

Padamsee himself has played Svengali to innumerable women and a few men as well. From Dolly Thakore to Sharon Prabhakar, Suneta Rao to Alisha Chinai, Kabir Bedi to Dalip Tahil, Shiamak Davar to Rachel Reuben, they all started out with him before going on to greater things. Thakore was a model co-ordinator before she met Padamsee who helped groom her into one of the most recognised faces in newscasting in Indian television. Alisha Chinai came to Padamsee singing slightly off-key yet he awarded her the famous *Another Suitcase in Another Hall...* song in *Evita* which raised the goosebumps in the audience and was the beginning of a sensational pop career. Which same song was subsequently assigned to a dancer in the play called Suneta Rao who convinced the director that she could do it. Today Rao's snazzy song-and-dance acts come as a direct inspiration from the director who showed her the spit-and-polish routine.

As we talk socialite Devika Bhojwani saunters in with hubby Suresh. The duo have come to rehearse for Tuesday's show for which Devika will be singing Virgin Mary's song in *Jesus Christ Superstar* just as she did exactly 25 years ago when the play was running at Birla Matushri. Bhojwani lets us in on the not-inconsiderable fact that she met her husband through the play - he was apparently transfixed by her stage persona and came to meet her afterwards. "Three months later, we were married," says Devika simply, "so you can say that the play changed my life." She's not the only one who owes Alyque one: Kabir Bedi met and fell in



1949: The Killers, **1952:** Antigone, Dr. Faustus, **1953:** She Stoops To Conquer, The Way of The World, An Ideal Husband,

1954: The Taming of The Shrew, **1955:** Candida, **1957:** Shishon Ke Khilone, **1958:** Of Mice And Men, Shayad Aap Bhi Hansen, **1959:** A Long Day's Journey Into The Night, All My Sons, **1960:** A View From The Bridge, **1961:** Sara Sansar Apna Parivar, Bandra Saturday Night, **1962:** The Madwoman of Chailot, Julius Caesar, The Zoo Story, The Death of Bessie Smith, Hello Out There, **1963:** Othello, The Crucible,

1964: Hamlet, **1965:** A Touch of Brightness, **1966:** The Word, Asylum, **1967:** Bedroom, **1968:** O Dad, Poor Dad,

1968: Bury The Dead, Trial Balloon,

1969: Marat/ Sade,

1970: Tughlaq, **1971:** Mede,

1972: Mira, **1973:** The Birthday Party, **1974:** Jesus Christ Superstar, **1975:** Vultures, Inherit The Wind, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? **1976:** Exit The King, A Streetcar Named Desire, **1977:** Man of La Mancha, **1979:** Razzle Dazzle, **1981:** Pagal Khana, Death of A Salesman, **1983:** Evita, **1984:** All The

50 YEARS of THEATRE



● Alyque in *Death Of A Salesman*.

King's Men, **1986:** Aap Ki Farmaish, Titali, Tarantula Tanzi, Maha Dada, **1987:** Suicide in B Flat, **1988:** Kabaret, **1990:** Othello, **1991:** Tara, **1992:** Butterflies Are Free, **1993:** Death And The Maiden, **1994:** Final Solutions, **1995:** Roshni, **1997:** Begum Sumroo, **1998:** Odd Couple.

love with his wife Nikki Vijaykar on the sets of Padamsee's *Othello* nine years ago. So if marriages are made in heaven, you couldn't blame Padamsee for occasionally feeling like God.

As Bhojwani goes through

numerous rehearsals in the study room where we are seated, Padamsee directs, nodding his head absently, his spectacles in hand. There's no getting around some particular notes in the song, which for some reason just aren't

sounding right. Bhojwani takes it a semi-tone lower tip-toeing around the falsettos that the song requires, then one tone higher but it still doesn't sound right. "Feel the song," Padamsee advises, "it's got to have more feeling" and he

marches upto her and reads it out line by line explaining exactly what he means. Bhojwani does it again. This time it's much better, but the falsetto still isn't right. Padamsee examines the song from left and from right and finally pinpoints that the problem lies with Bhojwani's breathing. "Take a breath on 'ho-ly' and hammer the 'name' part to glory," he instructs. Bhojwani tries it again and it's just perfect. The song has come alive. Glory be, this has got to be the stuff that directors are made up of.

"You know," says Padamsee with a sudden burst of illumination, "the brands I built in Lintas - my 'brandchildren' as I call them were all drama. So whether it was Lalitaji in the Surf ad, the Kamasutra Girl, Park Avenue, the MRF muscle man, or Jet Airways advertising for me is drama. When I squished the three tomatoes in the jar for a family planning campaign it was drama. The time when the disabled child drew her mother and herself as whole on a slate and subsequently rubbed out her leg, was drama. It's all drama," he says waving his hands in the air happily.

As one gets ready to leave one cannot help feeling that it's been a hell of a life for Padamsee. For him as for no one else do Shakespeare's words about the world being a stage and all men and women being merely actors, hold true. And on Tuesday when they get together to celebrate his first 'hundred' years they'll be saluting a director and an ad guru who had the opportunity to play God more than anyone else. And believe you us, while it may have been fun, it was damned stiff work all the way.