

'The Little Festival' to be held at Kalakshetra from July 1 to 8

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The Little Theatre's international theatre festival for young audiences, 'The Little Festival' will be held from July 1 to 8 at the Kalakshetra Auditorium, Thiruvanmiyur.

On July 1 and 2, the play *The Garage Gang* and on Ju-

ly 4 and 5 *Hansel and Gretel in Taka Din* by The Little Theatre will be staged. On July 7 and 8, *The Story of the Lake* from South Korea will be staged.

A panel discussion on "The importance of arts post COVID" will be held at the Goethe Institut from 6 p.m.

to 7.30 p.m. on July 5.

Donor passes are available at www.littletheatreindia.com, and can be picked up from Cheria Aana, #2, Village Road, Nungambakkam.

For details, call 8778449642 or email thelittlefestival@gmail.com, according to a press release.



DAY'S DIARY

ISIS rule

In 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an Islamic State leader, announced the establishment of worldwide "caliphate" of ISIS

RISE OF THE GROUP

The Islamic State (ISIS) is a transnational Sunni insurgent group operating primarily in western Iraq and eastern Syria. They first appeared as Islamic State of Iraq (ISIL) in 2013



ISLAMIC "CALIPHATE"

"Caliphate" is a state governed in accordance with Islamic law. It demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance to its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi



THE INVISIBLE SHEIKH

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi aka Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai is the founder of ISIS. He is titled as 'Invisible Sheikh' because he appears rarely

The perfect mix and match of fruits

PG 3

THEATRE TALES FOR TOTS

As The Little Festival, a theatre festival for children, returns with its eleventh edition after a hiatus, members associated with the show tell us what's in store

SAHANA IYER

Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." This quote from *Dead Poet's Society* still rings true 33 years later. If anything, it has cemented its prominence, reminding us that in the competitive climate of today, it is important to take a step back and indulge in the arts. Hoping to enable the same for the youth of the city after the grim pandemic, The Little Festival — the international theatre festival hosted by The Little Theatre — is returning from July 1 to 8, post a two year hiatus, for its eleventh edition. "Every festival, I look at the children looking at our shows, feeling their soul is satisfied, there is a lightness in their heart and that they want more theatre because I think theatre is what helps people understand one another, build compassion and empathy. Life is not just about exams, finding a career and drudgery. They need to know about the joy of living and you get that through the art,"

notes Aysha Rau, founder of The Little Theatre.

Onstage offers

The festival will feature three productions at Kalakshetra Auditorium, Thiruvannamiyur — two in-house (*The Garage Gang* and *Hansel & Gretel in Taka Din*) and one facilitated by InKo Centre (*The Story of the Lake*). *The Garage Gang*, is a celebration of a child's imagination, informs Krishnakumar Balasubramanian or KK, the artistic director of The Little Theatre. "It hits home because it reminds us of what we've forgotten as we grow up. It's essential now considering the pandemic and that children and parents are going through hell trying to navigate entirely new situations. I believe that theatre is one medium where children can watch and feel like it's a mirror of what they've been going through and find a way

to express themselves. The show is laced heavily with physical comedy," he says, adding that the show talks about how we need to nurture our childhood imagination as we grow up.

Where one show provides family entertainment, the next production introduces the youth to native artforms creatively. Starring Anu Bhaskaram and Lakshmy Ramakrishnan, *Hansel & Gretel in Taka Din* is an attempt to evolve Bharatanatyam and communicate it with the current generation. "Anu is a Bharatanatyam dancer, passionate about making classical art forms accessible to the young people. For this, they (Anu and Lakshmy) are bringing the age-old, well known story of *Hansel and Gretel* with contemporary music to visually depict the story through dance in a fun way to help children understand the nuances of the art," KK says.

Rehearsals have been in full swing as actors too rejoice their return to the stage. "They are so excited. I realised that art is so important. Finally to be able to rehearse and do everything in person in the studio is liberating and making them feel on top of the world. I think that's what art does to people," notes Aysha.

