

Le Fakir de Bénarès
Opéra de Bombay
Jamshed Bhabha Auditorium
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The Indian connection

The opera Fakir of Benares opens at Jamshed Bhabha auditorium today

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THIS evening, after almost two decades, an opera will be staged in Mumbai. The Fakir of Benares, directed by Muzaffar Ali, will unfold at the Jamshed Bhabha auditorium. The producer, Francis Wacziarg, is ambitious about placing India on the international map through this production.

"I'm looking forward to doing more operas. For some reason there are several French operas

with an Indian angle to them, so I hope to present them to this country very soon," he elaborates.

This 61-year-old who acquired Indian citizenship 13 years ago is currently worrying out the nitty-gritties of handling a 160-strong crew and cast, but his interests are diverse.

A journalist, who first came to India in 1969, Wacziarg extended his stay and took on the role of commercial attache to the French consulate in Mumbai. Four years later he moved to Delhi on assignment with BNP Paribas before setting up his own company to promote Indo French trade and joint ventures.

More interestingly, Wacziarg is a renowned restorer who has given a facelift to eight properties

throughout the country including the chain of Neemrana 'non-hotel' hotels. ("I don't like my hotels to be very formal. They're

comfortable places where people can relax," he says.) He has also co-authored two books on Rajasthan along with Aman Nath, Painted Walls of Shekhawati (1982), and Arts and Crafts of Rajasthan (1988) apart from being the founder of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). "I spend more than 50 per cent of my time on cultural and non profit activities," he grins.

The Fakir of Benares at Jamshed Bhabha Theatre, NCPA, Nariman Point, today and on January 4