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<i>Sunflower Parade</i>	
Oil	
34"x34"	
Laurence Sisson	



RICHARD MAITLAND

"Don Juan Playhouse"

Oil

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"ROOFS IN THE RAIN"

Oil

16x21

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Richard Maitland, Artist

Story, Marian F. Love

George Richard Alexander Maitland, painter, dancer and choreographer, made his dancing debut when he was eight years old in San Francisco. He was trained in the Meglin Studios and first danced publicly in a famous Children's Review called *The Meglin Kiddies*. "Shirley Temple and Jane Withers were Meglin Kiddies," Richard

in Deming, New Mexico, of *Cooper's Comedy Players*, a touring group that had traveled across the country from Brooklyn and featured Grandfather Fred, 'Music, Singing, Dancing, Ventriloquism Comedy and Novelty Acts.' He is reputed to have brought the first Edisonograph to the Territory and showed 'comic movies of high quality' on it.



Ranchos de Taos Church

oil/canvas

24''x36''

remarked, "but I wasn't 'discovered.' As a youngster I toured Bay Area pubs on Sundays with my Grandmother Cooper and one of her many husbands, tap dancing to juke box tunes while they passed a hat. In my teens I entered show business and have been in it for most of my life. My Grandfathers Maitland and Cooper played and sang in Lew Dockstader's Minstrels but at different times so they never knew each other.

"Grandfather Fred Cooper collected theatrical memorabilia and so do I. I have an 1888 program printed

He settled in Silver City near Deming, and in the 1890s he was a marathon runner wearing white tights and dark, elegant, leather running shoes. He claimed 48 acres of land in the mountain hamlet of Pinos Altos outside of Silver City, homesteaded it and had a silver and copper claim not far away. He was the postmaster, barber, owner of the general store and played the church organ. The Pinos Altos church is now a museum. He and my Grandmother (Ligon) were married when she was only 15 and he about 42, and my mother was born in the back room of

the adobe post office.

"My parents met in Silver City, were married and moved to Bisbee, Arizona where I was born. Mother took me to visit a ferryman uncle of hers at Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River when I was two years old, and Great-Grandfather Ligon drove up from Flagstaff to see his first great-grandchild. He was killed when his Ford careened off a cliff and was buried on the spot.

"Great-Grandfather Maitland emigrated from Edinburgh to Weston, Kansas, where he built a grist mill. He'd have been happy to know that 12 years ago a red stripe was added to the Lauderdale tartan to create the Maitland clan symbol. He was an elegant man and nearly as handsome as my father, was a writer and assistant editor of a big New York newspaper before he went to work for a San Francisco publishing house. My parents and Grandmother Cooper moved to San Francisco before I was five years old and I grew up there.

"When my parents were divorced, Mother and I spent about three years in Silver City where Grandfather Cooper managed the Bullard Hotel. I wish I'd heard him talk about show business, but I was only in grade school. He opened up a little when we visited him for a couple of weeks when I was in my late teens, but by then he lived alone in a shack on his mining claim and wasn't used to talking. He'd lost nearly everything when the hotel burned and he dressed in shabby clothes set off with a diamond stickpin. He carried Jim Corbett's gold watch and had long before disguised the initial J with a diamond bar so it looked like an F. He also owned a straight razor used to shave Billy the Kid.

"When I was sixteen, I dropped out of school and worked an eight-hour day assembling ships' instruments and studied dancing with the San Francisco Ballet at night. Two years later I danced in a touring company's revival of *The Merry Widow*. It had come out from New York and Balanchine had done the choreography. While I was in it I was advised to pursue a career in New York and went there in 1945 for the first time. I went via Mexico City on a Greyhound bus and it cost \$36 to Mexico City and about the same from there to New York!

