

String Theory

The 11th edition of Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival brings together the old and new in puppetry

PALLAVI PUNDIR

THE Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival, as reiterated over the last ten years, has something for everyone. This time, Festival Director Dadi Pudumjee points out that majority of productions are for family viewing, and an odd two shows for teenagers and adults. There are interesting additions, for instance, the entry of Portugal, the technique of Bauhaus dance theatre presented by Israel's The Train Theatre, and a first-of-its-kind seminar. "The seminar is very special as it features Indian puppeteers who will discuss how they have changed their techniques over the years," says Pudumjee. *Talk* lists some highlights of this edition.



Aakaar Puppet Theatre will present *Dhola Maru*

FOLK ON THE FORE

THREE Indian directors and puppet companies will present folk classics on stage. While Dadi Pudumjee will showcase *Heer ke Waris*, about the eternal love story of Heer and Ranjha, based on the renowned 18th century text *Kitab-e-Ishq* by renowned Punjabi Sufi poet Waris Shah, Aakaar Puppet Theatre will present the tale's Rajasthani counterpart — the story of Dhola and Maru, directed by Puran Bhat. Meanwhile, Shadow Puppet Theatre of Odisha will bring to life 18th century poet Biswanath Khuntia's *Bichitra Ramayan*. The 60-minute production has been directed by Guru Khageswar Pradhan and performed by Ravan Chhaya Natya Sansada, possibly the only surviving group working in the style from Orissa.

PUPPET TALK

WHEN it's not all play, the festival will focus on issues in traditional and modern Indian puppetry through a two-day seminar. The event, organised by IGNCA in collaboration with Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust and Sangeet Natak Akademi, will be held at IGNCA on April 11 and 12, and will feature scholars and puppeteers from states such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Orissa among others. At the same time, IGNCA will put up its own collection of puppets at Matighar.

LA FEMME

Spain's Alejandro Prieto and The Winged Cranes strike a universal chord with the issues of gender roles through their production *Bernarda's Backstage*. Adela is a beautiful Spanish woman who has to comply to her mother and follow the traditional role of women in Spanish society. This is a story about rebellion and explores themes such as passion, repression and freedom. Along with puppetry, one will see dance, video projections and unique lighting, bringing a bold visual tribute to women across the world.

**A scene from
*Bernarda's Backstage***



THE WORLD IN A CUBE

ONE has seen cubism in art and architecture, metamorphosing broken up objects and reassembled into abstract forms. Israel's The Train Theatre is inspired by the Bauhaus dance theatre and recreates a cubic world where anything can be a square. The visually dynamic production *The Cubes Circus*, directed by Galia Levy-Grad, has

artistes use square costumes and props. Inspired by Grad's children's book *Tsafuf*, the award-winning 45-minute mime performance combines modern puppetry, sculpture and dance theatre.



**The Train Theatre
will present
*The Cubes Circus***

Ishara International Puppet Theatre Festival will be held at India Habitat Centre (Lodhi Road), Epicentre (Gurgaon) and Club Patio (Gurgaon) from April 8 to 16. Tickets for all shows are priced at Rs 350. Check the schedule at isharapuppet.com. Contact: 26011430/432