Leaning on old traditions like *Taka Din* is *The Story of the Lake*, the third production



that focusses on a popular folk-tale, retold for the modern audience using shadow puppetry by Company Young from South Korea. "It is a typical folk tale that focusses on good and bad and the importance of compassion and community. The director believes the latter is important, especially following the pandemic and two years of gloom. This could be a story of hope and resilience and talks about the larger role of art and transformation that comes through art," explains Rathi Jafer, director of InKo Centre.

Offstage offers

The festival is also offering workshops and will be hosting two panel discussions on July 5 at Goethe-Institut Max Mueller Bhavan. Featuring professionals from the entertainment and medical industry and moderated by Dr Rohini Rau, trustee of The Little Theatre, and KK, the discussions will touch upon the importance of art in healthcare and education after Covid. "Children have been stuck at home for more than two years. Kids can grow only through conversations, meeting people and going to new environments and this (their confinement) can lead to anxiety, depression and various mental illnesses. It's the arts that can address this issue comfortably and that is why I feel that this is such an important conversation," elaborates Aysha. The impact of the arts will be seen soon enough as schoolgoing children fill the seats to The Little Theatre.

Theatre allows you to escape reality and move into an area of make-believe which is happy. I want kids to go back feeling enriched by the experience.

Aysha Rau, founder, The Little Theatre



STILLS FROM THE PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF THE LITTLE FESTIVAL

To book tickets or see the schedule, visit thelittletheatreindia.com or visit Cheria Aana, #2 Village Road, Nungambakkam. For more details, call 28211115 or 8778449642.

