



অ্যাকাডেমি আজ কাল পরশু ৬টায়  
হার্ভার্ড বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ইংরাজি বিভাগের সহযোগে

নান্দীকার-সৃজন

শেক্সপিয়রের হারিয়ে - যাওয়া নাটক

**যাহা চাই...**

মঞ্চ পরিকল্পনা : সঞ্চয়ন ঘোষ আবহ : স্বাতীলেখা সেনগুপ্ত গৌতম হালদার

আলো : সুশান্ত বড়ল / স্বরূপ দাস রূপসজ্জা : রঞ্জিত দত্ত

পোশাক : সোহিনী সেনগুপ্ত হালদার শিল্প নির্দেশনা : সৌমিক-পিয়ালী

অপর লেপথ্য সহযোগী : নয়ন-মৈনাক মদন/টিঙ্কু বরতন দাস নিতাই দাস  
হিমাংশু পাল মনোজ প্রসাদ বাবলু দাস কার্তিক দাস বন্দাবন দাস রাম সাউ  
চন্দ্রিমা শাসনাল গৌতম বসাক মিঠু দে বিকাশ বিশ্বাস বিশ্বজিৎ ঘোষ মজুমদার  
পরিমল মুখার্জি, অনির্বান চৌধুরী নবনীতা দাস কাঞ্চন আমিন প্রণব দে স্বস্তিকা ধর  
দুলাল মুখার্জি শান্তনু ঘোষ মনোজিৎ দাস

**যাহা চাই...**

উৎস : সেরভান্তেস শেক্সপিয়র রবীন্দ্রনাথ

নাটক : সুকান্ত চৌধুরী

নির্দেশনা : রুদ্রপ্রসাদ সেনগুপ্ত ও গৌতম হালদার

অভিনয়ে : গৌতম হালদার দেবশঙ্কর হালদার পার্থপ্রতিম দেব  
সুমন্ত গাঙ্গুলী শান্তনাথ সাউ শান্তনু ঘোষ সুপ্রিয় চক্রবর্তী  
বুলন সরকার সুমনা মুখোপাধ্যায় রিমি মজুমদার অন্তরা ব্যানার্জী  
সোহিনী সেনগুপ্ত হালদার রুদ্রপ্রসাদ সেনগুপ্ত স্বাতীলেখা সেনগুপ্ত

• হলে টিকিট •

A great start to the year for theatre and music lovers. In January, Nandikar presents the second interpretation of The Bard's mystery play and Congo Square brings keyboardist Scott Kinsey to town

# Shakespeare's lost play now in Kolkata

Satarupa Basu

**C**ardenio is coming to town. Well, fictionally that is. The character, which first finds mention in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, has been doing the rounds in literature since then. Shakespeare is said to have written a play on him which is now lost. Much later, in the 18th Century, scholar Theobald claimed to unearth it. It did a disappearing act again, until eminent Shakespearean scholar Stephen Greenblatt at Harvard University revived the mystery in 2005 as part of a greater project on cultural mobility.



Greenblatt along with Charles Mee, a leading Broadway playwright set the play, along Shakespeare's interpretation, in contemporary Italy with Italian and American characters. The play,

in its interpretation of complex questions of marital harmony and suspicion, examines issues of sexual and social relations.

Greenblatt's socio-cultural project kick started similar projects in various countries. The first of such refashionings was staged in Japan in 2006.

The second interpretation is to be staged in India, by Kolkata-based theatre group Nandikar.



**In focus:** Shakespeare's play was revived by Stephen Greenblatt

In collaboration with Harvard University's English department and translated in Bengali by Shakespearean scholar and professor Sukanta Chaudhuri, the play, *Jaha Chai*, is being directed by Rudraprasad Sengupta and Goutam Halder.

Chaudhuri, in an effort to in-

terpret along contemporary lines has drawn on Rabindranath Tagore's works, namely *Ghare Baire* and *Charulata*. "In a departure from Chaudhuri's translation, we have given the play a serio-comic angle," says Rudraprasad Sengupta. "At the most obvious level, the play is a comedy, at another a more serious exploration of minds, relationships and at a still higher one, of truth and representation," he adds.

Greenblatt, along with the initiator of the play's Japanese version, will be present at the occasion.

The play, with a cast comprising Goutam Halder, Debshankar Halder, Sohini Sengupta Halder, Swatilekha Sengupta and Rudraprasad among others, will premier at Academy of Fine Arts on January 12 at 6.30 pm and on January 13 and 14 (2.30 pm and 6.30 pm each day).

satarupa.basu@hindustantimes.com

# Shakespeare, found via Tagore

RESHMI SENGUPTA

Calcutta will discover Shakespeare's famous lost play *Cardenio* through Rabindranath Tagore — and explore the universal truths of sexual love and jealousy that intrigued both the bards — later this month.

