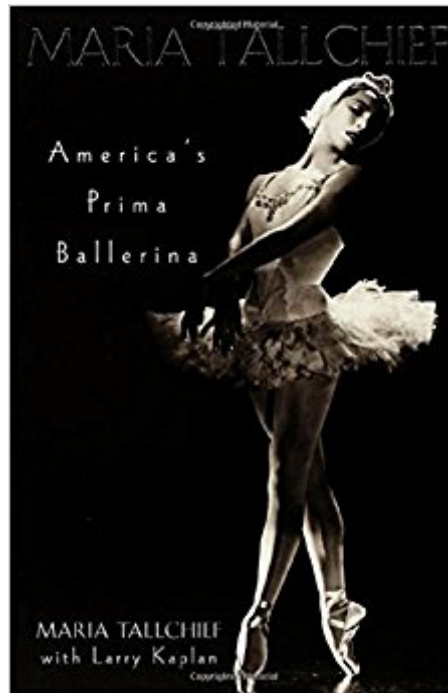




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# Maria Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina



## Synopsis

A fascinating self-portrait of the fairy-tale life of a woman who understood that a committed talent could transform the world around her."Maria Tallchief and American ballet came of age in the same moment.... Her story will always be the story of ballet conquering America. It was and is an American romance."-Arlene Croce, The New Yorker

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

She was George Ballanchine's muse for 20 years and his wife for 6; together they made the New York City Ballet an essential part of American culture with his choreography and her dazzling, technically bravura dancing in "Firebird," "Swan Lake," and other modern classics. Maria Tallchief's dignified autobiography describes their groundbreaking artistic collaboration with satisfying thoroughness. She is reserved about their personal relationship but candid about the increasing favor Ballanchine showed to younger dancers, which led to her departure from the company in 1966. Her story captures a key moment in ballet history.

Tallchief, the daughter of a full-blooded Osage Indian father and a mother of Scotch-Irish descent, was the queen of American ballet in its glory years; and her life story reads like a fairy tale, but one in which the princess must pay a high price for her magical gifts. Tallchief devoted herself to ballet at an early age, achieving instant recognition when she went to New York in 1942 at age 17. Immediately accepted as a member of the Ballet Russe, she caught the fervent attention of the controversial and brilliant choreographer George Balanchine. He made Tallchief not only his prima

ballerina--creating unforgettable roles for her that called for "pyrotechnical virtuosity and limitless stamina" --but also his wife. Tallchief, adeptly assisted by coauthor Larry Kaplan, who also cowrote Edward Villella's autobiography, *Prodigal Son* (1991), is modest about her own stupendous talent but expresses undiminished awe for Balanchine's genius. Her descriptions of working with Balanchine and Stravinsky are fascinating and exhilarating, but her accounts of the terrible strain of 14-hour days of practice and performance are sobering. At the height of her career, Tallchief suffered from "perpetual exhaustion" and a fractured personal life, but she has no regrets--only sterling memories and much to be proud of. Donna Seaman

A very interesting book about a famous and great ballerina. Of course everyone wants to know the "details" of her life with Balanchine which she writes about but with great discretion; i.e. we do not learn anything about what they did in bed but she strongly hints at the fact that it was a relationship based more on their common need, hers to dance and his to make dances for her, a phenomenon that characterizes most of his relationships with the ballerinas he married. Her book is honest although almost always, "politically correct", that is, she never gossips or smears any particular person but her outlook on life in general is optimistic and positive. One gets an insight into not only the world of ballet but also what it felt like at times to be a real American native indian and, at the same time, a famous American ballerina. Reading between the lines you know how she suffered when she lost favor with the great Balanchine as his number one dancer as his eye, as was his tendency, looked to younger and more amazing dancers such as Suzanne Farrell. However, her courage and talent kept her going and she always moved on in her career and personal life to new heights and happiness. Like many dancers, she is a true survivor.

Extremely well written bio. Written with a wonderful sensitivity . A great view of an extraordinarily talented artist and performer, as well as an amazing woman. This is the story of an extraordinary woman, written by an extraordinary woman (herself). It has a wonderful female perspective.

Great book!!!

The book was very interesting and it was wonderful to have her perspective. I feel she was very honest in the approach she used to share her life story and those who were involved in it. My only objection is it would have been a bonus to have included pictures of her various successes. . . .

This book was enjoyable and informative, and actually written by the extraordinary Maria Tallchief, thus giving the reader a remarkable insight into her life. Recommend highly!

for any ballet lover, this is a must read..how a gifted part-indian girl and her great talent prevailed through very hard work and perseverance....and the stories about balanchine and many ballet greats are totally absorbing...very highly recommended.

My daughter needed a book for a biography and this was a wonderful, interesting and informative book. We were going to donate it to the library but she likes it so much we are keeping it.

thanks

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