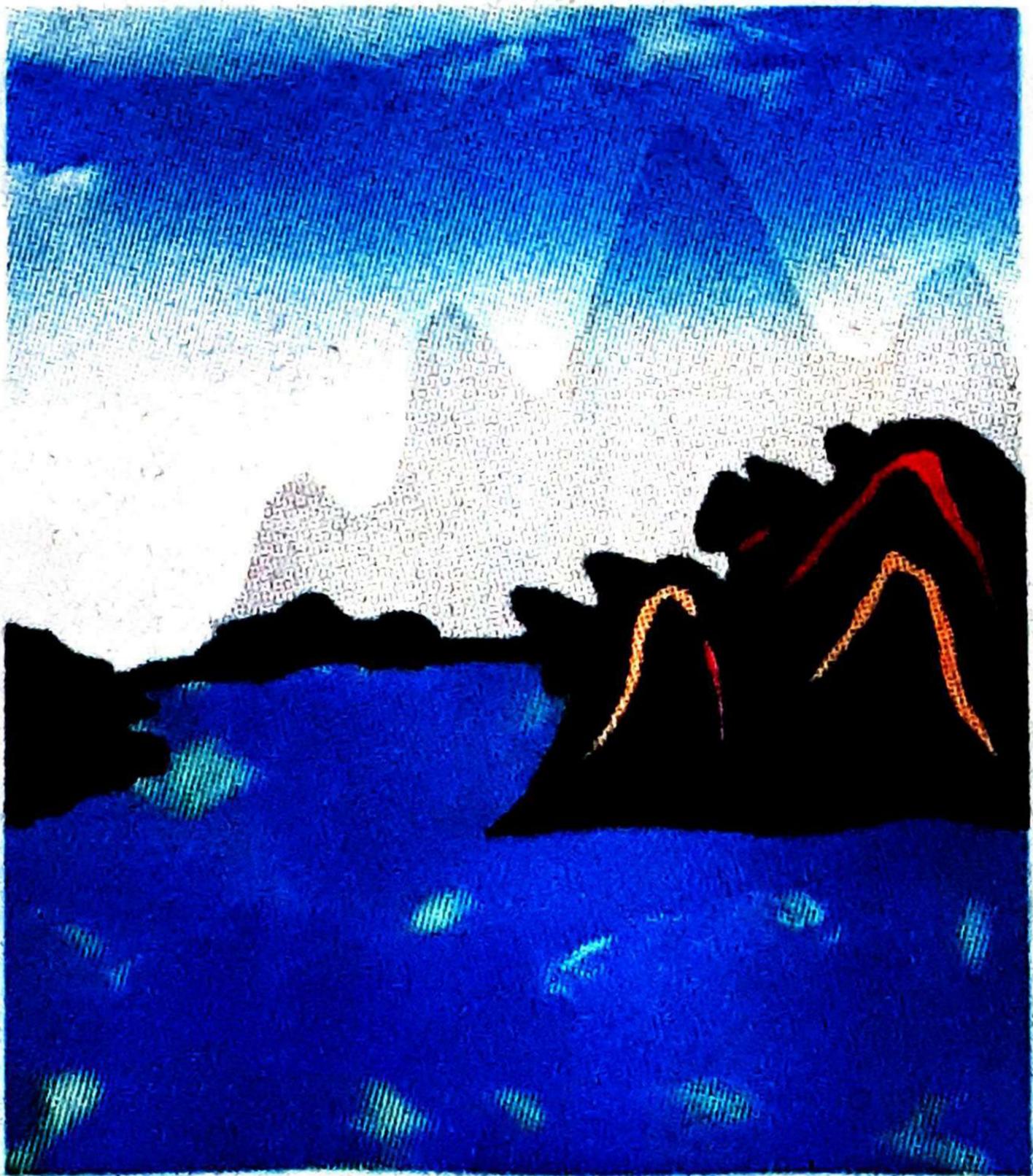
WEDNESDAY
29.06.2022

City Chennai
Express **Exhibit**

Lake stories

InKo Centre is delighted to co-present The Story of the Lake by Company Young, a Korean folk tale, at the Little Festival on July 7 and 8 at 11 am at the Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium, Chennai in association with the Little Festival.

 **CALL: 28211115 / 8778449642**



Chennai's The Little Theatre is back on stage with a theatre festival for young audiences

S GOWRI

WEDNESDAY

JUNE 29, 2022 17:37 IST



From a previous performance of *The Garage Gang* | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Little Theatre is set to unleash two years of pent-up creativity in its returning edition of The Little Festival, with workshops, South Korean theatre, local favourites and more

What characterises Cheriana, The Little Theatre's studio space today, is rhythm. After a quiet couple of years, back rolls, cartwheels and foot-tapping beats created from loose tyres and metal tools fill the space as the cast and crew inch towards show day. As Thaatha and his minions mime behind curtained walls trying to revive little Gingo's imagination, *The Garage Gang* comes alive once again.

The play, that relies heavily on slapstick and physical comedy, will kick off The Little Theatre's 11th edition of The Little Festival, an international theatre festival for young audiences that returns after a pandemic-led hiatus of two years. The home production will be accompanied by a dance-theatre showcase *Hansel & Gretel in Takadin*, *The Story of the Lake*: a shadow puppetry rendition from South Korea, workshops, and a panel discussion spread from July 1 to 8.

The story follows a little girl named Gingo and her relentless pursuit to find her 'imagination', with the help of her grandfather and his trusted yet quirky accomplices. It explores human relationships and a child's potential for imagination. Though the city is familiar with the play, the narrative has taken on a new meaning post the pandemic. Its effect on children has further stretched the play to retrain its lens on the importance of support systems, be it in school or family.

"We have been waiting to get back on stage," says actor and artistic director of The Little Theatre, Krishnakumar Balasubramanian (KK). "During the pandemic, as a group, we have always kept our creative juices flowing. This containment of creative energy is going to explode on stage." This creative void, as KK calls it, also shows up in how the team has devised the story for *The Garage Gang* this year. The cast includes KK as Thaatha and Ananya Ramaprasad as Gingo, besides Shabeer Kallarakkal, Vikas Rao (also the choreographer), Praveen Gunasekaran, Ashwin Raam and Aravindan R. "We have made sure that we bring in the best slapstick and physical comedy on stage. And oftentimes, people mistake slapstick to be something that kids enjoy but as adults we enjoy slapstick, maybe in subtler ways, in everyday life," adds KK.

It's story time

How does a classical Indian artform like Bharatanatyam come into play in a Grimms' fairytale? Performing artistes Anu Bhaskararaman and Lakshmy Ramakrishnan try to answer in *Hansel & Gretel in Takadin*. It all started a year-and-a-half ago when Anu and Lakshmy collaborated on a series called Dancing through Stories which looked at bringing classical dance to children through stories they can relate to.

