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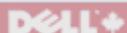
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ON STAGE

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**FOUR CHAPTERS**



**Featuring Sasha Ghoshal, Dharini Woolcombe. Based on the novel by Rabindranath Tagore. Adapted and directed by Oporajito Bhattachajee. Presented by Maya South Asian Theatre Company. To Dec 12. Wed-Sat 8pm; Sun mat 2pm. Wed-Thu \$15; Fri-Sat \$20; Sun mat PWYC/\$15 advance. Classic Theatre, 1300 Gerrard E. 905-507-6776.**



Rajaram and Woolcombe

To most downtown Toronto theatre-goers, Little India might as well be Mumbai for its proximity to the usual Bathurst-to-Berkeley-area haunts (a.k.a. The Axis of CanStage). But if *Four Chapters* is anything to go by, then downtowners could use a little eastward drift. This excellent play, adapted from the 1934 novel by the Indian Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, is the first production to tread the boards at the newly reopened Classic Theatre, located at the edge of Little India on Gerrard East.

The Classic has been many things in its lifetime: an acting space, a cinema, a porn palace, a vaudeville establishment, and -- until recently -- a disused warehouse. Over the past few months, however, the directors at the MAYA South Asian Theatre Company (who also produced and adapted *Four Chapters*) have begun to renovate the building, to function, once again, as a stage.

MAYA's play centres around two Bengali lovers, Ela (Dharini Woolcombe) and Atindra (Pablo Silveira). Ela works for Indranath (Anand Rajaram), the leader of an anti-British terrorist movement, whom Atindra, as a member of the pro-British ruling classes, has little care for. *Four Chapters* charts the destruction of the lovers' relationship, as the pair struggle to reconcile their affair with their opposing political ideologies and the violent backdrop of India's fight for independence.

Tagore is known as the "Indian Shakespeare," but "Indian Odets" might be just as apt: *Four Chapters* is an excessively talky, often static and didactic work (there's no set, just a background of black risers). The actors, though -- especially Silveira, Woolcombe and the narrator, Sasha Ghoshal -- give powerful, measured performances



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and writer/ director Oporajito Bhattachajee mostly justifies his minimalist choices. (It probably doesn't hurt, either, that Tagore's language is so beautiful.) All in all, though, this is a promising start for Maya and the Classic. **PAUL ISAACS**

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