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## Yao comes to India and teaches family values

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CHENNAI: If you were/are a working parent, achieving the perfect balance between career and looking after children might be tricky. Sometimes, it means providing a comfortable life for your children at the expense of spending less time with them. But more often than not it is a perpetual struggle for many.

Brush Theatre, a South Korea-based theatre company will be staging the life of Yao, a little girl who grows up in such a household through their production Yao Yao, presented by InKo Centre in association with the Little Festival 2017.



The theatre group which began three years ago won the Asian Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for their first production, Brush. "The world took notice of us for the first time and that has led us today to be Brush Theatre LLC," shares KilJun Lee, director, Brush Theatre. The group has 11 creative artistes including musicians and actors. "We have done four productions including Brush and Yao Yao," he says.

The group focuses on the power of imagination and he explains that they want to lead the children and audience to imagine and expand their own identities. Lee shares a certain irony within Korean families. "Many parents make money to provide better education for their children but this eventually turns to a lack of what children really need, which is love," he elucidates.

The highlight of this play, he says, is when Yao dreams and imagines. A thread of adventure unravels when Yao grabs her father's overcoat to stop him from leaving home. "Our production mixes fiction and reality, play and movement, complementing live action with magical screen art," he shares about Yao Yao which has been a part of the Cradle of Creativity ASSITEJ World Congress 2017.

Lee believes that performing in front of children is not something to be taken casually. "We must acknowledge them as proper audiences to find value in the future of performing arts. Therefore, sharing quality stories and narratives is very important," he opines.

This year's Little Festival is based on the concept that a country's culture cannot be defined by one race or religion. So, what's Lee's take on that? "I think that all reactions from children are the same regardless of race, but it changes as children grow in different societies and cultures. Race does not matter," he avers.

Interested in Indian culture, art and history, Lee says that the troupe is excited to be a part of Little Festival and also collaborate with theatre groups from India. "Korea has always had a good relationship with India and Koreans are very interested in Indian culture and traditional dances. We would like to collaborate and even stay in India for a while to learn and experience dance. I think Indian dance is a great example for actors to learn how to hold the centre of the body," he points out, and adds that visiting temples, markets and watching Indian performances will be part of their stay in the city this time.

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With Korea's theatre scene in the process of globalising, Lee opines that it is an age of change not only in theatre, but the world, in general. "The distribution of theatre productions has developed and the visual appeal of shows has also improved. Also, there is a sharp increase in marketing, especially 'star-marketing'. Theatre business in Korea is booming," he adds.

The theatre group will tour Europe and America next year and will also be a part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2018.

'Yao Yao' will be staged at the Museum Theatre, Egmore on July 6 and 7 at 11 am. For details, call: 28211115 or 9677125738

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From the play Yao Yao

# Celebration of all things right

KIRUBHAKAR PURUSHOTHAMAN

DECCAN CHRONICLE

One of India's leading theatre companies for children, Little Theatre, is celebrating the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of its annual event called Little Festival. The theatre company, which has been entertaining young audience and fostering many talents for about two decades, has been bringing in many international talents from across the world for the trademark festival every year. Even this time, theatre groups from South Korea and Germany have come down to Chennai. This edition of the festival mainly focuses on bringing plurality and introducing various cultures to *namma* Chennai children, says Aysha Rau, the founder of the Little Theatre. "It is highly necessary to introduce different cultures to our children, given the amount of hatred for 'others' has taken root across the world. It is essential for our kids to understand the different lifestyle and cultural potpourri. That's why we have brought in plays like *3 Time King* (Germany)," she says.



Krishnakumar (above) and Aysha Rau

see that Chennai has earned a name internationally," she opines.

Two plays titled *Yao Yao* (South Korea) and *Green Man* will be staged in the coming week. Talking about *Green man — An Unusual Hero*, the producer of the play and the creative director of Little Theatre, Krishnakumar Balasubramanian, says, "The *Green Man* is a two-person piece. Vikas Rao, choreographer-actor and I will be performing for the piece. The premise of the adventure play is about a king, who has a child, who is born green. So, he sends two of his men to a forest to kill his son and the journey that follows is what the play is about."

"The underlying themes of the play are bullying and racism, which are topics very important for the school children these days. However, it is packed with full of fun and laughter," he adds.

Talking about how art is important to fight these social issues of bullying, he asserts, "Children these days have access to content which is not suitable to them. So, many develop a sense of superiority for knowing these things and adhere to the pop culture. Those kids who don't are looked down upon by the former group. Hence kids basically need an association with arts, which will help them develop capabilities of comradeship." He adds, "The essence of *Green Man* is not just telling what's right and wrong but to make kids understand the effects of being a bully or being bullied."

(*Green Man* will be staged on July 4, 5 at Museum Theatre, Egmore)

## AIMING FOR HIGHER GROUND

Adwitha Arumugam, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader, is the new promising talent who wants to go big in theatre

Adwitha Arumugam, who is currently in class tenth, learnt acting as she was learning alphabets during her kindergarten days. By participating in school dramas without fail, she naturally fell in love with the adrenaline rush that comes while being on the stage and performing before hundreds of people. Adwitha is now part of the popular comedy play *KoKo* of the theatre group Mactrics, which is a pantomime that touches the issues of parental and societal pressure that children face.

"I basically hated to sit inside a classroom. And I found out that by practicing for annual day programmes, one can escape from attending classes. That's why I started participating in the plays at school," Adwitha begins.

But eventually, acting became more than a way to bunk classes for her. "At school, I was just playing the roles of trees and things initially, but then I started fighting for roles which had at least two or three dialogues. I then signed up for an acting class in Alchemy Theatre Groups, and that was the major turning point in my journey. I gained a lot of experience there," Adwitha says.

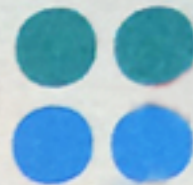
I don't want to restrict myself to acting. I want to write for plays and learn all the aspects of the art — ADWITHA

She admits the extreme care and support from her parents is what has made her pursue her dream. Though Adwitha performs brilliantly in her academics too, she is all set to study theatre and arts. "I don't want to restrict myself to acting but want to write for plays and learn all the aspects of the art," she beams. She even has plans of setting up an academy for acting, a big dream for a tenth-grader — but not for her parents, who are already checking out spaces for such an academy.

— KP



Adwitha in the play *KoKo*



## Screen art

July 7 | Egmore

InKo Centre in association with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korea Arts Management Services presents *Yao Yao*, a play by Brush Theatre. The story is about Yao, a girl who loves spending time with her dad. But, he has to put on his suit and go to work. When Yao grabs his overcoat to stop him, a thread unravels and there begins a magical world of adventure and discovery. *At Museum Theatre.*  
*From 11 am. Entry: ₹200. Details: 24361224.*

