

THE HINDU

METROPLUS

CHENNAI THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2010

Welcome to a magical world

EVENT The Little Festival will feature plays for children from Korea, Germany and the city

Get ensnared by evil Chef 'Aracado de Gucansole'. Watch the letter 'O' get transformed from a soccer ball to a soap bubble, and from a bubble to the sun shining in the sky. Dive into a Korean folktale, complete with soaring music and bright costumes.

The first edition of 'The Little Festival' which will run from June 10 to 19, promises to provide the city's children with a colourful escape into a world where magic reigns supreme. Comprising three performances, which will be staged across 10 shows at the Museum Theatre, Egmore, the Inter-

national festival brings together Germany, Korea and Chennai on a single stage.

Ayesha Rau, of the Little Theatre that stages the city's annual Christmas Pantomime, who is organising the festival, explains why theatre is essential for children. "It helps develop artistic sensibilities," she says, adding "I don't think everything has to be about education." In a city rife with high academic achievers backed by ambitious parents, this is a message that's worth heeding. "Theatre builds personality," says Ayesha. "Scientifically it's also been proved rhythm

and music helps develop the left side of the brain — which is what you would use for engineering. Or to be a doctor."

The festival, which she hopes to make an annual event, aims to bring child-oriented productions from different countries to the city stage. "It is a way of bonding between different countries. We have so much trouble — the arts is one way of cutting across these problems."

Chennai's contribution to the festival is 'The Kingdom of Joomba', a musical with an original script and music. Stating that theatre for chil-

dren is not necessarily by children, Ayesha explains that most of the actors this year are adults. The plays, however, are designed for children as young as three, with lots of colour, dancing and music. And, of course, flamboyantly cheerful characters.

The 'Kingdom of Joomba' for instance is a fantasy set in an enchanted forest. There's a prince and princess. There's also a big, bright dragon. And that evil aforementioned chef. Of course, they'll all live happily ever after.

'Matti, Patti, Fu' staged by Fliegendes Theater, Ber-

lin, is puppet theatre for children aged between three and six years. The story, which bounces with coloured shadows and live music, features Little Matti and his big friend Totto figuring out what 'O' can be made into. "A monster with which they can play hide and seek, a captive balloon with which Matti travels through the air, a car with which he explores the world." Finally, there's 'Choon Hyang' by Theatre Seoul based on a famous Korean folktale. It is a musical in English that incorporates Korean music, dance and movement. The costumes here, made of



SPREADING CHEER 'Choon Hyang' by Theatre Seoul

Hanji paper, are a visual treat. Tickets will be available at Landmark stores, Oxford Bookstore, Gatsby Village and ProMusicals. For bulk bookings call 28211115 or email littleth-

estree@gmail.com. The festival has been organised by the Little Theatre in collaboration with Goethe-Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan Chennai and Inku Centre. SHONALI MUTHALALY

performance

Theatre for tots

The Little Festival comes to Chennai to entertain kids and the young at heart

AYSHA RAU, founder, Little Theatre, is all set to unveil the first 'international theatre festival for children in Chennai.' Christened The Little Festival, it will showcase three productions, including plays by German and Korean theatre groups.

Rau says that she has always been eager to put together a theatre festival for kids. "I want to bring quality theatre to India from different parts of the world and here's my chance," she smiles. She approached groups from Japan, Singapore, America, France, the UK, Korea and Germany for the fest, and expects the number of participating nationalities to rise to seven next year, she tells me.

The line up

Rau is especially excited about The Little Theatre's original production, *The Kingdom of Joomba*. "It is a musical that has all the elements needed to entertain children — a princess and an evil chef named Avocado, for example," she laughs.

The German *Fliegendes Theater* group meanwhile, will perform a puppet play titled *Matti, Patti, Bu, Meant* for children between the ages three and six, the play chronicles the adventures of little Matti and his big friend, Tutto.

The Korean delegation is a big one — think 26 artistes of which 19 are kids. "This will be the only play in the fest enacted by children themselves," admits Rau. The

group, Theatre Seoul, will put up an English musical, *Choon Hyang* — it is an adaptation of a popular Korean folk tale. So the festival has just one performance by kids? "It's very difficult for children to travel from one country to another — they would need adult chaperones, acquire permission to miss school, etc." Besides, The Little Festival is about putting together good entertainment for kids, not by them," she adds.

