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**CHAPTERS' UNEVEN  
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**MAYA THEATRE ADAPTS  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S  
POLITICAL ROMANCE**

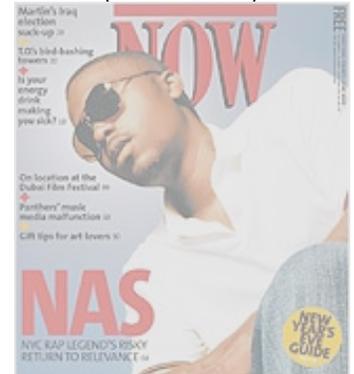
BY Jon Kaplan

**FOUR CHAPTERS** by Rabindranath Tagore, directed by Oporajito Bhattacharjee, with Sasha Ghoshal, Dharini Woollcombe, Anand Rajaram, Dinesh Sachdev, Pablo Silveira and Bhattacharjee. Presented by Maya Theatre at the Classic Theatre (1300 Gerrard East). Runs to December 12, Thursday-Saturday 8 pm, matinee Sunday 2 pm. \$15-\$20, Sunday pwyc-\$15. 905-507-6776. Rating: **NNN**

Romantic love and nationalistic ardour go head to head in **Four Chapters**, adapted from the 1934 novel by Nobel Prize winner and pacifist **Rabindranath Tagore**. Presented by the South Asian troupe **Maya Theatre**, the play offers tantalizing philosophical moments and some passionate performances, but at times it's mired in a stiff presentational form. At the work's centre are the lovers Ela ( **Dharini Woollcombe** ) and Atin ( **Pablo Silveira** ), who have both come under the sway of revolutionary leader Indranath ( **Anand Rajaram** ), whose goal is to free Bengal from British control. The Western-educated Indranath teaches a popular doctrine of violence to rid the country of its colonizers, while Ela, also devoted to the ideal of an independent nation, is just as strongly pacifistic in her beliefs.

The work has a formal style both in its writing and its direction by **Oporajito Bhattacharjee**

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, who also plays another follower of Indranath. Even in intimate conversation, there's generally a reserve between characters. This is a play of dialogue and argumentation rather than action, with wide-ranging references to Arjuna, Dante, Krishna and Ibsen within the text's philosophy and imagistic poetry.

Rajaram brings a grave, dispassionate dignity to Indranath, along with a touch of amoral coldness, but it's the emotional Woolcombe and the flirtatious, sensual Silveira who spark the production. Their scenes together have a growing warmth that takes on tragic dimensions by the work's end, when a choice has to be made between the personal and the political. As the singing narrator, **Sasha Ghoshal** makes more of an impression with his melodies than with his spoken words, which set the scene on the bare platforms of the set.

Despite the uneven production, there's a tangible excitement in the audience and onstage for Maya's mainstage theatre premiere, performed by a fully South Asian cast in a reclaimed Gerrard East warehouse. The evening begins with a brief concert by sitar player **Raju Raghavan** and tabla performer **Yashodhan Navathe**, which gets us in the mood for the piece. @

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