

DANCE TRAINING



Girls undergoing training in ballet dancing.

Ballerinas In The Making

By A Reporter

EVERY Tuesday and Friday evening, at the stroke of five, a dozen or more children go scampering into a spacious room on the sixth floor of New Delhi's luxurious Ashoka Hotel.

There, awaiting them, is Richard Maitland, American ballet dancer and teacher, who conducts the only school of classical Western ballet in the Capital.

The classroom is 30 ft. square. Alongside one wall is a railing at which the pupils do barre' work. Near the opposite wall is situated a tall mirror which Maitland uses to observe his pupils' movements as they copy his. It also helps the children to correct their faults. A third teaching aid is a radiogram. A piano is the classical requisite, "but I can't afford one," says Maitland.

As the music starts the children line up at the railing for the barre' work. This is taxing exercise for their young limbs. But it is this half hour of rigorous training of the muscles and limbs which pre-

pares them for the next half hour of "floor work", which consists of foot work and body movements. Out-turned feet—that is the vogue in a ballet school. Even while at ease in the classroom the young enthusiasts are advised to walk with the feet forming an obtuse angle as possible. Movements sideways are easier and quicker—and by far more graceful—when the feet are turned outward.

Minister's Son

Maitland's pupils are an international lot the like of which one may see in the U.N. School at the U.N. Headquarters in New York. Most of them are foreigners. The only boy in the class is the son of an Indian Cabinet Minister. A Polish social worker of Delhi sends both her young daughters to the Maitland School.

Of tender age as they are the children have varying visions of a future dance career. "I don't know," said a shy little danseuse, daughter of a Dutch diplomat, when asked whether she would take to ballet dancing as a career. "I like to," was the more specific reply of an English girl, daughter of an official in the British High Commission. "I love to," snapped enthusiastically a Filipino, daughter of a New

Delhi hotel band leader.

Maitland runs another class for his advanced pupils. He sticks to the classical style in his school even though he is aware that in night clubs the purely classic has less appeal than watered-down patterns suitable to jazz.

Maitland's Tip

A beginner must learn and practise for three years before dancing to an audience, says Maitland. But this is no rigid generalisation, he himself having got his first public assignment after eight months of training in a ballet school in San Francisco.

With the Ballet Russe he toured the U.S.A. and Europe. He appeared in several plays on Broadway. After a spell of film-acting ('Band Wagon, No Business Like the Show Business'), Maitland set out on a tour of the East to see and learn the dances of the Orient.

In Indonesia, he learned Javanese dances, and was fascinated by the Siamese and Burmese styles. It is Bharata Natyam and Kathak that lure him most and even as he teaches western classical ballet in New Delhi, he hopes to learn some styles of Indian dancing too.