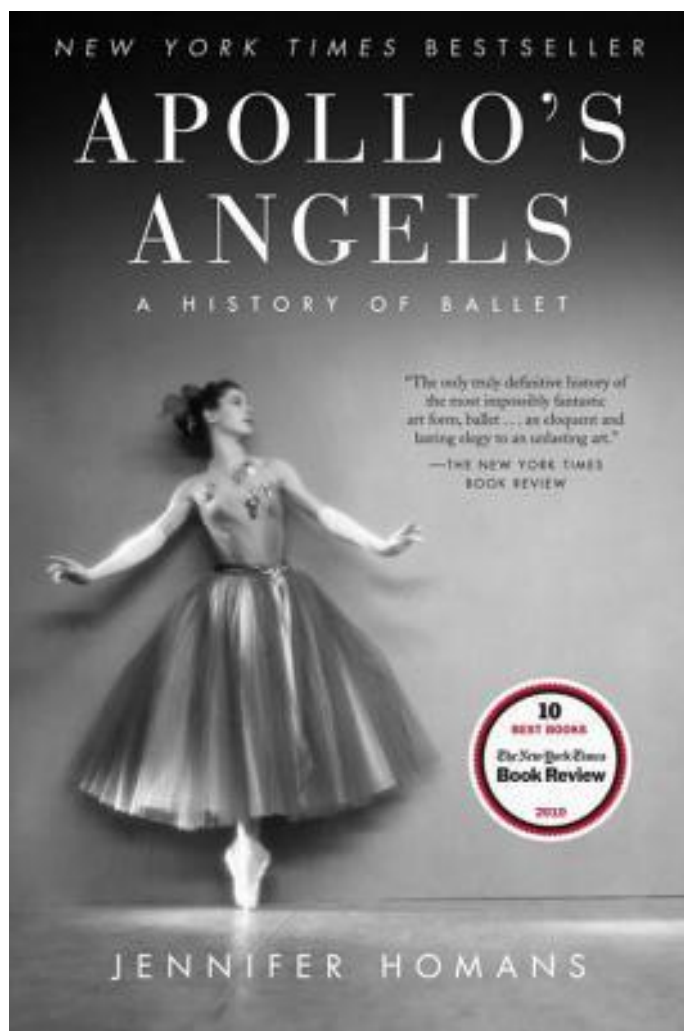


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**Jennifer Homans**

**Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet**



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Author: Jennifer Homans

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## Description

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

For more than four hundred years, the art of ballet has stood at the center of Western civilization. Its traditions serve as a record of our past. Lavishly illustrated and beautifully told, *Apollo's Angels*—the first cultural history of ballet ever written—is a groundbreaking work. From ballet's origins in the Renaissance and the codification of its basic steps and positions under France's Louis XIV (himself an avid dancer), the art form wound its way through the courts of Europe, from Paris and Milan to Vienna and St. Petersburg. In the twentieth century, émigré dancers taught their art to a generation in the United States and in Western Europe, setting off a new and radical transformation of dance. Jennifer Homans, a historian, critic, and former professional ballerina, wields a knowledge of dance born of dedicated practice. Her admiration and love for the ballet, as *Entertainment Weekly* notes, brings “a dancer's grace and sure-footed agility to the page.”

**NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW • LOS ANGELES TIMES • SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE • PUBLISHERS WEEKLY**

## Insightful reviews

Shirin: Wow. Wow. Wow. This book has been on my nightstand for a while now - I've been reading it in bits and pieces, but recently have been devouring it in large chunks. It really was amazing. Granted, you kind of must be quite serious in your interest in the topic to take in all 550 pages of ballet history. And it is quite an expansive and detailed history, up until Balanchine. I think this is where some critics start to have issues with Homans. She basically admits to thinking ballet has been dying along with Mr. B. Yes, the epilogue is rather pessimistic and depressing. And as a fan of classical ballet who can also appreciate contemporary choreographers' "gymnastic or melodramatic excess, accentuated by overzealous lighting and special effects" (or maybe innovative use of technology and fusing art and science to better fit the century we live in), I thought her pessimism quite unfounded. She flat-out disses contemporary dancers' technical skills, save a few named favourites (Diana Vishneva, Angel Corlla, Alina Cojocaru). Anyway, you don't have to read the epilogue. Pretend there's a chapter missing on ballet since the 80's. Enjoy the vast, detailed history of this great art form and have fun trying to recreate them in your head with all the vivid descriptions Homans provides. This has officially become one of my favourite books. Definitely to re-read.

