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A SHY, modest young man with silken curls and blue eyes stood smiling in the midst of a group of art lovers. It seemed almost impossible to extricate him from the crowd of admirers.

At last when I succeeded in drawing him out Richard Maitland heaved a sigh of relief. "Oh, I have been on my feet for such a long time", he said gratefully. And we sat down for a hearty chat.

It was the first day of Maitland's exhibition of paintings in Bombay.

Not many who went to the exhibition that evening knew that Maitland is not primarily a painter. He is a professional classic ballet dancer who tries his hand at the canvas only in his off time.

Maitland came to India four years ago as a tourist. He was so fascinated by the country that he stayed on. "I was captivated by the colour and beauty that I saw here", he said.

He told me that he used to paint



Mr. R. Maitland

in his student days. Since then he had neglected it in favour of dancing which he had chosen as his career. By what he saw in India he felt almost compelled to capture his impressions on canvas.

"For the first time in fifteen years I started painting vigorously", he said. Two exhibitions held by him in Delhi had won praise from the critics.

World Trip

He said for a long time a feeling of restlessness had been growing stronger in him. He wanted to take a trip abroad but hardly had any means to fulfil his ambition. "I thought that going around the world would be an artistically stimulating experience and for six years I saved money to do this trip."

He came to India via Indonesia and Nepal where he stayed for a short while. But in Delhi he got stuck. Many people who came to know of his professional background as a ballet dancer requested him to open a ballet school. He was himself enamoured of the idea. Soon he was engrossed in teaching classical ballet to a set of eager students in Delhi and almost forgot that he was there only for a brief while. He also organised an International Children's Dance Theatre with a cast of nearly 20

children of different nationalities. He said during his stay in Delhi he had organised as many as 36 charity shows of which two were in aid of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. He said he would like to undertake a tour of the country if some organisation could sponsor it. Such a tour would give him an opportunity to perform in different parts of the country and also to help in raising funds for "any good cause".

Professional Dancer

Maitland who has been a professional dancer for fifteen years and has appeared in many Broadway shows is keenly interested in all types of dancing. "I do all types of dancing. If I were younger I would have probably tried to learn Indian dancing too," he said. At one time he had learnt Indonesian dancing and gave a series of performances with Devi Dja, a celebrated Indonesian dancer, in America and Mexico.

In his opinion foreigners could not do full justice to classical Indian dance traditions. True, there might be exceptions, he agreed and said even while doing Indonesian dances he never felt he was looking authentic.

He said all modern Indian dances were based either on the classical or the folk dances of the country. But these forms of artistic expression were not enough for portraying modern themes. These themes demanded "more rapid movement." It was his ambition to help in the popularisation of "modern interpretative dance with a classic ballet foundation" in India.

Many in India, he said, seemed to believe that American dance comprised only Rock 'N' Roll.

That was the belief shared by many in Indonesia too. "It is true this is a dance which everyone can do but it would be nice if people knew that there were many other American dances," he said.

Interior Design

Maitland hails from Arizona. He studied interior design, painting, sculptural construction, lapidary and modern jewellery design at the California School of Fine Arts and the New School in New York. His first love, however, was dancing and after his graduation he became a professional dancer. Of the many Broadway shows in which he featured were the popular musicals "Lil Abner" and "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers."

During his stay in India he has visited Kerala, Madras, Rajasthan, Orissa and "almost all the hill stations." He hopes to travel to the remotest parts of the country "to paint and to perform" during the next two years.