

Faltering start,

sparkling finish

Sparks flew (literally) at the Hyderabad Dramatic Circle's presentation of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play "The Visit" at Bal Bhavan, in the Public Gardens on November 19. Directed by M. Nagabhushana Sarma, the production had been sponsored by the Max Mueller Bhavan, Hyderabad.

After a faltering start, fifteen minutes behind schedule, the play took off at a better pace with the characters becoming familiar with the stage. The theme set in Guellen, a dying provincial town in Europe, unfolds with the townsmen awaiting the arrival of Clair Zeehnassian, played by Polly Cheney, a fabulously wealthy old woman returning after an absence of 45 years. Looked upon as the saviour of the town she announces an endowment of one million pounds (or dollars, the cast could not decide the currency), half of which is to be distributed among the town-folk. Her one condition is the execution of her former lover who betrayed her many years ago. She waits as slowly the Guellener's are corrupted by the

brutalising effect of their greed. The relentless drive of the old woman's revenge is fulfilled when the townsmen kill the seducer and she leaves the town.

The cast of 30 odd players took in their stride the slight contemps of the burning up of an overhead lamp which extinguished itself before much damage could be done. They resumed the story from the beginning of the scene. B. S. Prakash as Alfred III, the seducer gave a fine performance while Chakravarti Mavilapalli's schoolmaster was good in parts. Shankar Melkote made a good mayor.

The play was an ambitious project with a poor stage. At some points the small stage looked crowded with too many players not quite sure of what to do. Stage management could have been better with back drops which reached the floor instead of ending five inches higher. But I must say a three hour stint on the wobbly chairs of the auditorium is a trifle for the back muscles.

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