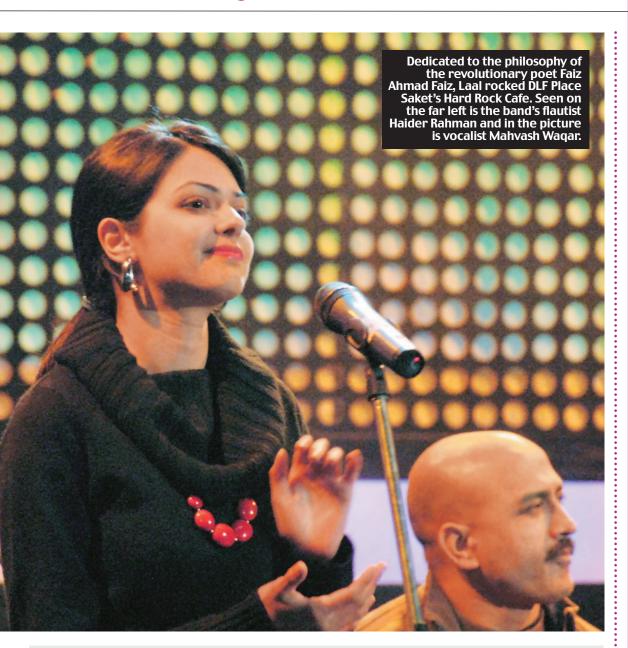
# DAY!





Scenes from Roald Dahl's Lamb To The Slaughter (above) and Maugham's Mr Know-All (right & inset).

#### by **Adila Matra**

THIS WEEKEND, take time off to watch three literary classics come alive on stage, back to back for 95 minutes. Roald Dahl's Lamb to the Slaughter, Somerset Maugham's Mr Know-All and Sholom Aleichem's Tevye Wins a Fortune (from the Fiddler on the Roof stories) has been adapted into musical plays by Dramatech, a theatre group formed by IIT-Delhi alumni in 1984.

Director Ravi Raj Sagar, a marketing professional, has knitted these three stories together for an evening called 'The Weekend Cocktail'. Why named so? "Because the evening is a mix of the best literary works plus music,' Sagar explains. You'll hear 'Diamonds Are Forever' in *Mr Know-All*, 'Tea for Two' in Lamb to Slaughter, and 'If I Were a Rich Man' in



## THREE CLASSICS COME ALIVE ON STAGE WITH STRAINS OF MELODIES

Tevye Wins a Fortune.

"We had performed these plays last year too and the response was astounding," says Sagar, adding that he chose these stories for three rea-

sons: one, they're
acknowledged classics;
two, they lend themselves easily to
dramatisation; and
three, he had the
right actors. "We
have Reuben
Israel, an accomplished singer, to
essay the role of
Tevye," says Sagar. "'If
I Were a Rich Man' in a
lesser voice would have
been disastrous." Dramatech

initially had only IIT-Delhi

alumni, but it has expanded

over the last 27 years and 35 productions to include talent from Delhi University and IIMs. It is now a mixed group of 90 members — all working professionals and students.

He says he had to make an effort to adapt Maugham and Tevye "from page to stage", but he was lucky to stumble upon a teleplay based on Dahl's Lamb to the Slaughter by Alfred Hiitchcock for a BBC series. "There was no way I could compete with that, so I just picked it up," he says. If you missed 'The Weekend Cocktail' last year, it may be a good idea to catch up with it this weekend.

— The Weekend Cocktail will be staged on April 21 & 22 at the Shri Ram Centre. Tickets are available on www.bookmyshow.com



Ekjute's founder-director Nadira Babbar and her daughter Juhi are behind the anniversary plays.

# Theatrical dream turns 30 in style

### by **Adila Matra**

NADIRA ZAHEER Babbar is perhaps known more as the founder-director of the well-regarded theatre company Ekjute than for her occasional forays into Bollywood (Bride and Prejudice; Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities) and her other tinsel-town connection—her husband (and old National School of Drama mate) Raj Babbar.

But Nadira, who's in the city to celebrate 30 years of Ekjute, her Mumbai-based theatre company, is happy to be the way she is — and she wears the mantle of a guru of contemporary theatre without much ado.

At the opening of the

Ekjute's 30th anniversary celebrations in the city last week, Nadira's family and friends, including Raj Babbar, daughter Juhi Babbar and her husband Anoop Soni, showed up in strength along with several

famous faces.

The celebratory function at Shri Ram Centre saw Union Company and Minority Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid, Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh and the Press Council of India Chairman, Justice Markandey Katju, heaping praise for the Babbars.

Ramesh reminded the audience that Nadira's late

father, Husain Zaheer, was a brilliant scientist who was the first director-general of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. "It is a less-known fact that Nadira is his daughter and I'm not surprised she turned out to be a dedicated professional," he said. Khurshid joked that even

politicians are actors who played their roles well. "It depends upon who sports the villain's role and who are the ones that people love," he said.

How has Ekjute managed to complete 30 years? Babbar said: "Pure love and

passion, but it isn't right to blame artistes if they leave

the theatre for the big

screen. Our country unfortunately doesn't financially support theatre artists."

The ten-day festi-"We can't val took off with blame artists Pencil Sey Brush Tak, Ekjute's if they leave the well-known and theatre for the big controversial play on the life of M.F. Husain, screen. There's no financial support starring Tom for theatre Alter, Anoop artistes

es" Soni and Juhi
Babbar. When
asked why the group
chose the play for the inaugural evening, Juhi Babbar
said, "This is one of Ekjute's
strongest plays made on one
of the greatest masters who
walked the earth."

 The festival, which is on till April 22 will feature Ekjute's classics such as Footnotes of Life, Kahaaniyan and Operation Cloudburst.



Ekjute's controversial play *Pencil Sey Brush Tak*, where Tom Alter played M.F. Husain, flagged off the festival.