



ONE TWO, CHA CHA CHA

Marin Leggat travelled the world teaching dance. Finally it's India's turn, writes **Rochelle Pinto**

The dancers spill across the room, their feet hitting the wooden floor boards in perfect unison. They're performing a Bollywood number for their instructor, Marin Leggat, who sits in the centre of the room, capturing the exuberance of the dance on camera.

"I've rarely watched Hindi cinema" confides Marin, "So they promised to put on a show for me."

Leggat is a dancer, educator, choreographer and founder of M.E.L.D. Danceworks in New York. She received the Dee Winterton Spirit of Dance Award from Brigham Young University, the same institution from which

she completed a bachelor's degree in dance education and sociology. She remembers being inspired to take up contemporary dance after listening to a college professor talk about creativity.

"Contemporary dance requires an ability to improvise though it's based in the basic structure of ballet." She explains. "With my students, I like to see them create their own movements which I can then craft." The creative freedom enjoyed by the students is apparent in their nervous excitement, as they try to add their own personal style to the routine.

Leggat has been around the world teaching dance in places

like Cambodia, Botswana and Thailand as a means to bridge cultural and religious differences. According to her, spirituality permeates through every part of daily life and provides the perfect base for expressive art. "I believe in allowing the students to express their own value systems through



dance," she explains.

Her interest in coming to India was sparked when she met Terence Lewis of the Terence Lewis Dance Company in Sri Lanka shortly after the tsunami in 2005. Now on her first visit to India as an instructor, Leggat is excited about working with the pupils at Lewis' dance company. "The dancers here are so eager and passionate, they genuinely believe in what they are doing. I personally feel strengthened having worked with them."

Before she leaves India, Leggat has one secret desire to fulfil — choreographing a dance sequence to music by A R Rahman.

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