

# Dance like a man

KARISHMA MODI

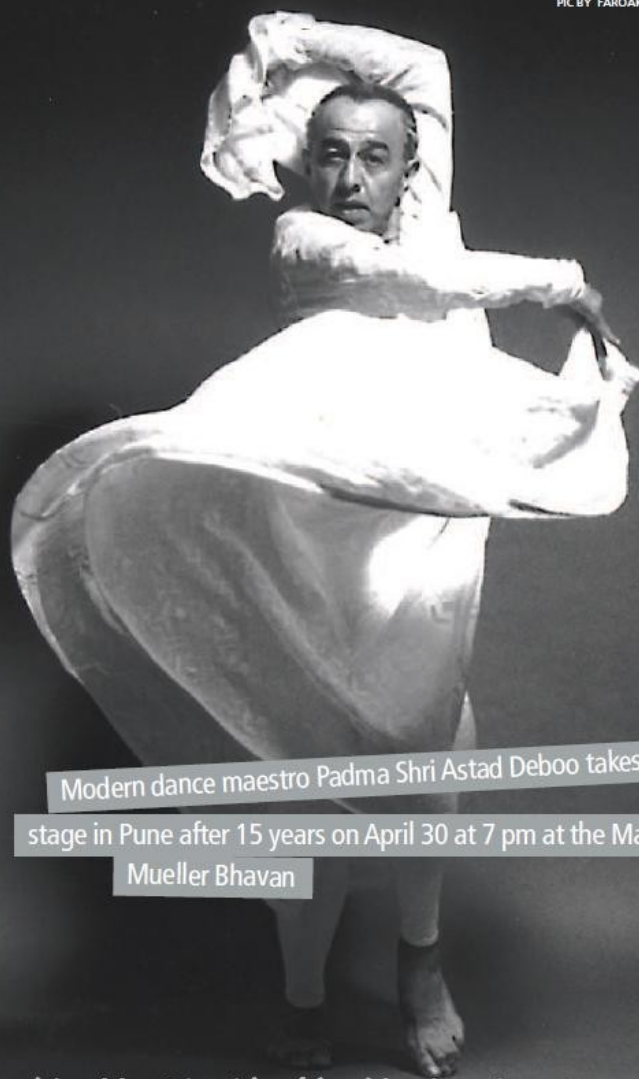
It is true that the less popular an art form is among the masses, the less we get to see of it. But the process of bringing people into the embrace of something like this is time consuming. "It takes time. I moved back to India thirty years ago. What I've been doing since '78 is opening doors for new dancers who are looking to present their work under the Contemporary Dance banner. And yet, they have to cultivate their audiences in the same way. So no, it's not an overnight process," says Astad Deboo.

After a gap of 15 years, the modern dance maestro Astad Deboo is back in Pune. Though awarded the Padma Shri for propagating the form, Deboo still believes that the journey towards a mass base is just beginning. The term 'modern dance', is very often, misunderstood and mass appreciation is still in nascent stages. "Even before the award, I had already cultivated an audience for my work. But this art form is still restricted to a niche audience and isn't yet very popular," says Deboo.

Modern dance exponents do not find support in specific centres in the country, Chennai for example. "It was I who took the initiative and began work with the deaf students of the Clarke School, Chennai. So the first push came from my end. I thought here was a talented group of dancers, already trained in the Bharatnatyam style and now through seven years and 75 performances of 'Contraposition' I have worked with them on an entirely different level from their training. Yes, Chennai has its quirks but even a city like Mumbai has not opened up. There's always a dearth of sponsors and consequently a lack of presenters, not to mention audiences," explains Deboo.

As for the performance on Friday, just enjoy it. "All I want is that people come in and see this performance as a whole and not break it down and look for 'messages'," says Deboo.

PIC BY FAROAK CHOTHIA



Modern dance maestro Padma Shri Astad Deboo takes the stage in Pune after 15 years on April 30 at 7 pm at the Max Mueller Bhavan