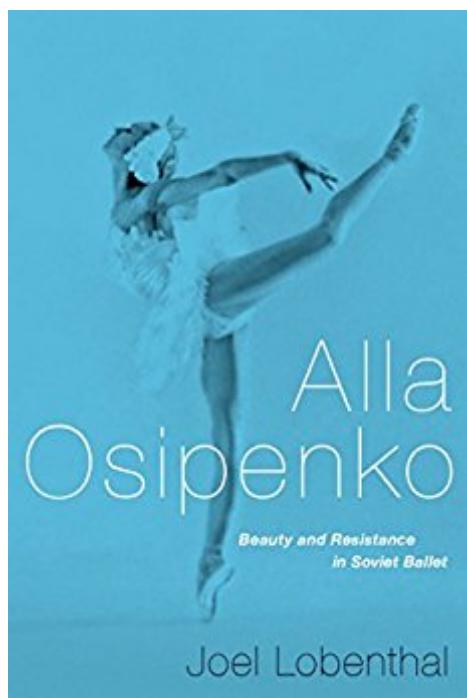


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Alla Osipenko: Beauty And Resistance In Soviet Ballet



Synopsis

Alla Osipenko is the gripping story of one of history's greatest ballerinas, a courageous rebel who paid the price for speaking truth to the Soviet State. She studied with Agrippina Vaganova, the most revered and influential of all Russian ballet instructors, and in 1950, she joined the Mariinsky (then-Kirov) Ballet, where her lines, shapes, and movements both exemplified the venerable traditions of Russian ballet and propelled those traditions forward into uncharted and experimental realms. She was the first of her generation of Kirov stars to enchant the West when she danced in Paris in 1956. But dancing for the establishment had its downsides, and Osipenko's sharp tongue and marked independence, as well as her almost-reckless flouting of Soviet rules for personal and political conduct, soon found her all but quarantined in Russia. An internationally acclaimed ballerina at the height of her career, she found that she would now have to prevail in the face of every attempt by the Soviet state and the Kirov administration to humble her. In *Alla Osipenko*, acclaimed dance writer Joel Lobenthal tells Osipenko's story for the first time in English, drawing on 40 interviews with the prima ballerina, and tracing her life from Classical darling to avant-garde rebel. Throughout the book, Osipenko talks frankly and freely in a way that few Russians of her generation have allowed themselves to. Her voice rises above the incidents as unhesitating and graceful as her legendary adagios. Candid, irreverent, and, above all, independent -- Osipenko and her story open a window into a fascinating and little-discussed world.

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Customer Reviews

Joel Lobenthal's ALLA OSIPENKO: BEAUTY AND RESISTANCE IN SOVIET BALLET (Oxford Univ Press, 2016) offers one of the best-researched, most fascinating AND clearly-written insights on the Kirov Ballet and artistic life in the USSR. Osipenko, with her lean lines and beauty, was an artist and ballerina ahead of her time yet, sadly, one who was rarely selected to participate in Kirov tours to major Western capitals and never to America. Hence, this book goes a long way toward correcting a huge knowledge gap for balletomanes. This is one of the finest books (English or Russian languages) written on late-Soviet ballet history. It reads like an autobiography, which makes sense, as Lobenthal's main resource was a series of 20 face-to-face interviews with Osipenko herself, as well as years of research in Russia. Learn about her studying under the great pedagogue Vaganova...her early triumphs in Paris...the creation of Grigorovich's Stone Flower...her fighting against the conservative and authoritarian forces in the theater...working with the difficult choreographer Leonid Jacobson and future luminaries Nureyev and Baryshnikov...her four marriages (and friends in between)...her eventual move to America after her dancing days, etc. In sum, this is a treasure of a book and the only English-language biography of one of the most fascinating ballerinas of the 20th Century.

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