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Fifty Ballet Masterworks: From The 16th Century To The 20th Century



Synopsis

Profusely illustrated vision of ballet as movement, art, theatrical spectacle, and history. Penetrating discussions of 50 seminal works, from the 16th to the 20th century. 474 illustrations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For balletomanes, it's old news. Kirstein's pro-Balanchine bias was not as pronounced as I'd feared. Which fact allows me to give it a fourth star.

Lincoln Kirstein's genius as a writer of dance history is his ability to concisely and accurately relate dance to politics, industry, and economics--among other things. This book is organized chronologically by dance masterpieces, beginning with the sixteenth century and ending in the twentieth century. It's a great quick reference book to the great ballets. For each ballet, Kirstein describes the plot, creation of the ballet, and artistic collaborations that made the ballet possible. More importantly, he puts each ballet into historical context by discussing the art movements and politics of the time that affected the performers, choreographers, composers, costume designers, set designers, librettists, and other creative contributors to the ballets. There is also a section of photographs, lithographs, etchings, and drawings at the end, in addition to the art that appears with each ballet. You won't find a lot of biographical information in the book, nor is it filled with anecdotes about the artists. The bibliography will point you in the right direction if you want to learn more. This is a straightforward, factual book that never ceases to educate and fascinate.

This book is very useful for those interested in the history of ballet. A big plus is the importance given to image and iconography, showing paintings, sketches and costumes for many ballets and dances. Another plus are the different chapters centred on the history of ballet music, of choreography and costumes, and also a chapter about dance and mime. It covers 50 ballets giving not only information on them but also on their historical context. At the end there is a very big list of bibliography for those who want to pursue further studies on the subject. I would strongly recommend it.

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