"The idea was to explore the dance form in ways that you don't do in a traditional classroom. To look at a different facet of it," says Chennai-based Anu. The decision to use Hansel and Gretel came from the tale's scope for interpretation. With the help of contemporary music devised by Chennai-based music composer Jerry Silvester Vincent, the play draws heavily on Bharatanatyam but has elements from contemporary dance forms. "We felt that if the form is going to be new, the story should be familiar and so, we wanted to bring in a tale that is easily understandable," says Anu. The narrative is predominantly told through movement and dancing, and a little bit of audience interaction.

Oh so far away

Speaking of folktales and fairytales, from South Korea comes *The Story of the Lake* by Company Young. Using shadow puppetry, the play tells the story of a lake that was the sole source of sustenance for the community on its banks, yet caused great worry.

"It's a folktale, reinvented for modern audiences. It continues to use shadow puppetry and traditional theatre forms in a way that audiences across the world can relate to," says Rathi Jafer, director of InKo Centre. The importance of conviction, faith and community is what comes through in this play, making it an ideal tale to start off with "on a note of hope and resurgence after two years of gloom," says Rathi.

The festival will also see workshops on Storytelling Through Dance, Physical Acting and Korean Shadow Puppetry and Traditional Sounds and Rhythm. A panel discussion with industry experts on July 5 will touch upon the importance of arts post the pandemic.

The Little Festival is from July 1 to 8, at Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium, Thiruvanniyur. The Garage Gang will be staged on July 1 at 11am and 7pm and July 2 at 11am and 6pm. Hansel & Gretel in Takadin will be staged on July 4 and 5 at 11am. The Story of the Lake will be staged on July 7 and 8 at 11am. Visit @thelittletheatrechennai on Instagram for more details.

City**Curating a small wonder with dance, drama and puppetry**

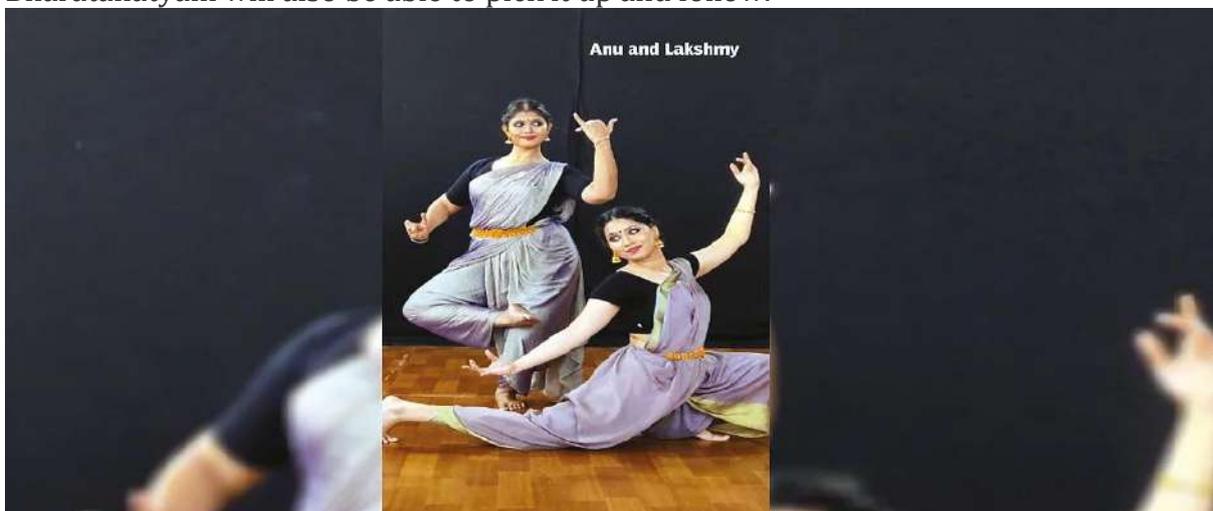
This year the workshops explore storytelling through dance, physical acting, Korean shadow puppetry, and Korean sounds and rhythms. With productions like The Garage Gang, Hansel and Gretel in Taka Din, and The Story of the Lake.

