Pulling Strings

SINCE 1992, Wilfried Scharf, an Austrian zither player has been knocking the stuffiness out of classical renditions with his peppy style. "I have always been an improviser and believe that when two different genres of music come together the end result is, if nothing else, thrilling," chortled Scharf, who teaches zither (a musical instrument made of wood, similar to the Indian sitar) at Anton Bruckner Private University in Linz.

Scahrf, who has performed in classical rock concerts in Japan and Germany, has been creating fusion music between the flute and clarinet. "The fusion is possible with string instruments mostly, as it creates a great symphony. When I am with my students we play classical rock music on the electronic zither," said Scharf, 53. His three-member ensemble Salzburger Saitenklang cranked out a mix of folksy tunes combined with baroque at India Habitat Centre on Friday evening. Scarf's ensemble also performed a *jugalbandi* with Indian instru-

CLASSIC REVIVAL: (from left) Steindl, Scharf and Kraus

ments in the second half of the performance.

The trio, with Scharf on the zither, Sabine Kraus on the harp and Roswitha Steindl on the guitar, began with Mozart's opera *Magic Flute*, followed by a classic rendition of Handel's composition in B major. "When we are playing we always like to communicate directly with the audience," smiled Scharf, who closed the first-half of the performance with a fitting tribute by playing *The Third Man*, a sassy rendition brought alive by the harp. "The movie *Third Man* gave much prominence to zither, as the entire background music was composed on zither," Scharf told the audience.

In the end, Scharf's ensemble played *Green Eyes* by Frank Sinatra along with Suhail Yusuf Khan on the sarangi and Mohit Lal on the tabla. Up next, the ensemble will be performing in Goa on September 7 and in Mumbai on September 8 at Joss restaurant near Colaba at 7 pm.

— *Richa Bhatia*