*Jaha Chal...*, a modern play written by Prof Sukanta Chaudhuri on the lines of *Cardenio*, is part of the "cultural mobility" project initiated by American Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt and sponsored by Harvard University.

Greenblatt's motive is to look at how conjugal relationship and jealousy — thought to be the theme of *Cardenio* — develop and vary from culture to culture. The project's first production was staged in Japan a year ago.

Shakespeare is said to have written *Cardenio* inspired by an episode from Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, where the character Cardenio tests the chastity of his wife by asking his friend to seduce her.

"Greenblatt wanted a play located in India and so he approached writer Amitav Ghosh, who asked me to write it. I took a look at the play written by Greenblatt and Charles Mee, and wrote *Jaha Chal...* in Bengali. Then I translated it into English for Greenblatt. He liked it and Nandikar liked it, too," says Chaudhuri.

Greenblatt and Broadway playwright Mee had constructed their version of *Cardenio* based on 18th Century Shakespeare scholar Theobald's adapta-



**TELL IT TO THE BARDS:** Nandikar troupe members rehearse for *Jaha Chal...*, with Rudraprasad Sengupta directing. Picture by Aranya Sen

tion. They set it around modern American characters, located it in Italy and also wove in the actual discovery of the lost play, which is then enacted.

With that as the basis, Chaudhuri has transplanted the context to an upper middle-class Bengali family, where a triangular relationship unfolds between Nikhilesh, his wife Bimala and friend Sandip from Tagore's *Ghare Baire*. They discover Tagore's *Nashtu Neer* — supposed to be lost just like *Cardenio* — and enact it.

The play-within-a-play in *Jaha Chal...* reflects the Bhupati-Charulata-Amal triangle. "But I took particular care not to repeat lines from the film *Charulata*, except one which has been deliberately kept," adds Chaudhuri.

Rudraprasad and Swatilekha Sengupta play the theatre couple Pramathesh-Sarojini, whose home in a Santal district is the venue for the sub-play. Sohini Sengupta Halder is Bimala, Goutam Halder is Nikhilesh and Debshankar Halder is Sandip. "There is an interplay of illusion and reality. Initially, we spent a lot of time to decide on the acting style. But finally, we went ahead with whatever the text threw up," says Rudraprasad, who is directing *Jaha Chal...* along with Goutam.

*Jaha Chal...* will premiere at the Academy of Fine Arts on January 12, to be attended by Greenblatt and Mee. "The aim has been to bring out the maximum ironical and comic potential of the play and lightly touch upon the philosophical questions," says Chaudhuri.





# Finding El Dorado

composed one himself, with experimental American playwright Charles Mee, and invited others to do so, too. Following a Japanese version, Renaissance guru and debutant dramatist Sukanta Chaudhuri wrote *Jaha Chai* (a consciously Shakespearean title in Bengali), Nandikar's latest production.

As in Cervantes' episode, a husband (Goutam Halder) foolishly decides to test the virtue of his wife (Sohini Sengupta-Halder) by persuading his best friend (Debsankar Halder) to try to seduce her. The attempt almost backfires, because the intimacy that grows between Sohini and Debsankar makes Goutam jealous. Such a situation can develop into unadulterated slapstick, like the Marx Brothers, or high tragedy, like *Othello*.

More likely in Shakespeare's case, given the nature of his last romances and valedictory collaborations with Fletcher, *Cardenio* would have turned out a psychological study of the green-eyed monster, though ending happily. We cannot erase the memories of Leontes, morbidly



suspicious of his queen's relationship with his best friend, or the scepticism in *Henry VIII* or the tragicomic take on the Chaucerian *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Instead, Nandikar leads us merrily down the garden path — literally, thanks to Sanchayan Ghosh's sylvan décor — of romantic farce, creating an effect closer to the Bard's earliest Plautine comedies. The first half is eminently risible, as when co-director Goutam tiptoes upstage straining to overhear the 'test', or in his mannerism of kneading the hands of those conversing with him. Situation comedy is at its best here.

Peaking early, however, it has nowhere to go in the second half except wind down to its conventional resolution. Despite the playfulness, the insertion of a

play within the play, now a hackneyed device in theatre, adds little. The tense possibilities of an extra-marital friendship are swept behind the creepers, and the blame shifted to Goutam's ex-girlfriend, who becomes a potential threat to Sohini, but convenient to pair off Debsankar with, much to everyone's relief.

Goutam's affected stage voice may fit his moronic part, but has become self-parodic by now. As his mother, Swatilekha Sengupta acts much better, cleverly putting on an eccentric attitude that convinces us as to where he inherited his traits from. Debsankar and Sohini give dependable performances as usual. Most of the other roles are dispensable in the script itself, including that of Goutam's father, played by co-director Rudraprasad Sengupta, who merely stands around, smiling benignly. But if you want to laugh, *Jaha Chai* does the trick.