



At the rehearsal

## Touch can speak more than a thousand words

● **Aarthi Murali**

In an age when we are pinned down to being a woman, a man, a homosexual, an Indian, a husband, or a refugee, how do we look beyond identities? For Preethi Athreya, a Chennai-based contemporary dancer, the moving body is the only recourse. "When you're moving, the body is reconstituting itself. It's never stable. So, it competes with the idea of identity that's fixed in a particular point in time," she says.

Preethi is a co-founder of Basement 21, a practice-based performance collective in Chennai. She performs, choreographs, and is a facilitator who uses dance as an agent of change, and her latest piece 'The Lost Wax project' is about exposing the fluidity in systems that appear to be organised and unchanging.

"The process began in February 2017. I was interested in how we become aware of each other when we reach out and touch somebody. Spaces between people changes a lot, it becomes very charged," she explains. "It is important to understand this today when we all lead individualised lives — isolated in both our living and thinking."

The idea began with the thought that physical contact with each other changes the environment around us. And since skin is the largest receptor of our intentions and feelings, Preethi believes that skin contact can speak more than words can. She says, "A series of experiments began. Avantika Bahl, Dipna Daryanani, and Sanchita Sharma, contemporary dancers from Mumbai, Jaipur, and New Delhi, who I've worked with in the past, came together for the

piece. We met once every two months."

This search in movement comes from the belief that words cannot express the full capacity of all that we think and see. "A word is a small and ineffective medium," she says. "It's only in the research of the body that you come across different worlds that you can create. For me, it has been a revelation to find that space with my co-dancers."

While the piece is a work for women, Preethi believes it is not restricted to them being women. "I made this choice consciously because of the female body's capacity for endurance that is remarkable and unique. If you're dealing with male body, there is a different way of understanding male psyche, and anatomy, and how the same set of thoughts can be expressed. But for this project, the movement vocabulary worked out for the female body."

The projects aim to create a space in which a body is able to have multiple relationships with different bodies, orientations, viewpoints, and even soundscapes that are created. "The potential identities created work as a metaphor to say that we exist in many parallels and dimensions, and can't be reduced to any definition," she says, adding that this is most relevant in an age that is hyper-sensitive where the artist's work is censored heavily.

Watch 'The Lost Wax project' today at Cholamandal Artist Village, Palavakkam from 7.15 pm. For details call: 24490092

# INDULGE

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2018 | CHENNAI

## pick of the week

rsvp



### Dancing her way

February 23 | Palavakkam

Inko Centre in association with Goethe Institut, Mumbai and Alliance Française of Madras presents 'The Lost Wax Project,' a contemporary act choreographed by Chennai-based Preethi Athreya. She will be accompanied by Avantika Bahl Goyal, Dipna Daryanani, Kamakshi Saxena and Sanchita Sharma. At Cholamandal Artists Village. 7.15 pm. Entry free. Details: 2449-0092

### On high notes

February 25 | Adyar

Curated by the students of G3 Studios, 'The Little Pan - Indian Town' is a Western musical recital. Chennai-based pianist Arvind will be seen accompanying guitarist Kaviraj. At Backyard. Entry free. 6 pm. Details: 73584-58117



23<sup>rd</sup>

24<sup>th</sup>

25<sup>th</sup>

**CHENNAI TIMES**

**THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2018**

**The Lost Wax Project,  
Cholamandal Artists'  
Village East Coast Road,  
Injambakkam, Palavakk-  
am, from 10am to 7.15pm,  
till Feb 24; Choreographed by  
Chennai-based dancer, Preethi  
Athreya who will be accompa-  
nied by other dancers to create  
a presentation that is provoca-  
tively abstract, evocative and  
disruptive.**