Not just kids

When I mention the criticism faced by Little Theatre's Pantomime production, for including innuendoes inappropriate for children, Rau dismisses it with, "Pantomimes have always had language filled with double meaning. Most children will not understand it and if they do, then they are not as innocent as we might think!" Does she condone it then? "Definitely not. I think kid's plays can entertain both children and adults alike, without resorting to such tactics," she declares.

The Little Festival is on from June 10 to June 19 at Museum Theatre. Passes (Rs 200) will be available at Landmark, Oxford Bookstore, Gatsby and ProMusicals. Details: 28211115



PH: A Raja Chidambaram

— AS

>> PLAY TIME | s.chandrashekar

Of love and dances

The idea of an operatic performance, or at least one that involves an aesthetical and meaningful mixture of song, dance and dialogues, is what Choon Hyang is about. We bring you a tête-à-tête with Natia Lee, Artistic Director, Theatre Seoul...



Choon Hyang: True Love, is the story, told partly in song and partly in dance, of Choon Hyang and her true love, Mong-Ryong, rendered by children (some as young as nine years) as faithfully today, as it was several centuries ago, when it was passed down orally. The Little Theatre, in association with the InKo Centre, will stage this classic example of Korean theatre in the city, later this month...

Can we begin by talking a little bit about yourself and how you wound up working with Theatre Seoul?

I majored in Educational Theatre, while in Graduate School. I went one further and took a full major in Theatre, while at university. Throughout this period, I was always very interested and very excited at the chance of working and producing performance pieces with children. Somehow, when you work with children, your creative processes seem to work that much better. Also, I think, people across the world are starting to realise that theatre is a great learning tool for the child. I believe that very much and that's why I've been working in this field for 15 years now.

Theatre Seoul, if we're not mistaken, was formed in 1995. What was the purpose behind the group?

Our motto has always been - Of the children, by the children and for the children. Our aim is to produce a theatrical experience that the entire family can enjoy together. More importantly, we also strive to ensure that all those kids who do act with us take something away from the experience. You can actually see them grow in

confidence. What fills me, and all of us who work together, with happiness is that, apart from the children who act, even those who come and watch the show get that little bit of self-confidence. At the end of the day, we're all about delivering education through theatre.

This will be the first time you're performing in the city. However, you have already performed Choon Hyang in Bangalore. What was the experience like, from the group's perspective?

We've performed in several countries across the world and we've taken several productions to different places. Few countries, however, have been as passionate about the performance as Indians have been. It is always touching that every time we perform, the audience gives us a standing ovation. The first time, we actually cried a little because we did not expect such a welcome.

Choon Hyang is a bit like Romeo and Juliet, so understanding the story (even if one does not understand the language) will never be an issue. In Bangalore, in our last show, there was a small group of blind children who were listening intently to every word. It didn't matter to them that they couldn't see the show. At the end of the evening, there were smiles on their faces and we were very touched to see that.

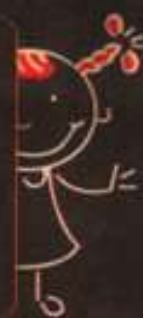
Choon Hyang will be staged on June 18 and 19, at the Museum Theatre. Tickets are available at the Gatsby Village Oxford Bookstore and all Landmark outlets. For bulk bookings, call 28211115

s.chandrashekar@timesgroup.com

Chennai's first international theatre festival for children!

THE LITTLE THEATRE

presents



the little festival

June 10 - 19, 2010 MUSEUM THEATRE, EGMORE

Kingdom of Toomba

by The Little Theatre

A musical fantasy in an enchanted forest
June 10, 11, 12, 15 & 16 (7 pm)
and June 12 (3 pm)



An exciting puppet theatre from Germany
June 13 & 14 (4 pm)



MATTI, PATTI AND BU

By Fliegendes Theater, Berlin

Choon-Hyang True Love

by Theater Seoul

A beautiful musical in English with Korean music & dance
June 18 & 19 (7pm)

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Just a little theatre

A theatre festival just for you. There are shows from Chennai, Korea and Germany, so don't miss out.

This is the first international theatre festival for children in Chennai. "The Little Festival" from The Little Theatre is a wonderful platform for various countries to strengthen ties with the youth of India.

What's on

The Little Festival's first edition began on June 10. It is on till June 19 at the Museum Theatre. While the first performance will be from The Little Theatre, "Kingdom of Joomba" the other two are courtesy the cultural wings of Germany and South Korea.

Kingdom of Joomba is a musical by The Little Theatre. The musical is a fantasy that takes place in an enchanted forest.

