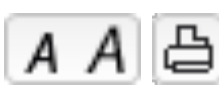




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## Twists in the Tale

Alaka Sahani , Alaka Sahani : Sat Nov 07 2009, 03:07 hrs



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*Prithvi Theatre festival showcases new-age productions where imagination takes flight and experiment is the norm*

Earlier this year, Amitesh Grover found a way to heighten the appeal of the four-century-

old Hamlet for contemporary audiences. The Delhi-based multi-media artist and theatre director devised The Hamlet Quartet, based on Shakespeare's tragic play and Heiner Muller's post-modernist drama Hamletmachine. The 29-year-old then spiced it up with a series of experiments bordering on smart and surreal.

Prithvi Theatre lends its stage to this three-month-old play as its annual festival, Theatres of India, commencing today.

At the festival, The Hamlet Quartet has company when it comes to experiment-rich plays. There is Theatre Roots and Wings' Sahyande Makan: The Elephant Project, Ranan's Equus and Sridhar/Thayil's The Flying Wallas: Opera Noir. Dialogues hardly feature in The Elephant Project as Japanese actress Micari transforms into an elephant.

The new production of Peter Shaffer's Equus is replete with music and movements while Opera Noir is a dark Indian twist to opera. "We have some very young groups presenting interesting work during the festival alongside the groups which are using traditional mediums and expressions," says Sanjna Kapoor, director of Prithvi Theatre.

In the script of The Hamlet Quartet, written by Kashav Kumar, a number of insignificant characters in the original play have gained prominence. Their dialogues have been created; the length has been curtailed to 1 hour-20 minutes; and props, mostly surreal in nature, have been introduced. All these have been done keeping the original plot intact. But the most striking of Grover's experiments is the profuse use of multimedia.

"I have been working on making multi-media a part of theatrical experience. In The Hamlet Quartet, we have a television set on the stage which plays live feed as well as pre-recorded scenes of Ophelia's madness," says Grover. The play is very visual with specially treated sound giving it an extra edge. Very few will be able to guess that for the final sword fight sequence in the play, they have treated the sound of pumping an inflated bed.

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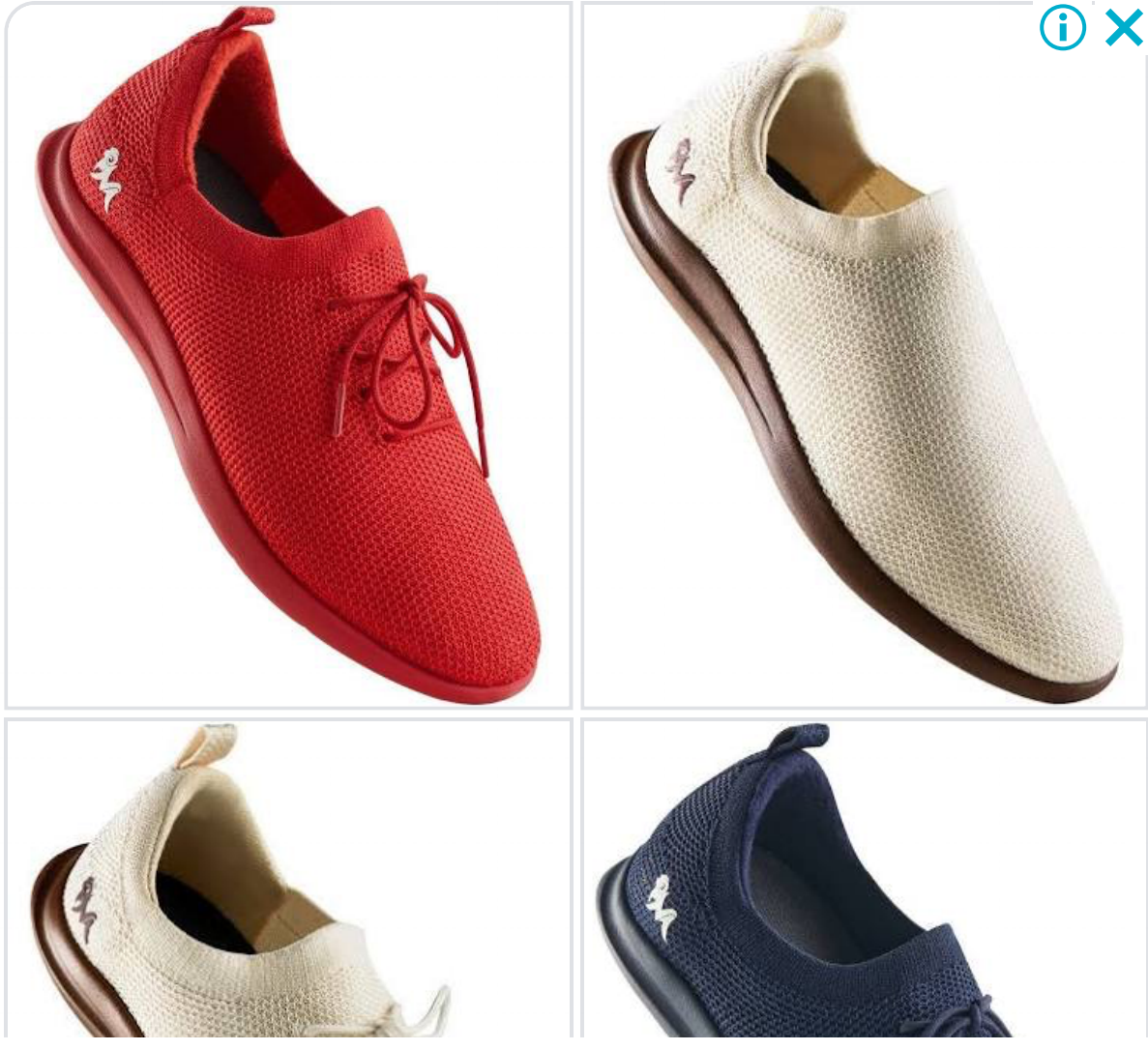
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