On One Stage

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Delhi will see a grand display of theatre traditions of the Asia Pacific region at a meet organised by the UNESCO

This New Year, hundreds of young theatrepersons from China, Japan, Thailand and New Zealand will be packing their bags for Delhi. They are delegates to the Asia Pacific Bureau (APB) theatre meet that will be held at the National School of Drama (NSD) from January 3 to January 8, the first such international gathering in the country.

A Unesco initiative, the APB brings together drama students and teachers from across borders “to ensure an active contact with each other and improve understanding of varied theatre practices,” says Anuradha Kapoor, director, NSD. The first meet was held at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, China, two years ago.

On the cards are seminars and workshops as well as student performances and an exhibition. Even as Kapoor goes through the itinerary of the meet, the students of the school are sprucing up their productions. NSD will present shows ranging from adaptations of Charles Dickens’ works to tales from Andhra Pradesh. Under the guidance of Tripurari Sharma, the second year class has adapted William Shakespeare’s Othello in nautanki. “We’ve also incorporated other performing arts of the Braj like lat chalana and kushti into the play,” says Sharma. Krishna Mathur, eminent nautanki exponent, has come on board for this production.

“Across the region, we have a similar theatre tradition, a highly stylistic form that includes percussion and martial arts among others. This is different from the text-driven realistic performances of the Anglo-American genre. At the meet, we will discuss the methodologies to create the next generation of theatre practitioners,” adds Kapoor.

The Toi Whakaari from New Zealand, which is trying to integrate indigenous traditions, she says, could pick up tips from Indian and Chinese schools, where various traditional forms co-exist in a theatreperson’s repertoire. Indian students, on the other hand, could benefit from the backstage discipline of Japan and China.