

## Curtains up for MetroPlus Theatre Fest

*This year's line-up has a strong international flavour*



**German Ambassador to India Bernd Mutzelburg addressing the launch party of Theatre Fest 2008 of The Hindu MetroPlus in Chennai on Thursday.**

Chennai: The curtains went up for the MetroPlus Theatre Fest on Thursday night at The Park when theatre enthusiasts showed up to celebrate the launch of the fourth edition. This year's line-up has a strong international flavour with plays from New York, Seoul and a German production made in Chennai. Speaking at the party, Bernd Mutzelburg, the German Ambassador to India said, "Relationships are not only about economics or creating economic win-win situations for countries, they are about bringing together the brains and the hearts of people." Referring to the Fest, he said, "We can only grow together if we understand each other, if we appreciate each other and if we know about each other." In his welcome address N.Ram, Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu said that "while raising the bar, our organisers have ensured that the Fest retains its varied and eclectic character, which has been appreciated by varied audiences in the first three editions." "This year, with the help of the Goethe Institut, we created a new production, *Electronic City*, a play with a German director and a cast drawn almost entirely from Chennai," he said. "Over the past couple of months, the cast – which was settled through workshops with about 100 actors in the city – has been working at the Goethe Institut to put the play together." '*Electronic City*,' which will be staged on August 3, is a parable of our world deadened by technology and controlled by clocks. It has a hard experimental edge and no linear structure, Mr.Ram said. "Time is relative," said Johannes von Matuscha, Director of '*Electronic City*.' "That's what I experienced in the last six weeks. I was tense when I got to know that the rehearsing time was this short because in Germany, we are used to eight to nine full-day weeks. That tension was taken over from me when we explored the project with the wonderful dedicated professional cast of Indian actors," he said, terming his play "a social experiment." This year's edition has a lot of action built around the festival. A national symposium on "English Theatre in India: Challenge and Opportunity" will be open to all at Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall, the festival venue, on August 6. "On every performance day, we will have some interesting activity before the play commences outside the auditorium — from play readings through music to lessons in pottery making. There will be conversations with the directors of the play following the performances," Mr.Ram said. The festival begins on Friday with the Korean version of '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*' brought to India by the InKo Centre and the Korea Foundation, in association with AsiaNow Productions. Director Jung-Ung Jang of the award-winning Yohangza Theatre Company said that Korea and India shared a deep cultural connection in the past and an exchange of this kind would ensure that the ties between the countries are preserved. The other international production, '*The Whale*' from New York brought to the festival in association with the American Consulate General is an adaptation of Herman Melville's classic by Renee Philippi and Carlo Adinolfi of the Concrete Temple Theatre, will be staged on August 7.

### Indian productions

The Indian productions include A.R. Gurny's '*Love Letters*,' from Mumbai directed by Rahul da Cunha, '*The Suit*,' from Chandigarh by celebrated director, Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry and '*The President is Coming*,' a light-hearted comedy from the young Q Theatre Group from Mumbai. The winner of the MetroPlus Playwright Award 2008, Abhishek Majumdar, will do a reading from his winning entry, *Harlesden High Street*, during the festival. The rules and regulations for MetroPlus Playwright Award for 2009 will be published in MetroPlus shortly. The MetroPlus Theatre Fest is sponsored by Bose and Associate sponsors including LG, Nippon Paint, Club Mahindra Holidays and Bru, and staged in partnership with Radio One, Evam and the Park Hotels.

-Sudish Kamnath