Educating Through Wit

THE PIONEER 13

ARTS

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Educating through wit

When the NSD-TIE invited Wolfgang Kolneder to produce a play for children, he had the advantage of a very talented cast along with an adept set and lights designer Nissar Allana, and to top it all a music director of the calibre of B V Karanth.

With such a formidable group of artistes, one would expect something more than just a competent production. Kolneder himself has a background of having done plays of the "theatre of the absurd" of playwrights like Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter. One expected that this experience would translate itself into elements of fantasy being used in the play.

Talking trees and animals, the river and the drain as characters, did exist in *Pani Phir Gaya Pani Par* and their visualisation through Kirti V Sharma's costumes and M Ilyas' masks were attractive. However, their stylisation through drama was too simplistic. The play has been adapted to Indian conditions from an original production by Grips Theatre.

Music, dance and song are the most effective tools of communication with children — and one wishes that much more of it had been used in the play. Except for Vani Tripathi, who also has a charming stage presence, there were no other singing voices. This is not to say that it was not a neat production — except that one's expectations were higher.

Pani Phir Gaya Pani Par educates kids about water pollution. It shatters the myth that unlike cities, villages are free of environmental pollution. A father and son who get stifled by urban pollution decide to go to the countryside. In the village the city boy, Vicky (Abdul Latif), befriends the village lad, Bansi (Suwarn Rawat).

They take a voyage on the river in a raft and discover that there is a different set of problems in the villages. The water is highly polluted by human waste and dumping of hazardous chemicals by industries. This results in a chain of toxic deaths of animals and vegetation.

Many interesting characters have been introduced. The most effective among them were Laxmikant Shetgaonkar's rendition of Pillai, Jaya Barnela's Nati and Charru Sharma's Dadi.

Jyoti Dogra with her versatility in many different roles and Vani Tripathi with her clear diction and confident characterisation of the River were impressive. The duo also handled the fight between the river and the drain with gusto and good timing.

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