**MUSKAAN AHMED**

Published on : 30 Jun, 2022, 8:08 am

CHENNAI: The Little Theatre is organising the 11th edition of its annual theatrical festival, The Little Festival. The programme will include a lineup of workshops, panel discussions and plays specially curated for audiences from age 7–15, exposing them to many forms of art and culture from around the world. This year the workshops explore storytelling through dance, physical acting, Korean shadow puppetry, and Korean sounds and rhythms. With productions like The Garage Gang, Hansel and Gretel in Taka Din, and The Story of the Lake.

Talking to DT Next, about how two forms of art – dance and storytelling go hand in hand, Anu Bhaskaran, says, “Bharatanatyam on its own conveys a story. Lakshmy and I chose contemporary stories and attempted to narrate the story through dance. The course is curated in such a way that someone who has no prior knowledge of Bharatanatyam will also be able to pick it up and follow.”



She says that despite Bharatanatyam being a rigid dance form, the workshop will work towards finding the right balance while telling a story to create a flow while using the body as a medium. “We start off with trying to mimic animals and learn the vocabulary of the dance form. Covering the basics of both forms is the way forward. I’m hoping for people to be intrigued enough by the dance form that they join the classes,” she chuckles.

Krishnakumar B (KK), who played supporting roles in films like Soorarai Pottru and Maaran, is a theatre and film actor, playwright, and director. His love and passion for theatre is what drove him to introduce theatre to children and youngsters. KK who is conducting a workshop and also directed The Garage Gang, says, “The play is a comedy show which revolves around a grandfather and a little girl.

“The main theme of the play is exploring a child’s imagination and how it needs to be protected as we grow into adulthood. Often, I’m told this show seems like it’s only for kids; to them I say, when we can enjoy Tom and Jerry even now, it means there is a child in every single one of us.

Talking about the workshop, KK says that he hopes to introduce the children to the basics of theatre and its techniques and to lose their inhibitions to communicate better. “I’m looking forward to seeing what the audience has to say about our play and how they react to our interactive elements since we always break the fourth wall,” he says.

Acknowledging the craze for all things Korean, Rathi Jafer, director Indo-Korean cultural and information centre who is organising the Korean shadow puppetry workshop says, “The affinity has always been there. It just spiked during the lockdown when people began consuming Korean media even more. This workshop is perfect for people who want to explore Korean culture. We have South Korean actors from a theatre troupe who will conduct the workshop.” The Little Festival is also having a panel discussion on the topic ‘The importance of arts post Covid’. The event which begins on July 1 ends on July 9. Tickets are available on www.thelittletheatreindia.com



(L-R) Rathi Jafer and Krishnakumar B

THE HINDU CHENNAI

FRIDAY, JULY 1, 2022

FRIDAY REVIEW



Theatre for children

InKo Centre in association with the Little Theatre presents *The Story of the Lake*, a Korean folk tale, on July 7 and 8, 11 a.m., at the Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium, Chennai. Tickets are available at Cheria Aana, Nungambakkam, or call 044 - 28211115 / +91 877 844 9642.

