

Play Time: Lobo's Show, About Nothing

Meeta Mishra

ASHLEY LOBO is not happy with the way theatre is ignored in Delhi. Taking part in the Old World Theatre Festival (Sep. 12 – 24), at the India Habitat Centre, Ashley can't help but reflect on the plight of the theatre culture in the Capital. "In India, and in Delhi, in particular, it is very difficult to eke out a living from staging plays. In spite of the presence of the premiere institute, National School of Drama, here we have hardly contributed anything to dramatics. We have to develop an audience for theatre in the city. Festivals such as these help generate interest in the drama," says Ashley, in his now-accented-now-not English.

"The worst part is that anyone who has been able to do some good work in theatre here, goes off to Mumbai because that is where work, fame and money is. Therefore, there is always a paucity of good theatre people in Delhi," says Ashley. Though he belongs to Mumbai, he made Delhi his home because his "wife is from here". He completed his schooling from St. Mary's (a residential school) in Mount Abu, Rajasthan and graduation in Economics from St Xavier's, Mumbai. He studied dancing at the Bodenweiser Dance Centre and the renowned Sydney Dance Company. He returned to India in 1998 to set up The Danceworx Performing Arts Company. Besides choreographing corporate shows and com-



mercial product launches for numerous reputed companies, Delhi's answer to Shiamak Davar, Ashley has directed and staged many theatrical shows.

His play, *About Nothing*, will be staged at the IHC on Sep. 21 and 22. "The play, as says the title, is about nothing really. I feel that we make issues out nothing and that is what inspired me to write this play," says Ashley. *About Nothing* is an insight into one man's observations on various issues. Love, perception, death and life are some of the areas that the play hopes to touch on in an endeavour to come up with answers. Sometimes funny and sometimes sad, this dance theatre work with the usage of one actor and a group of dancers is highly experimental. And when it is Ashley at the helm of a work, then dance becomes an integral part of the work. So it is in this case – the play is interspersed with dance pieces ranging from Indian classical dance to Western contemporary dance.

But before staging the play here, he'll fly off to Mumbai to teach Sunny Deol's cousin Abhay how to shake his leg in the filmstar's new production. ■

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