Matti, Patti, Bu is a puppet theatre for children, from Germany by Fliegendes Theater, Berlin.

Choon Hyang is an English musical from Korea by Theatre Seoul. It is based on a famous Korean folktale and it incorporates Korean music, dance and movement. The costumes are made of Hanji paper and are a visual treat.

Tickets available at Landmark, Oxford bookstore, Gatsby, ProMusicals

For bulk bookings call 28211115 or email littletheatre@gmail.com

The Little Theatre in collaboration with Goethe-Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai and Inko Centre



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June 18-19

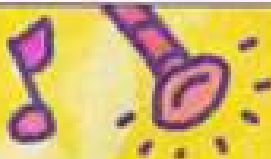


Choon Hyang

An English musical based on a popular Korean folktale that incorporates Korean music, dance and movement, with vivid Korean costumes made of traditional Hanji paper and authentic props.

June 18-19





ART, ARATTAI, AARPATTAM 2010
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Venue: **DakshinaChitra, ECR**

Time: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Donor Pass: Rs. 200



Children's Festival

CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL

19 to 23 July and 26 to 30 July

Enter the magical world of blockbuster children's movies like Finding Nemo, WALL-E, UP, and more. For the schedule, visit www.nalandaway.org/aaa2010

Venue: **Film Chamber, Near Gemini**

Time: 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Donor Pass: Rs. 75



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FOR SALES



A fascinated Anjali Bhagwat meets Theatre Seoul on their recent visit to the city.

FINDING TRUE LOVE

Children's theatre isn't a new concept by any stretch of imagination. After all, theatre is a form of storytelling, and who appreciates stories more than children do?

Over the years, Chennai has seen quite a few productions in which children play important roles. The Little Theatre's annual pantomime is a prime example. Staged in December every year, The Little Theatre pantomimes have become a Chennai Christmas tradition — they're fun, child-friendly and everyone, even the adults, can have a good time.

Keeping this in mind, the Little Festival was a natural progression. Anuja Rao (founder and driving force behind The Little Theatre) conceptualised the idea of an international theatre festival

bringing children and together with the local, Indian and Western theatre and drama groups — Matti, Puri and his by the Singapore Theatre, India, Chennai, Young True Love by Theatre Seoul, and Chennai's very own offering, Kingdom of Jambina, produced by Anuja Rao and directed by Hans Kaushik.

Theatre Seoul's production of *Choon Hyung True Love* opened with a bang by depicting the actors actually hit the stage, the audience was already clapping along to the beat of the drums and enjoying the beautiful costumes and dance moves by the larger-than-life performers. Only one did it register that the actors were no smaller than the movie (which made sense later when I realised that the cast ranged from 4 to 18 years of age).

Choon Hyung True Love is an adaptation of a famous old Korean folk tale, which has been a theatrical favourite for many years. The storyline is simple. A young man meets a beautiful girl one day and falls in love with her. Young Wang Hyung, a noble man's son, meets Choon Hyung in a village festival. However, the latter has already to leave to study in Seoul. During his absence, Choon Hyung meets a girl in love, waiting for her return. She is deceived by her hopes and dreams by the villain of the piece —

the corrupt merchant — who demands that she marry him. She refuses and is cast into prison. When Wang Hyung returns, he is devastated at her imprisonment and conceals a plan to save her. The true climax behind the play was the intense and the life-saving characters. The two side-kicks (Choon Hyung's maid and Wang Hyung's lackey) were hilarious and stole the show!

"Theatre for children, by the children," makes one of the cast members. That is how Theatre Seoul describe themselves. Having been Korea, Theatre Seoul was founded in 1992 and is Korea's first and largest theatre company for children with almost a hundred members. "This group focuses primarily on musical theatre, and tries to combine education and drama," he goes on to add.

The play has travelled all over the world, so when we asked the group about the response to their play in Chennai, they smile, "India has been great, the audience is very enthusiastic... they clap a lot."

Despite being young, the cast are all full-time theatre actors. Though they aren't given a chance to study drama at the school level, most of them plan to major in it in college like the oldest cast members, who portray Choon Hyung and his love, Wang Hyung.

When asked about the lack of children's

theatre groups, Kwon, one of the artistic directors of the play says, "There are many theatre groups with adults doing plays for children, we are the only ones with children doing plays for children!"

Watching Theatre Seoul was a revelation, the one only hope that they return for next year's festival — *Choon Hyung True Love* is definitely a show worth waiting for!