Duckie: "Ballet training could easily lapse into a narrow and meaningless set of gymnastics exercises." - Jennifer Homans.



Ouch. *Someone's* not a fan of acro.



The Library Lady: As someone who has been in love with ballet all my life and who dances (badly) twice a week, I wanted to love this book. But I didn't.

For a book on ballet, it has very little on the actual physical dance itself. I challenge you to find actual ballet terms in French mentioned in most chapters. There is very little on the clothing that is the essence of ballet. How the heck can you write a book about the history of ballet and brush past the development of the pointe shoe, that icon of ballet, or go into how it is used? And I

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looked in the index for the word "leotard" and realized that while Homans mentions them in describing costumes, she doesn't talk of how they became the dancer's standard garment. At all.

Its history is impeccable and I learned a great deal, especially about the early days of ballet--never knew of its origins at the courts of France! And I give credit to Homans for giving enough historical background to explain the settings and evolution without going way off track.

But this lacks humor, the little touches that bring historical figures to life. It has none of the joy And it ends with a sour declaration that ballet is a dying art.Perhaps Homans' cynical view colors her writing and makes this such a heartless book.

I suggest instead of reading this that you watch some of the great, if cheesy ballet movies. "The Red Shoes" will bring the time of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo to life. "The Children of Theatre Street" is a splendid documentary on Soviet Russia's ballet schools. "The Turning Point" is hokey, but it gives you a behind the scenes look at ballet, and Baryshnikov dancing in it makes up for the flaws. And "The Company" by Robert Altman shows a Joffrey Ballet company of modern times.

I'm going to watch them all, and revive my love of ballet. After I go to class tomorrow, that is....

Aoi: trying to write a entire historical past in regards to the evolution of ballet is a frightening task; and Ms.Homans acquits herself in grand style. A observe though: at seven-hundred pages, this can be a relatively specified read, and it may well now not allure a lot to readers unusual with the ballet world.The authorsketches the story of ballet from its earliest origins within the eu courts- its blossoming lower than the patronage of Louis the solar King, the athletic rough-and-tumble type of the Italians, its maturing to be an independant acting artwork below the Imperialist Russians. We delve deeper into the impact of ballet at the cultural world- exploring its ties to literature and opera. And ofcourse as no heritage will be entire with out together with the lives and careers of the nice dancers who revolutionized this art- Taglioni, Pavlova, Nuruyev, Diaghilev.A beautiful, rather well performed piece of work. Do provide this a learn no matter if you might have a passing curiosity in ballet- you can be interested at each turn..

Phoenix: First somewhat a disclaimer: i'm simply somebody who was once involved adequate with dance and ballet (as a spectator) to appear up a publication resembling this as a manner of possibly turning into greater conversant in the artwork form. I rented the audiobook model initially to accumulate a few history wisdom for a personality in friend's RP that was once a court docket dancer within the Renaissance period, yet chanced on that I got interested within the

