

Metro Plus Kochi

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French say *oui* to Kathakali

Bheesma art et Culture, a French organisation run by Mrs Lucile Paul-Chevance and Mrs Laure de Miol Flavard regularly brings students to Kochi. Besotted by Kathakali, these young men and women learn the art as much as they enjoy it. It has been an experience of sorts for both sides, says Mademoiselle CAROL INE.S, a French journalist



"RA-ma-ya-na, Ma-ha-ba-ra-tha", repeat after me, says the guru as 15 French artistes sit around Kalamandalam Venkitaraman, their teacher. They painstakingly try to pronounce the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. This group was in Kochi for three weeks at Kalamandalam training in Kathakali

The students, who are lovers of Indian art, come from all parts of France. These actors, dancers or mime artistes, who work on short contracts, are called 'Intermittent Du Spectacle'. They undertake such a course when they take a break from their vocation back home and train under the teachers of Kalamandalam. The Fort Kochi Kathakali Centre assisted them in staging performances, make-up and costumes. The group lived at Vypeen, near the backwaters. Alice, Caroline, Esther, Laurent were some of the 'shisyas' who tried to master this traditional art form. Their training included lessons in Hindu mythology and specialised histrionics, which goes with the dance. The students perfected face and finger movements, the soul of this art, working tirelessly for six to eight hours a day for nearly six days a week.