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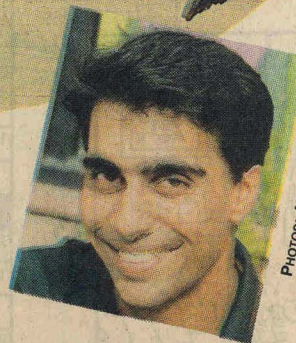
Ashley Lobo gets cold feet, thanks to critics

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You may not be seeing Ashley Lobo for a long time on stage. Not because he no longer wishes to perform, but because, he says, "that takes away the lime-light from my students." And how did he reach this conclusion. "Last year when I performed with them in *Me And My Girl*, I had a one-minute solo part," Ashley explains. "But the critics talked only about that one minute and barely reported the powerhouse performance of my students."

If that doesn't explain Ashley's commitment to his work, nothing will. In fact, students and, beyond them, jazz, form his life's centre of gravity. "My dream," he says almost hesitantly, "is to create dancers who can go on the Western dance stage and match the performers there step for step, technique for technique."

That's Ashley for you, the dancer-choreographer who started The Danceworx two years back to teach Delhi's nimble feet the intricacies of classical western dance. Ashley trained in jazz, classical and contemporary dance at the Bodenweiser Dance Centre and later with the Sydney Dance Company in Australia for over five years and worked on several musicals out there. And though you'd never catch him mentioning it, he has also done TV and promo work for international stars such as teen heartthrob Peter Andre.



PHOTOS: ATUL CHOWDHARY

Australia-trained Ashley Lobo (above) wants his students to grow up to become choreographers, not mere film extras

Back home in 1995, Ashley started choreographing musicals and theatre productions like *Me And My Girl*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Matilda* and *Les Miserables*. What disturbs him, though, is that what students learn here in the guise of western dance is "merely steps not technique." So, he steadfastly avoids taking the short cut, his goal being to turn his students into choreographers, "not extras in Hindi films."

Ashley has expansion plans aplenty for Danceworx. "Starting next year, we want to bring in a teacher from abroad (maybe one under whom I have studied) who will stay here full time and teach," he reveals.

Not only that, Danceworx already is spreading its wings beyond Blue Bells School, East of Kailash, where Ashley conducts his twice-a-week classes, charging Rs 850 per student. "My classes at Pitampura and Noida are already functional and we're planning to take up another space in Chanakyapuri". And what's Ashley teaching his students apart from dance? "Humility and my lack of belief in press," he says without a moment of doubt. This man sure knows his steps!