

childhood icon Martina Navratilova ("She won her first few things about his personal style. "I love jewellery," he con- I win a tournament," he says. "I've got 54 of them. I got my the time being the only M he wants to talk about is Martina."

'All we need is an opportunity'

NGO Akanksha to stage musical with 150 underprivileged kids

KHUSHNUMA DADACHANJI
Times News Network

"I'm acting from the heart," says 14-year-old Zaffar, the lead actor of NGO Akanksha's musical *Operation Khazana*.
He's one of the 150 Akanksha kids who've been bitten by the acting bug. Their enthusiasm on stage is apparent as they sing their lungs out, rehearsing the *What a Feeling!* set — the play's finale.

The two-hour song-and-dance extravaganza is a project undertaken by Akanksha and Indicorps (a US-based fellowship programme) to maximise the creative potential of slum children in Mumbai and Pune. Directed by young Harvard graduate Krishnan Unnikrishnan, it revolves around children trying to find hidden treasure so as to save their Akanksha centre.

Says Shaheen Mistri, founder of Akanksha, "I had always wanted to do a musical for years, to bring out the creative potential in underprivileged children and show the city what they can achieve."

The city's creative minds have lent a helping hand. The musical has been choreographed by Shiamak Davar and Dodo Bhujwala, costumes done by designer James Ferreira, Sheetal Design Studio and Kalpesh Dresswala.

The kids' dedication is enormous. Lead actress Priyanka (aka Razia) remarks, "I finished my history and english exams and ran for the technical rehearsal."

Though Krishnan has done theatre and

performed in plays, directing *Operation Khazana* is a whole new experience. "At first, all we did was run to Akanksha centres, to audition over 800 kids. We picked up anyone who had the slightest singing or dancing talent," he says.

Initially, getting the cast to act and get the desired expression on stage was tough. Says Krishnan, "The kids would never look into each other's eyes. So for a few rehearsals, all I made them do was stare at each other for a few hours!"

LITTLE WONDERS

Acting apart, to give a *Bambaiyya* feel to the show, the play incorporates tunes of songs such as *Aati kya Khandala*, *You are my sohniya* along with songs from *Flashdance*, *Westside Story* and *Sound of Music*. And the songs have lyrics both in English and Hindi, painstakingly written by Akanksha teach-



Akanksha kids rehearse for *Operation Khazana*

ers. For them, bringing 150 kids on stage was nothing less than a Herculean task. Especially since some of the young actors are from Pune. Says Shaheen, "For technical rehearsals, we brought the children down from Pune. They were quite dazed since for most it was their first train ride out and then they had to come on stage, in front of the lights and asked to dance."

The kids are simply proud of *Operation Khazana*. Pleads Prashant, in a hand-painted monster's costume, "We want to perform more shows. Just give us an opportunity!"

Operation Khazana will be held on February 4 at Nehru Centre and on February 9 at Kala Ghoda Art Festival

international
to a medley of



and grace as



is one of the
to singing hits



e with a medley

overs and shakers
2003 on Page 3

n't equate my role in the party to a post'

at you suggested
ame for executive presi-
Shiv Sena?

te some time, I was think-
I even spoke to (Shiv Sena
shah Thackeray about it
sion was, both me and
uld decide.

pted you to do this?
was the right way to end
ver 'differences' between
me. It's impossible to run
er the shadow of such a
tween two leaders. We
ty on this controversy.
o differences between
me.

reports of Bharatiya

Vidyardhi Sena (BVS) cadres being
unhappy with Uddhav's elevation.
As BVS president, how do you

react to this?
This is really funny.
First, a section of
the media plants
such a malicious,
one-sided story and I
have to give my
reaction to it. Why
should I give my
opinion on this?

What role do you see for yourself
in the newly-restructured Sena?
I'm a Sena leader and for the moment
it makes me happy. I've never aspired
for any post. I don't equate my role in
the party to acquiring a post. Maybe

it'll happen in the future, but as of
now, our focus clear — to strengthen
the party and fulfil Balasaheb's dream
of getting back into
power in Maharashtra.

**'We needed clarity
on this controversy.
There are no differ-
ences between
Uddhav and me'**

How do you fancy
your chances for the
forthcoming polls?
I saw great support
during my recent tour
of western
Maharashtra. The
Democratic Front (DF)

is a non-working, shaky coalition.
We'll be back in power soon; it's a
mere formality.

SMITA DESHMUKH
smita.deshmukh@timesgroup.com



(And by the time you discover You'll have to live with

If you're planning a Europe tour this summer, you're choosing your tour operator for Europe. Because it begins as a bait but in the end the package is suspense (not on!). For example, one tour operator family (not per person) worth shopping voucher free cost-price doubles. Read below:

- Basic Tour Cost**
- Plus Airport Tax (Rs.5,000 converted in USD)
 - Plus Visa Charges (Rs.7,500 converted in USD)
 - Plus Eurostar Surcharge
 - Plus Insurance (Rs.1,000 converted in USD)

- The following attractions are Optional**
- Plus Mount Titlis, Lucerne, Lake cruise, H
 - Plus Jungfrau, Interlaken
 - Plus Glacier 3000 with Geneva
 - Plus Paris with Night Show

- The following attractions are not included**
- Plus Disney Studio
 - Plus Eiffel Tower Level 3
 - Plus Tea/coffee at Mt. Titlis
 - Plus Yoga instructions
 - Plus Dandiya evening
 - Plus Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum
 - Plus Family Photo
 - Plus Video
 - Plus Mt. Rigi (Queen of hills)
 - Plus Innsbruck (Austria)
 - Plus Swarovski Crystal World
 - Plus Phantasieland
 - Plus P & O Overnight Cruise with Private

Gross Tour Cost
Minus Shopping Voucher

Net tour cost of other tour operators

So, what's the deal?
Compare this with Raj's 14 days Jewels
USD 2799 with a bonus of Rs.21,000 discount
find Raj's tour cheaper by Rs.23,350 (USD 471)!



MUMBAI : Chowpaty View Bldg., Opp. Sakh Sagar, S. V.P. Road,
9821527084, 9821527095 Tel: 23672424/25, 2362992
93694272 Andheri: 9820033690 Tel: 26316415 Santacruz: