



**POLE POSITION:** Dressed in micro shorts, black leather biker boots and wearing piles of jewellery, teen idol Miley Cyrus wowed with her pole dancing moves.

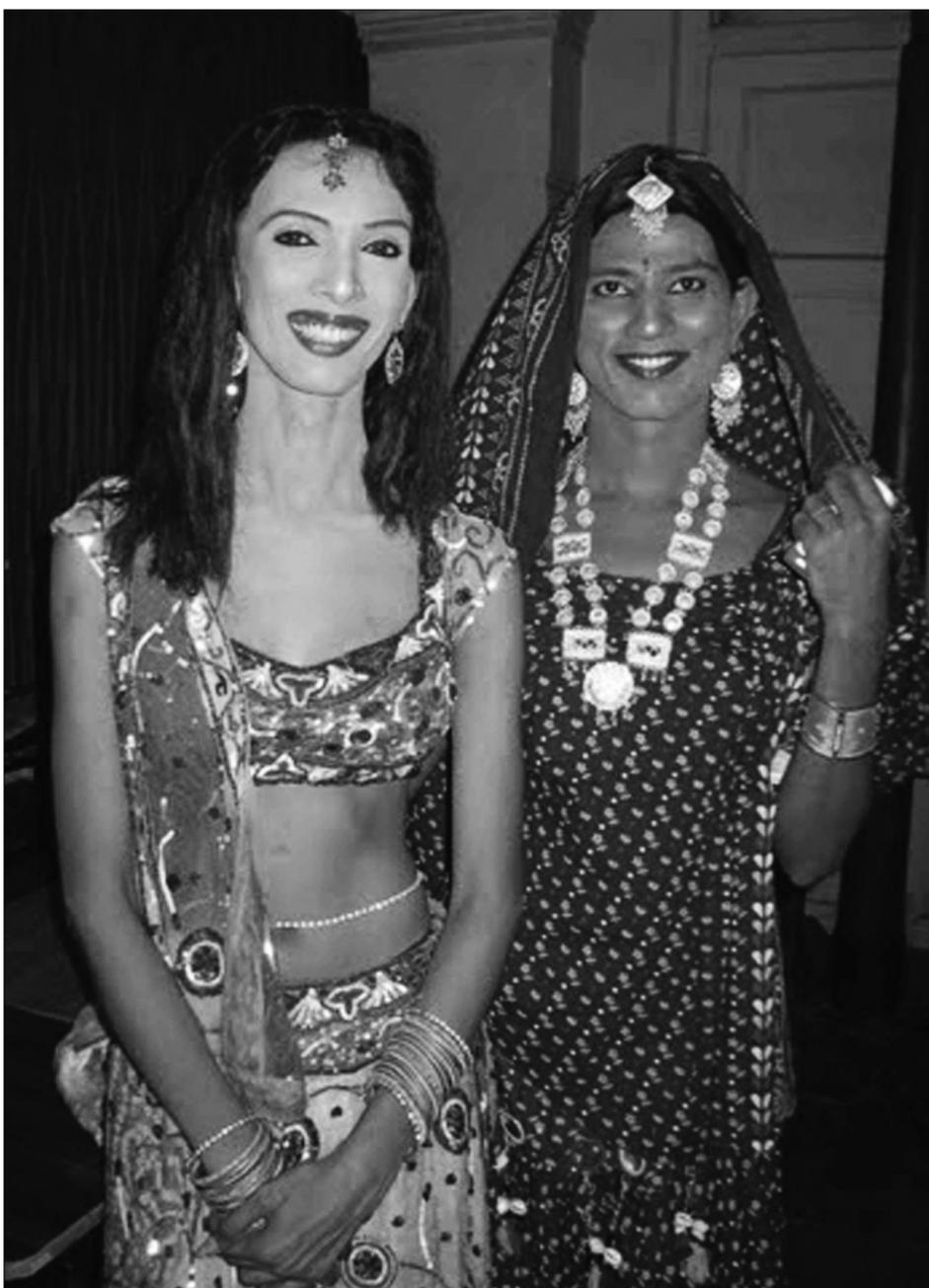


**WORKSHOP:** Children will participate in an Indian dance workshop at Ashton-under-Hill village hall held by Chitraleka Dance Company, a UK-based South Asian company, that will explore Indian dance through the legend of Ram and Sita.