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heritage for it truly is personal sake. i've got no direct event as a ballet dancer, nor might I be capable of (or wish to) develop into a ballet dancer. i am easily simply anyone who enjoys going to work out concert artwork (whether it is a circus performance, a ballet, a live performance or a play). With that being said, the reviews expressed during this assessment are easily simply that. i'm hoping it is a a little bit extra trained set of critiques after having learn this impressively compiled background book, but when I make assumptions that you simply can't accept, i'll understand. i do know i'm really not knowledgeable almost about ballet, yet I do take pleasure in it as an paintings shape and that i suppose that the author's argument worthy ruminating on. this can be a very informative and finished background of ballet from its earliest beginnings up till the current day. i discovered myself discussing the epilogue and what it may possibly suggest for ballet (as good as different functionality art)'s destiny with my relations after completing it. it truly is transparent that ballet can't (and will not be in my opinion, no matter what that is worthy as a person who has subsequent to no event with ballet directly) go back to its roots, as it is close to very unlikely to do so. The contexts and the gang that sustained these older varieties of the dance are all yet long gone (as is mentioned within the epilogue of the book). i locate that during many ways this can be a very good thing, as even though it is usually disheartening to lose the extra attractive artistic endeavors in any medium, it turns into essential to stream on and locate new how you can show new works of art. now not greatly comes of attempting to ape the kinds of the outdated ballets, that are themselves loosely tailored from nonetheless older varieties of dance. it's thoroughly comprehensible why, like oral storytelling for example, a few have the desire to make certain the previous methods do not die out. it is a distinctive option to create and event art. on the related time, if we focus an excessive amount of on what may possibly or is probably not misplaced in any artwork form, we'll omit possibilities to scan and are available up with new methods of expressing ourselves via dance. i locate there is a parallel to this in film, in addition to music. Many movie buffs are at present uncertain of what the longer term holds for motion pictures as an paintings form, understandably as there was a rash of overly advertisement and watered down motion pictures these days which are both derived from older works, according to older works or tailored from different assets which are frequently more desirable to their movie counterparts. i don't declare to have a distinct solution for the place movie or ballet may still visit locate new suggestion and existence for his or her respective paintings forms. i know this though: nor is going to actually "die." And to be honest, bringing it again to the book, i feel that ballet will remodel again, now not die. i believe the single loss of life ballet will see is of its oldest self, which back in my very own opinion it may well have had to do decades ago. there'll continually be echoes of the previous methods of ballet that clear out via to offer choreographers and dancers productions. i believe what ballet is doing at once is suffering to shed its previous pores and skin (to use a really drained phrase) with out destroying what little remnants of itself it has to refer again to. There must always be a admire for what it has of it is classical past, yet clinging so not easy to the previous methods will be what makes it that a lot more durable to maintain up. And now i believe a section conflicted after writing all that. After all, considering that ballet's heritage is (to use the author's words) inside the dancers' our bodies themselves and the dancers have gotten less hooked up to the roots of ballet maybe ballet will stop to exist. i can't rather say that even though with out nonetheless doubting that. After all, there at the moment are many movie recordings that experience preserved those dances. those recordings including ballet masters that also care adequate to coach the older kinds in addition to the extra modern forms, I hope, will at the least preserve new dancers conscious of the place ballet got here from. i feel that, even though to

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these extra heavily concerned with ballet might depression of what the loss of life of Balanchine and 20th century developments may perhaps suggest for classical ballet, i believe it is a blessing in disguise. i believe what ballet wishes instantaneously is as a lot new blood as possible.

Simon Blair: a really fascinating and considerate paintings at the background of Ballet. It follows this recognized dance culture from its inception within the Renaissance during the royal patronage of the solar King, Louis XIV, in France and the flowering of certain expressions of this dance shape in Russia, Italy, Britain and the USA too. Ballet has a globe trotting tale all it truly is personal and the genuine famous person this is the dance shape itself. Above all Ballet emerges as a hybrid: human and inhuman. it is humanity lies within the character stamped upon it by means of influential dancers and choreographers like Diaghilev and Nijinsky, Nureyev and Fonteyn, frequently strong-willed perfectionists with drive, panache and élan. They have been its progenitors, its étoiles (stars) and, rarest of all, its 'sacre mostre' (sacred monsters). it really is inhuman aspect is living in its pursuit of an ideal: burning apparitions of Roman gladiators, Swan Queens or Sugar Plum Fairies shimmering the degree to the amazement of all. For this second lives are committed and disciplines of utmost extents sustained for many years within the provider of excessive art. This ebook ends on a ponderously unhappy word because the author, a dancer of decades herself, wonders even if ballet has misplaced its approach and develop into yet a hackneyed repetition of dulled steps instead of the colourful and important theatre and dramatic authenticity it as soon as proved it could possibly be. Where, she wonders, will ballet's so-needed injection of power and reviving spark come from, if at all? From someplace unforeseen she guesses. Hope so. Cool book. SIMON

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