

European Ballet escorted small groups tour for senior travellers

Reading List

When Ballet Became French: Modern Ballet and the Cultural Politics of France, 1909-1939

by Ilyana Karthas

For centuries before the 1789 revolution, ballet was a source of great cultural pride for France, but by the twentieth century the art form had deteriorated along with France's international standing. It was not until Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes found success in Paris during the first decade of the new century that France embraced the opportunity to restore ballet to its former glory and transform it into a hallmark of the nation. In *When Ballet Became French*, Ilyana Karthas explores the revitalization of ballet and its crucial significance to French culture during a period of momentous transnational cultural exchange and shifting attitudes towards gender and the body. Uniting the disciplines of cultural history, gender and women's studies, aesthetics, and dance history, Karthas examines the ways in which discussions of ballet intersect with French concerns about the nation, modernity, and gender identities, demonstrating how ballet served as an important tool for France's project of national renewal. Relating ballet commentary to themes of transnationalism, nationalism, aesthetics, gender, and body politics, she examines the process by which critics, artists, and intellectuals turned ballet back into a symbol of French culture. The first book to study the correlation between ballet and French nationalism, *When Ballet Became French* demonstrates how dance can transform a nation's cultural and political history.

Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet

by Jennifer Homans

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.”

Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History

by Jack Anderson

Now expanded and updated, this second edition of the original bestseller is an engaging interpretation of dance history—from the Ancient Greeks and European royal courts to the rise of the “American” ballet and the explosion of modern dance. Short profiles, an extensive bibliography, a helpful index, and selections from primary sources are also included.

Ballet in Western Culture: A History of Its Origins and Evolution

by Carol Lee

This volume is a history of the development of ballet designed for dance history courses. The discussion moves from the origins of dance through the middle ages onto the beginnings of ballet, to Renaissance spectacle in Italy, and the beginnings of ballet in France.

The Ballet Lover's Companion

by Zoe Anderson

This engaging book is a welcome guide to the most successful and loved ballets seen on the stage today. Dance writer and critic Zoe Anderson focuses on 140 ballets, a core international repertory that encompasses works from the ethereal world of romantic ballet to the edgy, muscular works of modern choreographers. She provides a wealth of facts and insights, including information familiar only to dance world insiders, and considers such recent works as Alexei Ramansky's Shostakovich Trilogy and Christopher Wheeldon's *The Winter's Tale* as well as older ballets once forgotten but now returned to the repertory, such as *Sylvia*. To enhance enjoyment of each ballet, Anderson also offers tips on what to look for during a performance.

Each chapter introduces a period of ballet history and provides an overview of innovations and advancement in the art form. In the individual entries that follow, Anderson includes essential facts about each ballet’s themes, plot, composers, choreographers, dance style, and music. The author also addresses the circumstances of each ballet’s creation and its effect in the theater, and she recounts anecdotes that illuminate performance history and reception.

Reliable, accessible, and fully up to date, this book will delight anyone who attends the ballet, participates in ballet, or simply loves ballet and wants to know much more about it.

Ballerina: Sex, Scandal, and Suffering Behind the Symbol of Perfection

by Deirdre Kelly

Throughout her history, the ballerina has been perceived as the embodiment of beauty and perfection — she is the feminine ideal. But the reality is another story. Beginning with the earliest ballerinas, who often led double lives as concubines, Deirdre Kelly goes on to review the troubled lives of 19th-century ballerinas, who lived in poverty and worked under torturous and even life-threatening conditions. In the 20th century, George Balanchine created a contradictory ballet culture that simultaneously idealized and oppressed ballerinas, and many of his dancers suffered from anorexia and bulimia or underwent cosmetic surgery to achieve the ideal ethereal form. At the beginning of the 21st century, ballerinas are still underpaid, vulnerable to arbitrary discrimination and dismissal, and expected to bear pain stoically — but much of this is beginning to change. As Kelly examines the lives of some of the world's best ballerinas, she argues for a rethinking of the world's most graceful dance form — a rethinking that would position the ballerina at its heart, where she belongs. Highlighting the work of such great ballerinas such as Anna Pavlova, Isadora Duncan, Suzanne Farrell, Gelsey Kirkland, and Evelyn Hart Kelly illustrates how the world of ballet is slowly evolving.
