

# Woman's World



## 'Women must treat their INNER SELVES with a lot of respect'

**MARIN LEGGAT**, dancer, educator, choreographer and founder of M.E.L.D. Danceworks in NYC, is in Mumbai as a US Department of State Culture Connect envoy. Currently, she is associated with the Terence Lewis Contemporary Dance Company for a workshop to teach American modern dance. The workshop will culminate in a dance production with a stage performance next week

BY BONSY DESAI

**M**arin Elizabeth Leggat came to New York City from Salt Lake City, where she was teaching at Brigham Young University (BYU) and serving as Assistant Director of the internationally touring BYU Dancers' Company. After graduate school, she spent eight months in Sri Lanka, traveling and teaching performing arts at the Asian International School, then returned to the island in 2005 to teach dance in several tsunami-affected villages. Workshops and master classes have been presented in Thailand, Cambodia, Taiwan, Morocco, and South Africa. Right now she's working with the Terence Lewis Dance Company in Mumbai on a stage production that the city will witness in a few days.

**My inspiration...**

I was all of 16 when I saw a performance by Martha Green in Solex City. She, along with her troupe of dancers, put up a spectacular dance, a visual treat. That was the day I first decided I wanted to pursue dancing seriously. I have a BA as well as a MFA (Masters in Fine Arts) in dance. That's why I was very surprised to know that here, in India, there's only one college in Bangalore that offers a formal degree in dance. In the US we have people who have even gone as far as doing a doctorate in dance.

**I thank God everyday...**

I have fulfilled my calling! I'm a choreographer based in a city like New York, in the US – the land of opportunity. I lead a group of dancers and together we choreograph performances based on the themes of spiritual identity that influence artistry. Our themes talk of

how spiritualism affects dance and vice versa.

**Thing we don't see can be real...**

I'm here as a part of the American government's envoy programme. The objective is to build bridges and encourage interaction for the benefit of socio-cultural relations. I'm here to work with the dancers at the Terence Lewis Dance Company. We have worked together to mix our values and bring them on stage, so I would say

posed to back in America. I am very fascinated by the facial expressions used in them and sometimes I think that is missing in the post-modern dances that we perform – a certain kind of connectivity that you need to develop with the audience.

**Life is a journey...**

I love different things about different places. One of my most memorable trips was to Morocco about ten years ago. I loved the dif-

and I love this city with all its vibrant colour and energy. It is a lot like New York. But, yes, I have been to other parts in India a few years ago. I was here on a two-week trip to Rajasthan. I love Indian food, especially the hot rotis served with a meal. They are delicious!

**Can arranged marriages work...**

I think Indian women are beautiful! It's very heartening to see Indian women are now getting so

portrayed...

Yes, there is a stereotype about American women. I feel very disappointed when people believe that American women have low morals and no values. In fact, the American media is largely responsible for constantly portraying their women in a bad light. If the people of a certain country, especially the uneducated lot, know nothing about our country or its women then they are obviously going to judge us on the basis of what they read, see and hear about us in the media. So it's very sad that without knowing the women of our country it is generally assumed that we are shallow and have no morals to fall back on. Let me assure you that this is not the case.

**Women are innately creative...**

The most beautiful thing about a woman is her ability to create, be it dance, friendship or a human life. It is this ability that makes her unique, important and beautiful. Outer appearances are not important, as long as one is confident of herself from within. That confidence manifests from deep inside when, and if, you are sure of yourself. Don't paint yourself on the outside and then try to create something within, because if you are beautiful inside then the outer world will take care of itself. Begin to treat your inner self with respect and you will always be beautiful, no matter what you wear.

**I have no regrets...**

I can truly say that I'm very happy with all that I have today. But I do wish to get married, have children, and be a part of a happy family. Of course, I also want to keep coming back to India to perform and see more of your beautiful country!



that whatever you will see will be partly my idea and partly theirs. The name of our show is 'Light Traces' and it talks of how things can be real even if we can't see them. It shows us the fine line between reality and spiritualism. It's wonderful to be working with Indian dancers on this project.

**Faces can be so expressive...**

I love the facial expressions that are used in Indian dance forms. Bharatnatyam and Kathak are the two dance forms that we are ex-

posed to back in America. I am very fascinated by the facial expressions used in them and sometimes I think that is missing in the post-modern dances that we perform – a certain kind of connectivity that you need to develop with the audience.

This is my first visit to Mumbai.

### MARIN'S MANTRAS

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many opportunities. But I have to say I am still trying to understand this concept of an arranged marriage. The culture here is so different from my part of the world but, again, everything has its benefits and drawbacks. All I can say is that all the women I've been interacting with have been not only loving and giving, but very intelligent as well. It feels great to be a recipient of all the love and light they have to give.

American women are poorly