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POTPOURRI

Aamir Raza Husain and Virat Husain bring to Bengaluru their latest production, *The Lion in Winter*

Play with every element

SRAVASTI DATTA

"A critic, famous in London, once wrote, the sets are so beautiful, it's a pity the actors came in the way." Even though Aamir Raza Husain laughs quoting this, his productions, most notably *The Fifty Day War*, based on the Kargil War, and *Legend of Ram*, were landmarks in theatre primarily for the sets.

While *The Fifty Day War* re-created a live battle field, *Legend of Ram* had a mobile auditorium, seating an audience of 700 with huge and ornate sets that gave the feel of the epic.

Virat Husain and Raza Husain run Stagedoor Theatre with the belief that standards in theatre must not be compromised. Stagedoor has presented over 150 productions with 500 shows. Their outdoor productions include, *Shehanshahnama* and *A Tear*

drop in time. Their indoor productions include *The Itch*, *Move Over*, *Murder* and Agatha Christie's *Mousetrap*. In town with their new production, *The Lion in Winter*, the duo spoke of the importance of theatre not just being the medium of the actor, but an amalgam of various elements.

Using minimal sets seems to be a preferred choice, these days. "Neither of us like this slipshod way of theatre. An experience of a theatre combines sets, light, sounds, music, the actors, every element," says Virat. But Raza Husain stresses that when it comes to staging a large-scale production, it is important to be true to the story. "Peter Brooks in his nine-hour production of *The Mahabharata* took the epic apart. It started as a car and ended up with a bicycle! An epic must be presented like an ep-

ic, otherwise it's not an epic. I have watched *Romeo and Juliet*, in which there were Indian costumes and Bengali sweets were distributed, and a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the actors in suits!" says the Padmashri awardee.

The Lion in Winter is about personal and political power struggle in the court of Henry II of England. "It is all about relationships between fathers and sons, wives and husbands," says Virat, adding, "There was a lady who told us she related to the play, because no matter what we do for our children, mothers are always blamed. We've recognised that people and relationships as the forefront of the story." *The Lion in Winter*, sponsored by Aircel, will be performed on October 2, 7 p.m. at Regency Hall, ITC Windsor, 25, Windsor Square, Golf Course Road.



MORE IS GOOD For Virat and Raza Husain's sets