

Embassy of Netherlands marks 400 years of Indo-Dutch relations with a dance drama by
Danceworx, New Delhi and Balletschool Louise, Purmerend

LET'S GO DUTCH



The dance drama titled, *Divided Past, Shared Future*, organised by the Embassy of Netherlands intends to uncover misconceptions that people from the two countries, India and Netherlands have of each other.

The first part is presented by 12 dancers (age group of 12 to 18 years) of Danceworx Performing Arts Academy, New Delhi and is about a passage to Amsterdam, an original dance choreographed and directed by Ashley Lobo. They have used styles such as Hip-Hop, Modern dance, Jazz, Indian classical and even *filmi* dance, as they call it.

The story is set in the present and moves from scenes of a young girl at school, at university and then as pursuing fashion photography. She, then, meets a young man and they fall in love. Her father has trouble accepting, that she find a life partner herself, instead of her family arranging it, as is the Indian custom. The next surprise for the father is that this man, is Dutch, who, as it turns out, has an Indian background, was adopted at a young age by a Dutch couple and grew up in the Netherlands. Ashley consciously chose this twist, "Many Dutch couples are known to adopt children from India. I wanted to bring that out." So, the father agrees to the marriage, under a condition: the two lovers be separated to allow thinking time for their decision. They pass the test and a traditional Indian marriage, with all 24 dancers, closes the show.

The 12 Dutch dancers (from Balletschool Louise, Purmerend) will perform the second part of the show, using street dance, free-style jazz ballet and 'show ballet'. It starts with the arrival of a ship to India. Dutch traders and soldiers

meet Indian people in a maharaja's palace, negotiating cotton and slave prices. A romance begins between a Dutch trader and an Indian girl, resulting in a fight. The fight is related to Gandhi's battle against the British. In independent India, a dilemma arises: while some people want to return to their roots, others remain attached to western influences.

In the sixties, India becomes a popular destination for the young, western tourist and the two cultures converge again, this time on friendly terms. A water dance focussing on water regulation problems in India, brings in the Netherlands, who have longstanding experience with water management. The colourful side of India is focussed on, during a fashion show with Indian fabrics. After a modern sailor dance and the exchange of peace candles, all 24 dancers participate in the finale.

The two choreographers discussed choreography via email, telephone and audio/visual cassettes. The outcome is a performance, highlighting the significance and relevance of Indo-Dutch relations, to bring home the ideas that depict the traditions and cultures of the countries. The Indian troupe has just returned from Netherlands with their performance. According to Ashley, "It was a great learning experience. It was fascinating to see children (between 12 and 18 years) let nothing come in between their own plane of interaction. The best part is that they had to behave professionally and act responsibly. I think that has really taught them a lot." The show was well received and they expect the same in Delhi.

(*Divided Past, Shared Future* will be on at Kamani Auditorium on October 15 at 3.30 and 7.30 pm) ■