"I auditioned and won a scholarship to the American Ballet School which developed into the New York City Ballet. I house sat and got a part-time job in the New York Law Association Library. Boys were hired to dance in Radio City Music Hall's Corps de Ballet for certain shows. If the movie being shown was popular it had a long run, and when I danced there *Anna and the King of Siam* starring Irene Dunne played for 14 weeks. We did four shows a day, five on weekends and earned \$55 a week. That was a great place to be and you could practically live there. There was a movie house backstage where a different picture was shown each day, a cafeteria, a swimming pool, a barber shop, and on the roof were tennis courts.

"I danced in the Metropolitan Opera's Corps de Ballet in *Aida*, *Faust* and *The Bartered Bride*, then auditioned for Danilova, the leading ballerina with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and was accepted. The entire company was hired for the Broadway operetta *Song of Norway*, a great hit that ran forever. Mitzi Gaynor was my partner, and we

stayed in *Song* while it toured for two and a half years all over the country. The Ballet Russe gradually withdrew from the show and Mitzi went on to become a movie star. I joined *Brigadoon* to dance on the stage and then in the movie. When I tell people that I appeared in such and such a movie they look for me, but I usually ended up on the cutting-room floor.

"I like to say that Eva Le Gallienne directed me, and she did in a way in *Prince of Players*, a movie about Edwin Booth. Richard Burton played the lead and I carried a



Harlem Playground oil/canvas 36''x24''

spear. Miss Le Gallienne gestured to me and said, 'Young man, please move to that side.'

"For a season I was a principal dancer in the Dallas Starlight Operetta, dancing leading roles in shows such as *One Touch of Venus* and *Anything Goes*. I danced in a San Francisco modern dance company, *Halprin and Lathrop* in the Bay Area, and in San Francisco night clubs and later joined the road company of *Call Me Madam*. We toured from west to east with Ethel Merman, then Elaine Stritch starring. I danced on Broadway in *L'il Abner*, then danced in *Motorama*, an industrial show for General Motors.

"In Chicago I met Devi Dja, a Balinese who performed

with her company of Indonesian dancers. I took some lessons from her, then joined the company in San Francisco to tour the Southwest. I dyed my hair black, applied Pancake 48, and changed my name to Sudaka which means *rich* in Malayan. Devi Dja taught me how to cook Indonesian dishes, and in San Francisco I once cooked an Indonesian dinner for Margaret Mead and her husband, Gregory Bateson. They complimented me, but admitted the food wasn't hot enough for them.

"I worked for Agnes DeMille in the movie version of

Richard and Alberta Stokes had been friends since their adolescent years, and they decided to go around the world together. She was especially interested in India and he in Europe. "We planned to keep on going from India," Richard said, "but I couldn't leave India. I fell in love with it."

The two sailed on an American freighter from New York through the Panama Canal and on to Adelaide where Richard briefly joined the Australian company of *The Pajama Game*. "It was interesting," he remarked, "to hear



Bluebird of Unhappiness

oil/canvas

24''x30''

Oklahoma!, and also danced in the movie, *There's No Business Like Show Business*. There were a lot of big names in it. Marilyn Monroe told me that she was insecure about movement and dance, and thought that she was graceless, so I coached her for three weeks during lunch hours.

"I danced as a principal at the *Sands* and *Flamingo* hotels in Las Vegas with a group called *The Escorts*. It was a great time to be there, because I was star-struck and a good many of my idols entertained there at the same time: Marlene Dietrich, Tallulah Bankhead, Lena Horne, Louis Armstrong, Martha Ray and Harpo Marx."

Brooklynese spoken with an Aussie accent. On the way to India we stopped in Bali where I met Devi Dja's relatives, visited dancing schools and took some classes there, in Sumatra and on the Indonesian islands to brush up on the dances. We went by train from Singapore to Bangkok through jungles where *dacoits* (bandits) fired on the train. We were told to lie down, but it was more fun to watch out the windows. There was a lot of shooting in Bangkok which we thought had to do with a festival, but it was a military coup. We stayed for more than a month, but couldn't fly as we'd planned to see Angkor Wat. One of the

many princes descended from Mongkut, the famous King of Siam, took me to watch rehearsals of the National Ballet of Thailand in a great pavilion, and as Curator of the Museum he gave me a private tour through it.

