

# From Mozart's land

FERRY RADAX hails from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's land. The film-maker loves to be introduced so, for he is also a musician.

As varied and interesting as Mozart's corpus has been Radax's life and films. "I have seen it all—love and war, plenitude and poverty, peace and mayhem," he says.

The 68-year-old director is here to attend a three-day festival of his works, organised by the Janachitra.

A juror of the previous Mumbai International Film festival, he is all praise for contemporary Malayalam films, especially Murali Nair's

"Maranasimhasanam".

At the age of nine, Radax started out as a singer in the Wiener Sangerknaben choir. War was at its peak His family stayed behind in Vienna, while he, along with Sangerknaben, toured the disintegrating Third Reich.

"We picked up our lessons during the train journeys," he remembers. "Air raids and bomb attacks were a part of growing up. We, boys, were taught to defuse some type of bombs. We gloated over our swelling personal collection of shrapnel. One day, during an air raid, an explosion ripped through the doors of the building in which we stayed. Just as today's kids sit glued to action films on TV, we watched fighter planes spraying bombs all over Frankfurt and flames eating up buildings."

Watching these, he says, was fun as a kid. "If I were old enough to sense the reality, I would have gone bonkers."

Visiting Americans taught him jazz, and this later helped him earn money for his studies, strumming piano in the Yankee cafes in Vienna. He wanted to be a lawyer, but eventually chose to wield the megaphone. Bunuel, Kurosawa, Pasolini and

Orson Welles were his heroes. During a screening of "The Lady in Shanghai", he used a small camera to capture the whole of the classic. "I story-boarded the sequences. And learnt the film frame by frame, analysing the lighting and camera movements."

With his camera, he travelled extensively

—from Peru to Japan, North America to New Zealand, Ireland to Aeolian islands, Spain to Germany, capturing people and incidents in over 100 short and long films. In Japan, he ran into Toshiro Mifune, actor in Akira Kurosawa's films. A heavy smoker, Mifune held the cigarette between his lips even during rehearsals of fight sequences. He later made a film on the actor.



Radax is best known for his biographical films. "Ludwig Wittgenstein", which uses quotes from the works of the philosopher, interviews his colleagues and journeys to the stark landscape he preferred to retire to from the demands of everyday life, has been lauded by Wittgenstenians all over the world.

"Who are You, Mr. Joyce?" takes a not-so-reverent look at the novelist- literary experts, who have gathered in Zurich for the biennial Joyce symposium, discuss his works in a lugubrious tone, while his jovial "ghost" takes the audience on a pub-crawl, giving his own version of his life and thoughts.

Radax went to Capri to record the spell cast by the island on foreign visitors, who have included Hans Christian Andersen, Lenin, Oscar Wilde, Emperor Tiberius, Axel Munthe, painter Kopsich and Nietzsche.

Guess who played the misanthropic Nietzsche in "Capri, Receding Music"? Radax did it, his moustache twirled up.

*By K. Santhosh*