

# Swiss dancer gives Devdas dance moves

Mahalakshmi.P@timesgroup.com

**T**hey are incredibly well trained, always in a good mood, and always with a smile." Compliments literally rain from Swiss contemporary dancer and choreographer Nicole Seiler when she talks of the seven dancers from Attakkalari Repertory Company she has been working with for two months for a new production.

The Indo-Swiss collaboration, *Isshhk*, is being produced by Cie Nicole Seiler (Seiler's dance company), Arsenic Lausanne (a contemporary arts venue in Lausanne, Switzerland) and Bengaluru's Attakkalari Center for Movements Arts. "I have been coming to Attakkalari since 2011; first for a performance at its dance biennale and later, as a mentor for Facets, a residency programme it offers young choreographers," Seiler says. "The intense and intensive experience I had during the programme deepened my relationship with Attakkalari. I continued to visit and meet people from the company, and this idea, to make a piece for them, just struck me one day. Jay (Jayachandran Palazhy) was very generous to let me do it."

A contemporary performance that "explores the links between sound and image, between cinema and stage", *Isshhk* is woven around Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Devdas*. "I have been doing a lot of work on the subject of perception — how what you see on stage influences the way you hear, and how the sound playing influences the way you watch what's on stage. The idea was to show how movement is viewed through the filter of sound. I have been wanting to convey the concept using soundtracks from films for a long time," she says. The performance itself, she says, will have a lot of movement and improvisation based on the dancers' interpretations and "some Bollywood steps thrown in as a reference point".

Seiler watched a long list of Indian films and consulted with Térésa Faucon, a film historian who specializes in Indian cinema before zeroing in on *Devdas*. "I chose the movie because so many versions of the story have been

made for the screen from the 1930s to the 2000s. The possibilities it offered were interesting — of the change in the quality of sound over the span of 100 years; of what it says about India's evolution from the 1930s to its globalised identity today; and then of course, there is the unhappy love story that is so universal and relatable."

The hour-long production will be staged in Lausanne, Switzerland from April 19 to 22 at The Arsenic, a contemporary arts performance venue. Seiler says, "The planning takes a long time but we will bring it to Bengaluru, probably next year."



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**Nicole Seiler** | CONTEMPORARY DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER

