

DAY!



Dedicated to the philosophy of the revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Laal rocked DLF Place Saket's Hard Rock Cafe. Seen on the far left is the band's flautist Haider Rahman and in the picture is vocalist Mahvash Waqar.



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 artists if they leave the theatre for the big screen. Our country unfortunately doesn't financially support theatre artists."

"We can't blame artists if they leave the theatre for the big screen. There's no financial support for theatre artistes"

The ten-day festival took off with *Pencil Sey Brush Tak*, Ekjute's well-known and controversial play on the life of M.F. Husain, starring Tom Alter, Anoop 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.



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 reasons: 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 Hitchcock 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