HOT SHOTS

Fair of face and full of grace — that's Sita Mani (19), never mind what day she was born on. A faerie child. But with a mother who's name is as sweet as Honey. A mother, who not only propelled her into her dancing shoes, but now works, literally behind her, backstage.

After flirting with various hobbies as a sprite, 14-year-old Sita took a three-month course in Jazz Dance in Bangkok and it was love at first twirl. In Bombay, she joined classes for two years and then realised that "I needed a sounder base. So I went to Tushna Dallas, who's the very best, to study formal ballet."

Now at sixteen, Sita was an old lady beginner, stiff muscles and all, alongside tots of six. "Better late than never. The training was invaluable for leg strength and discipline. It's like going to school before college, so if you want to be a dancer you must go through the rigid formality of ballet, for at least six years, after which you can gravitate easily into any other dance form".

After a year, Sita, dainty ballerina, became the queen of Shiamak Davar's class. She first participated in

"Best of Broadway" with Tushna's blessing. Then came "Kabaret", "The Last Tango," the "France Festival" and shows, more shows.

Sita is now dancer and assistant choreographer with Shiamak Davar's Company. She assisted him in choreography for the 8th Asian Athletic meet, involving 100 Bombay and 800 Delhi dancers.

Yes Sita goes to College, too. She's in her FYBA in St. Xavier's and shrugs: "There's no clash. Classes are in the morning, the company's work is after 12, with rehearsals in the afternoons which can stretch out into the night. It's fun!

What does an aspiring dancer need? "Presentable stage looks, potential, performance, talent, stamina, a strong mind. Hmmm, so the will-o-the-wisp has a backbone of steel.

Which will hold firm in her determination to go abroad and do a course in musical theatre. And she won't be lost in the Showbiz Drain. She'll be back with a great big bang, I'm sure.

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