

of influences to put it down to one person. Going into specifics is unthinkable. "That's something you do earlier in your career. See somebody and give them *guru*-status. At this stage I'm working from a myriad of influences, from cinema through to literature, dance and music."

The dancers he worked with from Danceworx in Delhi are a young ambitious company, hungry for new influences and ideas. The piece he worked out with them is about their personal journeys that celebrates the growth of how this group, formed of individuals, with their own separate stories came together. The work they have done is informed and fine tuned by the ideas that Nik has brought with him and concludes to a finale they call the 'Here And Now' section. The music used consists of chants and beats suggestive of journeys and at the end interestingly, the dancers themselves provide the rhythm.

Trained as a contemporary and ballet dancer, part-time sculptor, musician and poet, artistically Nik's world is thoroughly eclectic, "I find that really exciting. Not to get stuck in a rut, where you can see or hear only in one way. It's important to keep all your senses open to any stimuli." Like what a jazz musician does when improvising. Similarly, jazz dance is also improvisation although it is a technique as strict as any other.

Danceworx has a primarily jazz base. That was one place for the school to begin as now it is moving towards ballet and contemporary dance as well, opening up as more information comes in and the dancers build on it through their own bodies with their own talent. The growth of the artist in this way is of fundamental importance.

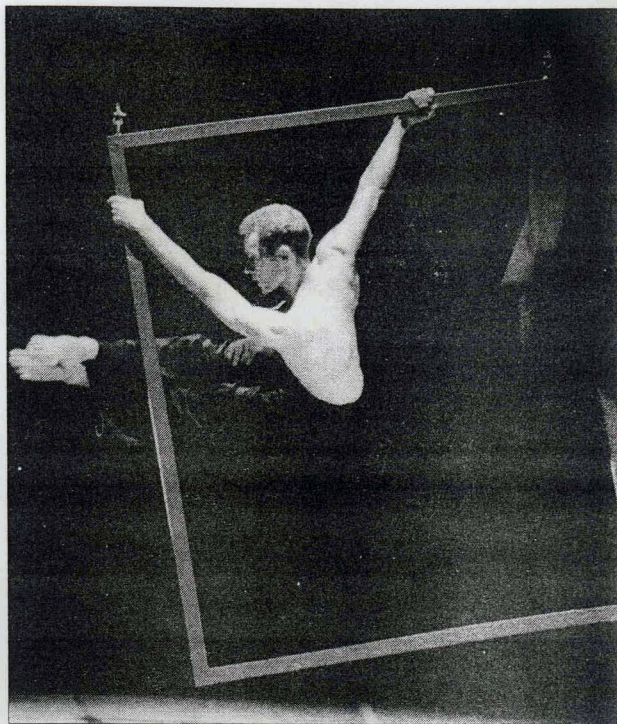
What impresses Nik is innovation through personal expression as a way of making art, rather than having everybody serve a specific technique and be recognised as an exponent of that. He hopes to start a process that will live on in his dancers' minds and "I'm not an integral part of it."

The challenge he enjoys most is of "working with people who have life experience, not necessarily dance experience" so that through a technique that is constantly evolving, "I try to bring out from each performer, an individual performance." When working with experienced dancers, he first tries to break down what they have learnt to give a purer character to what they do.

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On another level he says, "Each dancer comes with a life history that is often tragic. As an artist, you cannot carry such baggage and be expected to express freely. I can't ignore that and have to deal with it, as dance, obviously such a physical form, anything that we carry will be within the body somewhere and it has to come out." Often such a setting free can be confronting at the beginning of the process. "To guide



dancers to their own style without becoming a parent and hopefully, to find a way of handling what they are dealing with emotionally, as subtly as possible, and provide avenues for dealing with the past in as positive a way as possible."

**T**he movement he has created hopes to make his dancers within a group convey themselves as a "rolling organism" and start a movement that never stops, "The shapes that bodies can create not an arm's length but actually as torsos entwine." Starting by lying on the floor and using gravity, gradually coming away, "we use breath as that is the most vital movement and the originator of all movement." As they come up and away from the floor, they use gravity rather than fight it utilising weight and momentum. "There are no sharp corners in my movement because that is an inefficient way of moving. If you stop, you put an end to all the momentum and have to start the whole process again." The suspension comes from the breath, "we are not looking at single steps but at how a whole piece of movement can be shaped using the breath."

Dance is not merely about physical explosions, "the body and mind are far more subtle instruments. The subtlety of movement carries on right through our lives. I intend to dance till I die and I will have stories to tell that I hope will become more interesting as I grow older. The way I move will be effected by age too perhaps, but I hope to find subtler ways of moving as I'm less interested in gymnastics."

In India this could be the beginning of something hugely exciting as the dissatisfaction with classical forms increases and artists all over the world feel indisposed to follow the traditional repertoire they inherit. As this discord is on, the growth of the artist is in the right place.

*Nik Hills' dancers from Danceworx perform at Siri Fort Auditorium on July 7 at 7.30 pm and on July 8 at 4.30 and 7.30 pm.*