**STEP BY STEP:** Paula Abdul may be out of a job on *American Idol*, but she could soon be dancing with the stars on rival TV network ABC America. She may appear as judge on the talent show *So You Think You Can Dance*.

## DANCE+



# INDIA'S OWN DANCING QUEENS

footnotes Neil Pate

*Mumbai's transgender folks stage a dance show and collect Rs 30,000 for the Queer Azaadi March, which will be held on August 16*

THEY MAY BE far-off from the razzle-dazzle of a professionally managed Broadway show, but the three-hour, "Dancing Queens" drag show staged by a group of transgender persons from Mumbai on August 1 at Bandra left the audience spellbound, asking for nothing else but "once more!"

From Rekha's immortal *Dil cheez kya hai... mujra* from the film *Umrao Jaan* to Sridevi's *Morani bage mein dole aadhi raat ko...* folk dance from the film *Lamhe*, the female impersonators had the audience glued to their seats.

The flawless make-up, stunning costumes, sequins and hair dos — and last but not the least — the electrifying performances by the

dancing queens — Madhuri, Urmi, Malini, Jinno, and Harsha among others could give any Bollywood item girl a run for her money.

The event was basically organised by Kinnar Kasturi, a community based organisation in association with the Humsafar Trust (HST) and the Family Health International (FHI) to raise funds for the forthcoming Queer Azaadi March (QAM), which will be held in the city on August 16. "They all performed for free. In fact, they even refused to take money for conveyance," says an elated Malini, a transgender, who works as a community counsellor with the HST.

A transgender in full woman garb is truly a sight to behold, and more often than not a drag queen lip-synching and dancing to the 1980s raunchy number, *More sajan tohe bhook lagi toh puri, kachori, rasagulla banjaongee...* will have the crowd dancing on their feet in a jiffy. "We have seen some of them perform before, but today's performance and the response from the crowd was overwhelming. They have managed to raise Rs 30,000 for the QAM. In fact, after seeing their performance some people actually came forward and suggested we stage regular shows on the lines of the calypsos and drag shows in Bangkok and Pattaya, etc. here in Mum-

bai," says Vivek Anand, chief executive officer of HST.

Ahijit Aher, who performed on a popular Bollywood number and works as a communication specialist with the John Hopkins University says, "We are expecting a huge turnout this year for the QAM, not only from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community but from the mainstream society."

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sure and the fear of being ostracised."

The dance show was in many ways a safe space and catharsis for some of the transgender persons to cross-dress and celebrate their sexuality with like-minded people without the fear of being ridiculed or mocked at. Little wonders then that a majority of them were dressed to kill — backless ghagra-cholis, designer sarees and sexy gowns donned the soiree — not to mention the plunging necklines and receding hemlines. While some swayed their hips and strutted all over the place, others clutched their purses and saree pleats talking nineteen to dozen — conversations drifted from lipsticks shades to making banners for the azaadi march.

"Hum aulad nahin paida kar sakte to kya hua, apne humar se accha kam to kar sakte hai (So what if we can't bear children? We can do good work with our talents)," quips Amma, a senior leader from the transgender community as she asks for paan and supari to one of her disciples.

As William Shakespeare rightly said, "All the world's a stage." For those of us who prefer our entertainment on a stage made of wooden boards, there are entertainers who bring creativity, excitement and laughter to the audiences in the humblest of stage settings.

*The Queer Azaadi March will be held on Sunday, August 16 at 3 pm from August Kranti Maidan.*

# Put on your dancing shoes

voxtrot Sandip Soparrkar



**IN THE** fairytale of *Cinderella*, we saw her meet her Prince Charming all because of her pretty dancing shoes so you can very well imagine how important a role shoes play in dance.

Normally when people join a dance class they bother least about their dance shoes.

When we go to the gym to exercise we invest in expensive fitness footwear, so why is it that when it comes to dancing it is taken so lightly?

Remember half the battle is won with a good pair of dancing shoes — they not only make you look good but also help you move smoothly on the dance floor and prevent any injuries. Different dance styles demands different types and styles of shoes. I have men-

tioned some popular ones for you to learn more about them:

**Pointe shoes:** Designed for ballet dancing, these have a toe box that is stiffened with glue and a hardened sole so the dancer can stand on the tips of their toes. They are secured by elastic straps and ribbons that are tied to the dancer's ankles.

