**Volume 4│Theatre**

Every now and then it is declared that theatre will be dead. And every time it has survived this morbid prophecy. This book brings together the important question of what is theatre, or rather what should be theatre, and finds the answer to its survival.

From traditional performances in temples to folk expression, the book looks at the evolution of theatre to its modern avatar and discovers that at each stage, theatre has been honest to its time.

Be it Nautanki, Tamasha or as a progressive mass mobilization medium, theatre lives in its immediacy and intimacy. It is this magic of theatre which this book captures, through its many characters and artistes who when the curtain is drawn become ‘one’—performers.

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**Pathfinders**

* **Habib Tanvir** produced his first important work, *Agra Bazaar*. The large group of actors perfectly co-ordinated, the crowded look of the *bazaar* and the excellent use of music were to become trade­marks of his theatre. He described the play as ‘the first serious experiment integrating song with drama and rural actors with urban’. Tanvir’s contribution to contemporary theatre and culture is his remarkable incorporation of folk and tribal theatre traditions, music and language into his modern formal craft, his affinity with Brechtian theatre and his left-wing views.
* **Ebrahim Alkazi’s** knowledge of and feeling for the fine arts led him to seek a new aesthetic. He experimented with design and the orchestration of large groups on stage. In Mumbai, he had converted his rooftop into an elegant open-air theatre space. He continued with this concept in Delhi and his productions of Mohan Rakesh’s *Ashadh Ka Ek Din (*1962) on the NSD premises, Dharmavir Bharati’s *Andha Yug* (1963) amid the ruins of Ferozeshah Kotla and Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq* (1974) in the Purana Qila have become legends for their spectacle and stun­ning visual impact.
* Actor–director–playwright **Utpal Dutt** began his career as the second grave-digger in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* when he was in school. He took theatre beyond the geographical parameters of the stage to street corners and open spaces. He insisted that theatre could never be meaningful if it did not consider the political ethos within which it had to negotiate the terms of the volatile and fluctuating relationships between human beings.
* A post-graduate in Fine Arts from the J.J. School of Art in Mumbai, **Amol Palekar** began his career in the arts as a painter. He had seven solo exhibitions and participated in many group shows. In 1967, he turned to theatre after he met Satyadev Dubey. Imbibing Dubey’s commitment, work ethic and passion for experimentation, Palekar became a leading practitioner of *avant-garde* theatre.
* **Satyadev Dubey’s** production of Sartre’s *No Exit* (*Band Darwaze*) in 1965 was the next play to make a deep impression on critics and audience alike. In the five decades that fol­lowed this play, Dubey directed one, sometimes two plays a year, in Hindi and Marathi, and later in English. He is arguably the most prolific director in Indian theatre.
* A busy and internationally rated and highly respected actor in Indian cinema and abroad, Shah stands out with his continued commitment to theatre despite his busy film schedules, something that cannot be said of most NSD-trained actors. **Naseeruddin Shah** received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2000 for his peerless contribution to Indian Theatre.