

Calcutta Times

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2012 | ADVERTORIAL, ENTERTAINMENT PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

OF INDIA

What's HOT

YOUR WEEKEND PLANNER

PAGES 14-16

ART MUSIC THEATRE DANCE

SATURDAY 8 DECEMBER 2012
THE TIMES OF INDIA | WHAT'S HOT

15

The world joins hands for Bhopal

Bhopal, written by Canadian playwright Rahul Varma, is perhaps one of the most staged plays of the last decade. The work, which revolves around the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984, was translated in Hindi by thespian Habib Tanvir — one of the most prominent faces in the fight for justice for the disaster's victims — who aptly titled it *Zakhreli Hawa*. A theatre group from the US, Epic Actors' Workshop and Bond Street Theatre, staged the play in the city, ironically, on the same day that the tragedy had struck Bhopal 28 years ago.

Directed by Joanna Sherman, the play takes you through the plight of people who lived around or worked for the Union Carbide India Limited, referred to as Carbide International in the play, before and after the industrial disaster took place. It begins with Dr Sonya Labonté (played by Anna Zastrow), a Canadian NGO worker, being slammed by the Madhya Pradesh government for "spreading malice" against the pesticide company alleging that it was contaminating nearby areas. Representing the government in its most corrupt avatar is Sajal Mukherjee as chief minister Jagannath Bhandari, who tries his best to conceal Carbide's irresponsible conduct in return for "substantial" gains. But it's Soumendru Bhattacharya as



A scene from Bhopal

THEATRE REVIEW

FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Play	: Bhopal (English)
Director	: Joanna Sherman
Duration	: 90 minutes
Cast	: Soumendru, Michael, Gargi, Sajal, Anna
Rating	: ★★★★★

Devraj Sarthi, the CEO of the Bhopal branch of Carbide, and Michael McGuigan as Warren Anderson, the CEO of the company, who steal the show. The change in Sarthi's body language from the beginning of the play where he's all for concealing the company's malpractices with his unapologetic techniques, to the end where he's rendered in an irreversible situation, is praiseworthy.

Anna's act, seemingly easiest to portray as she mostly vents her angst against the "contaminated" situation, deserves special mention for its measured execution. Gargi Mukherjee as Izzat also puts up a fine show of desperation as she loses her daughter to the gas disaster and resorts to hopeless measures to deal with the situation.

The production gains from the video design by Michael McGuigan and lighting by Olivia Harris. Supporting the narrative of the play are visuals relevant to the topic which are projected on a screen behind the stage — the picture collage of the victims which appear on the screen add a poignant note to the drama. The music department, however, craves help as the soundtracks being and end rather abruptly and it does not help in the smooth flow of the play.

Sreemita Bhattacharya

Poor ★ Average ★★ Good ★★★ Very Good ★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★★