

In a Contemporary Milieu

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ARTS

THE PIONEER 13

In a contemporary milieu



FOOTLIGHTS

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Romeo and Juliet

by NSD Second Year

The NSD second year students' production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Anuradha Kapoor and translated by Atul Tiwari at the Ghalib Auditorium last week was in keeping with the current NSD trend of experimental theatre. The play was recast visually in a contemporary urban milieu.

The newly rediscovered Ghalib Auditorium has the intimacy of the SRC Basement and the seating capacity of the main auditorium. It lends itself well to the optimum usage of its space. With Arpita Singh's sets, consisting of painted blocks, ropes and swings decorated with props like wheels, umbrellas, and balloons, a mobile like flexibility of composition was created.

Dolly Ahluwalia chose black glossy tights with red scars and gowns for women and T-shirts, shorts and jeans for men with different colour schemes for the Montagues and the Capulets, setting the pace for the stylisation of presentation. The movements were brisk and the actors used the swings like balls and other props in an acrobatic fashion lending the show with far greater mobility than seen in Kapoor's earlier production done under the Vivadi banner.

Although it is believed that a lot of skill and learned guidance are needed for an intelligent understanding of Shakespeare, the directness of his appeal remains even for the lay man. As the editor of *The First Folio* recommended the plays for everyone, how "odd so ever" his brains be, since, Shakespeare is not a didactic playwright and understanding of the reasoning of his plays usually comes on subconsciously.

The fear of interpreting Shakespeare what puts the challenge in it. Of late the old reverence to the Bard has given way

to an investigative kind of irreverence. While today, Shakespeare's plays are performed all over the world and new kinds of experimental work finds inspiration in them let's face it, any attempt to rewrite Shakespeare cannot enhance the text in any way.

It can, at best, give yet another dimension to viewing the text. No wonder Atul Tiwari, the translator of the Shakespearean play, most candidly compared his attempt at translation with climbing the Everest or swimming the ocean. Yet, reinterpreting Shakespeare's

intact even while borrowing the imagery from the English.

According to Peter Brook, "In the second half of the 20th century in England, we are faced with the infuriating fact that Shakespeare is still our model" and this, despite the fact that since the days of Shakespeare, outlooks and political ideas have changed. Shakespeare's contemporaries almost unanimously believed in authoritarian monarchy, they accepted a police state and believed that there was divine intervention in history. Most of them were bigoted enough to hold the fun-

mula film with its associative imagery. The vast sweep of music ranging from classical to modern, Indian to western, added a universal and youthful dimension.

On opening any text of Shakespeare, one's attention can be held by a few lines of verse or a complexly constructed sentence or just one glittering or perceptive word. The bard had an absolute command over words, evocation of images, creation of sounds, rhythm, metre and the building up of texture of the text.

After overcoming the initial



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plays, does help in the understanding of the text, which is one of the objectives of a student production.

Translating Shakespeare even in English is not easy. For example, what was called 'presently' then, means immediately today, 'will' meant 'lust' 'rage' was 'folly' and 'silly' strangely meant that somebody was 'innocent'. In Hindi, the context too, is different. Judging by the complexity of the problem, Atul's translation skirted the difficulties intelligently by interweaving the prose with the poetry and keeping the colloquialism of the language

damentalist view that a man should be burnt at the stake for religious heresies. Maybe it is the medieval outlook in *Romeo and Juliet* that still finds its echoes in a third world society like India.

No wonder the echoes of the tale of *Romeo and Juliet* can be seen in at least half a dozen Bollywood films every year. Love amidst family rivalry is a formula which has been heavily overused. Anuradha Kapoor's attempt to relocate *Romeo and Juliet* in a claustrophobic cityscape, amongst other things, almost lampooned, maybe unintentionally, the for-

awe over his lyricism, one's attention is engaged by the highly evolved individual characters. Many of the early critiques on Shakespeare, were, about his characters and controversy about them still continues as if they were living beings.

Despite its many strengths, it was in the area of characterisation that the production suffered. Even though there was an abundance of enthusiasm, except for Geetanjali Sherikar as the nurse, most other actors lacked the variation required for evolution of well-sketched personalities.