**Ballet shoes:** These are heel-less slippers made of canvas or leather, with either continuous or split sole. The sole is typically made of leather, with thicker material under the ball of the foot and the heel, and a thinner and thus more flexible material under the arch so that the foot can be pointed to its utmost. Ballet slippers are usually secured by elastics that cross over the top of the foot. They are most commonly pink, white, black, or pale tan, although they may be made in other colours such as red or blue.

**Jazz shoes:** These typically have a two-part, rubberised sole to provide both flexibility and traction, and a low one inch or shorter heel. They are secured to the foot by laces or elastic inserts.

**Tap and Flamenco:**

These shoes are almost like regular shoes but have a metal like substance on the ball of the foot of the shoe so that the correct sounds are made with the shoe while dancing.

**Standard ballroom shoes:** These have suede soles. Men's shoes are typically lace-ups with 1-inch heels and patent leather uppers. Ladies' ballroom shoes are typically court shoes with low 2-inch heels, usually made of fabric so that they can be finished with a greater variety of colours to match the dancer's dress. The low ballroom heel distributes the dancer's weight across the foot.

**Latin American shoes:** These have higher heels designed to throw the dancer's weight on to the toes and the soles are more flexible. Men's Latin shoes typically have 1.5-inch to 2-inch shaped heels while Ladies' Latin shoes have 2.5-inch to 3-inch heels, and are open-toed and strapped.

**Dance sneakers:** Also known as "dansneakers", these are a combination of a sneaker and a dance shoe, with a reinforced rubber toe.

**Character shoes.** These shoes have a one- to three-inch heel, are usually made of leather, and often have

### Dance Shoe Care:

1. Brush your shoe regularly, from top and sole.
2. Use a wire bristles shoe brush for suede shoes.
3. Polish your shoes before and after use.
4. Do not wear your dance shoe to a party or outdoors; they are only to be used on the dance floor.
5. Keep your shoe in a cloth bag through which they can breathe. It is very important to allow your dance shoe to breathe if you want them to last longer.
6. Air your shoes once or twice a week and more during rainy season as it can catch fungus.
7. Pack and unpack your shoes carefully after every use

one or more straps across the instep to secure the foot during dance. They may come in soft-soled or hard-soled varieties. They may be converted to tap shoes by attaching taps.

**Foot thongs.** Various called called Foot Paws and FootUndeez, depending on the manufacturer, these are slip-on, partial foot covers that protect the ball of a dancer's foot from skin abrasions while executing

turns. From a distance, flesh colored foot thongs give a dancer the appearance of having bare feet.

### International shoe etiquette:

\* In most parts of the world (Asia, Eastern Europe, parts of the Middle East and Africa, much of Northern Europe and Canada, as well as Alaska) it is customary to remove shoes when entering a house.

\* In some areas of the United States, especially the Midwest, it is expected that visitors remove their shoes unless a host specifically invites them to leave their shoes on. People do this to avoid bringing dirt, mud or snow into the house. For some societies, including those in Asia, indoor footwear may be provided for guests.

\* In the Middle East, parts of Africa, Korea and Thailand, it is considered rude to show the soles of the feet to others (even accidentally, such as by crossing the legs).

\* In Thailand, it is an extreme insult for the foot, socks or shoes to touch someone's head or be placed over it.

Although feet touching heads is an extremely rare occurrence in any society, some Muay Thai boxers insult each other by "kicking" the opponent's head with their foot (most Muay Thai kicks are executed with the shin).

## people



**TROUBLED BRITISH** singer Amy Winehouse relies on the advice of a 13-year-old girl to help her through her problems.

The *Rehab* hitmaker has struggled with a divorce and a well-publicised battle with alcohol and drug addiction in recent years. During the turbulent phase, the only person she trusted is teenage girl Dionne Bromfield whom she calls her best friend and has signed to her new record company.

"All the time I'll come to her and say, 'Dionne, I don't know what to do about this.' She'll say something that makes complete sense. Me and Dionne are best friends," said the singer.

**WELL-KNOWN** Spanish director Pedro Almodovar, who is a gay, says he got attracted to his muse Penelope Cruz with whom he has done films like *Volver* and *All About My Mother*.

Almodovar admitted that he was intensely attracted to Cruz while filming his latest film *Broken Embraces*, a concept he also included in the plot.

"Out of all the actresses I have worked with, Penelope really has been the one who has caused a sense of desire in me beyond the sensuality of a film shoot," he said.

"Normally, as a director, you engage with your leading lady on an extremely emotional level, and there is everything but sex. But it is true that with Penelope it is different. She has caused me sexual desire," he added.

