but in a historical play it was a disaster.

JAIDEV TANEJA

Niyam Bhangar Niyam

Harihar Bhattacharya's Bengali version of Brecht's *Exception and the Rule* was a stark, forthright and sharp production. The parable about what befalls humanity when exploitation becomes an accepted way of life became more pronounced when it was told as a simple story.

Brecht had written:

In the system they've put together
Humanity is the exception.

Try to do a generous deed
You'll be the loser.

Fear for the man who shows
A friendly nature.

Woe to him who forgets himself. He
Holds out his cup to a fellow-man, and
A wolf drinks

What is the rule, recognise it
to be an abuse.

And where you have recognised abuse
Do something about it.

Bhattacharya uses songs and scenes to tell the story of the journey of an exploiter and the exploited without sentimentalising or romanticising any of the events. Siddharth Dasgupta as the Merchant, Dilip Sen as the Coolie and Sutapa Sikder as the Widow gave credible performances. Ashim Chakrabarty's music had a story-teller's quality which was pleasing to hear but did not involve emotions to blunt the thinking faculties.

Paap Aur Prakash

"Never strike off a word or a sentence," Emile Zola had exclaimed after watching a performance of Leo Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness*. Written in 1886 the play was banned in Russia. It was premiered in Paris by Andre Antoine's Theatre Libre. The ban in Russia was, however lifted in 1895. An example of best Naturalistic Drama, the play was based on a real life event involving peasants who were legally emancipated but enslaved by poverty. The dark powers of evil and ignorance which culminate in adultery, poisoning and infanticide, are portrayed in many richly drawn characters and powerful episodes. Jainendra Kumar's adaptation as *Paap Aur Prakash* into an Indian milieu retained the power of the original while adding an earthiness of its own.

Sona, young wife of a rich old man, Jodhram, falls in love with her handsome, youthful servant Chandan who is an incorrigible flirt. Aided and abetted by Kuslo, mother of Chandan, Sona poisons her husband. Chandan, after marrying Sona, starts an affair with his stepdaughter Meima who conceives a child while efforts are being made to marry her off. Chandan is forced by Sona to crush his illegitimate newborn to death. Chandan, in the end, longs for atonement of his sins.

Rajinder Gupta, who directed the play for *Sambhav* a group primarily consisting of National School of Drama graduates, succeeded in capturing the anguish and concern of Tolstoy for his characters. His simple design invoked the right kind of atmosphere. Deepa Sahi as Sona and Virendra Saxena as Risal gave very spirited performances. Kavita Nagpal created the jolly but depraved mother with great conviction. Suresh Bhardwaj went through various emotional phases with ease. Monoj Pahwa's Mangal was very sympathetic and Portia Mukherjee (Meima) and Priti Khare (Nandi) were also good. J.N.K.