"The trip to India ended in a five-year stay for me. Alberta worked for the Agricultural Division of the American Embassy but I never received a proper visa or a work permit, and was helped to stay by the British and German Cultural Attachés, Ambassador Bunker, his wife, and Indira Gandhi.

"I organized The Children's International Dance Theatre, had Indian students and children from all the different embassies in New Delhi, and was paid one rupee (20 cents) a lesson. At first we danced in my living room, then in a studio on the roof of the government-run Hotel Ashoka. I danced at the hotel every Wednesday and Saturday as a 'guest artist' and was paid under the counter. Soon I was asked to do charity shows with the children: the first for Bengal Flood Relief under the

I'd been painting Indian scenes right along and sold one to Jackie Kennedy, one to Mrs. Bunker, and many other private collectors until I'd earned more than enough to pay for my 45-day voyage on a Dutch freighter to San Diego.

auspices of Mr. Nehru. We performed the shows before the people whom they benefitted by roping off streets for our stages. Before I left we'd presented 58 charity shows including one for Mother Teresa's leper homes. It was marvelous to meet her, Mr. Nehru and the other noted people there. I studied Hindi and danced through many illnesses. Only the British seem not to get sick, or they don't tell you.

"I made a lot of trips, and danced in Katmandu, Nepal, in Darjeeling—a favorite place—Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. Once I fell down a mountain in Kashmir and landed on a glacier, but then, I shouldn't have climbed a mountain in tennis shoes. There's a pass in the Himalayas from India into Tibet which we climbed, took a quick look and dashed back because the Chinese would arrest whoever they could grab.

"When Alberta was sent to Cyprus, I went to live for a year and a half in Calcutta where nobody knew the good friends who'd helped to keep me in India. I lived at the Oberoi Hotel where I performed and was the cabaret manager. I was in charge of all the decorations for

holidays, made new friends and explored more of the country.

"Before I left I had to pay taxes. The tax forms took up 24 pages so I needed a lawyer whom I got through the graces of the American Embassy and the Indian government. I rode in rickshaws endlessly back and forth to the lawyer's and spent months in hot, mosquito-infested offices plodding through red tape. It took me six months to get five years of taxes settled. They amounted to \$10, and the lawyer's fee was \$15.

"I'd been painting Indian scenes right along and sold one to Jackie Kennedy, one to Mrs. Bunker, and many other private collectors until I'd earned more than enough to pay for my 45-day voyage on a Dutch freighter to San Diego.

"I lived in L.A. where my paintings were and still are shown. The reviews were very good and the critics found my work refreshing. I was meeting movie stars and other people I'd admired for years and they bought my work."

Richard's paintings have been described as romantic,



RICHARD MAITLAND.

photo-Marian F. Love

nostalgic and humorous. They range in size from large to miniature, and an impressive number of well-known people own examples of them. A few are Beverly Sills, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Lemmon, Leontyne Price, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Bellamy, Shirley Boothe and Phyllis Diller.

"I didn't enjoy living in Southern California," Richard said, "so I moved to Santa Fe in 1964. I've been in theatre and dance here ever since. I taught dance at Santa Fe Prep, theatre and dance at the College of Santa Fe, and have been a guest teacher at other schools. I choreograph dances for Louise Licklider's School of Ballet and for the Santa Fe Theatre of Music, and dance in shows. Alberta and I had a gallery downtown for several years until she moved away.

"I love art, travel, antiques and music—the human voice, jazz, opera and ragtime—and listen to opera while I paint."

Richard Maitland's paintings may be seen at The Linda McAdoo Galleries, 505 Canyon Road in Santa Fe.