

Dancer Jozsef Trefeli to stage the world premiere of his latest choreography Meet Me In The Middle along with two other productions

Hungarian dancer Jozsef Trefeli in collaboration with the Swiss Arts Council (supported by Pro Helvetia) returns to India to stage the world premiere of his latest piece

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A still from Creature

Dance is often thought of as a joyous celebration of life, a way to express happiness, love and other positive feelings. However, the power of dance goes beyond just spreading cheer and happiness. In many cultures, dance is also a way to express sadness, grief and other emotions such as anger. Shedding more light using this powerful tool of expression to showcase other emotions, Hungarian dancer Jozsef Trefeli in collaboration with the Swiss Arts Council (supported by Pro Helvetia) returns to India to stage the world premiere of his latest piece Meet Me In The Middle along with his award-winning piece Creature and well-known choreography, Jinx 103. “Across the world, in all cultures, most people think of dance as a celebration and weddings are a very popular occasion but in certain cultures, people dance at funerals too. Dances are very emotional art forms like music. Some songs make you happy and others make you sad. Similarly, there are happy dances and there are sad dances and angry dances too,” begins József.



The choreographer who specialises in contemporary dance, cabaret, theatre, musical comedy, and opera, founded The József Trefeli Company in Geneva with which he promotes cultural exchange by collaborating with dancers from different regions. “We bring traditional dance and contemporary dance together, to explore ways of reinventing, recreating and re-establishing the traditional dance in a way it can influence new ways of thinking about these old art forms,” he shares. His newest contemporary production, Meet Me in the Middle, is another of his many cross-cultural exchange projects where he is collaborating with the city-based artiste Diya Naidu. Both the dancers met online and have worked together through virtual reality and motion capture projects. Now, they join hands for this dance research project that will focus on interesting points in common between them including their ancestry and the body as a genetic archive. “I have only met Diya’s avatar in virtual reality and recognised her through her voice. Thanks to the pandemic, we were able to do this project and now we are together face-to-face, realising things about one another such as both our grandparents, my grandfather from Hungary during WWII and her grandmother here in India, would have had the opportunity to meet. And we actually use those stories in our work as a common link,” the dancer reveals.

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The performance will feature music by Domi Chansorn and Béatrice Graf and live compositional choreography to represent multiple layers of distance and time. “We are using video projection to give you a feel of that distance and time to add that dimensionality. And we also have a child-sized table and two chairs, which serve as a simple meeting point because people from all walks of life meet around a table,” he elaborates. On the costume front, the dancers will wear pedestrian and comfortable pants and shirts.

Creature, which is premiering in India for the first time, is a work about origins where two dancers, Gyula Cserepes and Jozsef Trefeli, shows us the kinship between the contemporary dance language and the archaic exoticism of folk dances. The piece, which was awarded the Swiss Dance Prize 2017 in the category of ‘Current Dance Works’ as one of the most outstanding dance pieces for the seasons 2015–2017, refers to the expressionist period, twentieth-century folklore and ethnography. The production brings together the choreography of Mary Wigman, the music of Bartok and Enescu and the relationship of the impressionists with Japan and Picasso with Africa. “This is a ritualised dance performance with the audience on all sides as there is no front or back. We actually cover up the face of the performers for the first half of the piece because it’s really about the expression of the body. We also use traditional accessories from Eastern Europe like sticks,” he concludes.

Jozsef’s India visit also includes the showcase of their renowned performance Jinx 103, where one can witness a non-frontational dance face-off between two dancers which comes with a pinch of humour. Post their performance in the city, all three productions will travel to Chennai and New Delhi this weekend.

₹399 onwards. April 14, 7 pm and April 15, 7.30 pm. At Shoonya Art and Cultural Association, Lal Bagh Main Road.