SATURDAY

02.07.2022

City

Chennai
Express

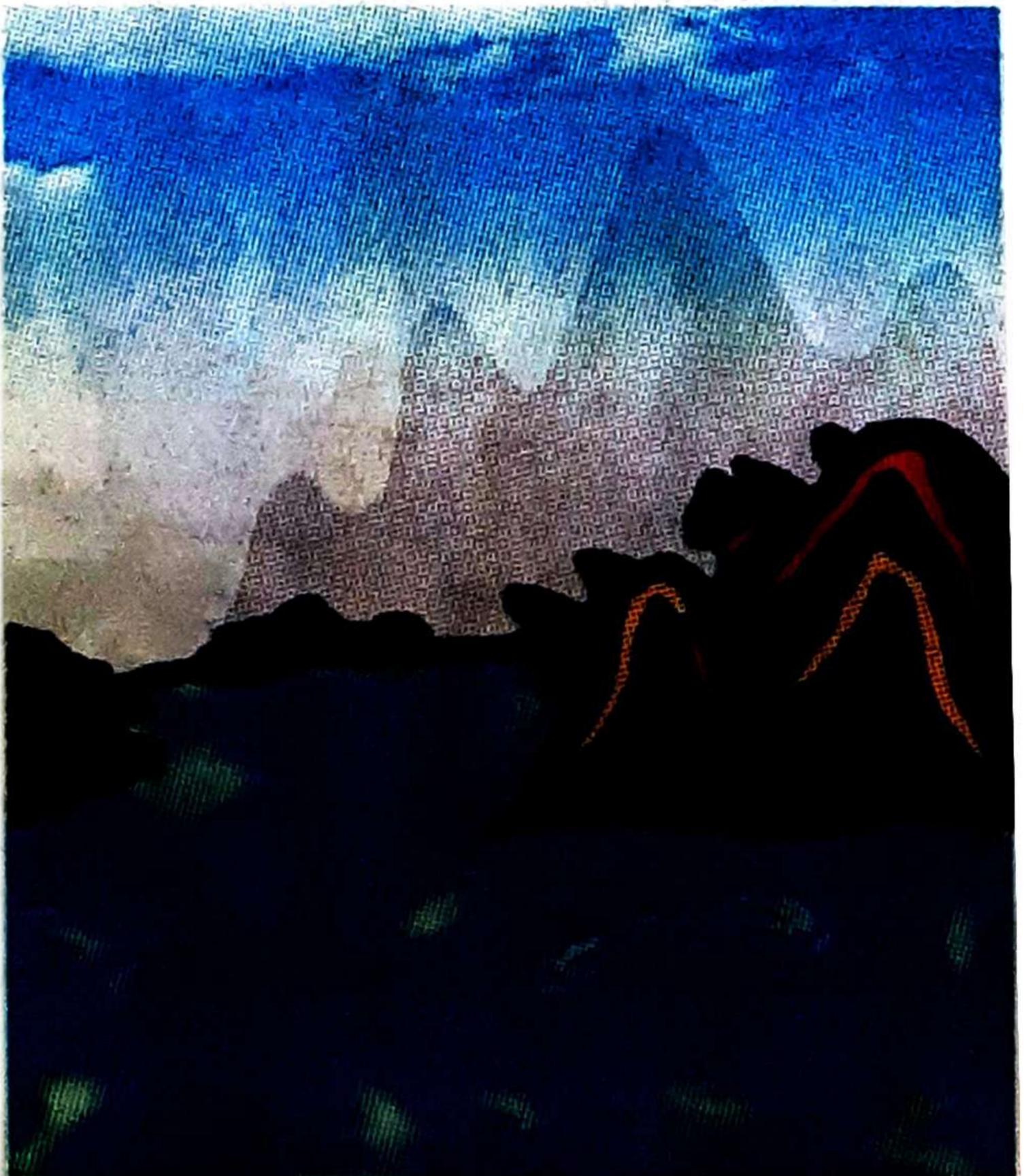
Exhibit

Lake stories

InKo Centre is delighted to co-present The Story of the Lake by Company Young, a Korean folk tale, at The Little Festival on July 7 and 8 at 11 am at the Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium, Chennai in association with the Little Festival.



CALL: 2821115 / 8778449642



Pick of the week

CHENNAI

THE HINDU WEEKEND
SATURDAY, JULY 2, 2022

**Workshops, food, art,
music and fashion you
don't want to miss**

For events, contact us on
weekend@thehindu.co.in

For K-fans

Dig into authentic Korean fare – from meat *bulgogi* to glassy *japchae*, prawn *gangjung* and *jeyuk bokkeum* – at the Korean Food Festival at **The Leela Palace**, New Delhi. On till July 3 for lunch/dinner buffet (₹2,600 plus taxes). Meanwhile, delve into Korean folk history with the English play, *The Story of the Lake*, brought by **InKo Centre**. Based on a popular Korean folktale, the play, at Chennai's The Little Theatre, is a Company Young production. For adults and children over 10. At 11am on July 7-8 @Bharata Kalakshetra Auditorium.

MONDAY

04.07.2022

City

Chennai
Express

Exhibit

Lake stories

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