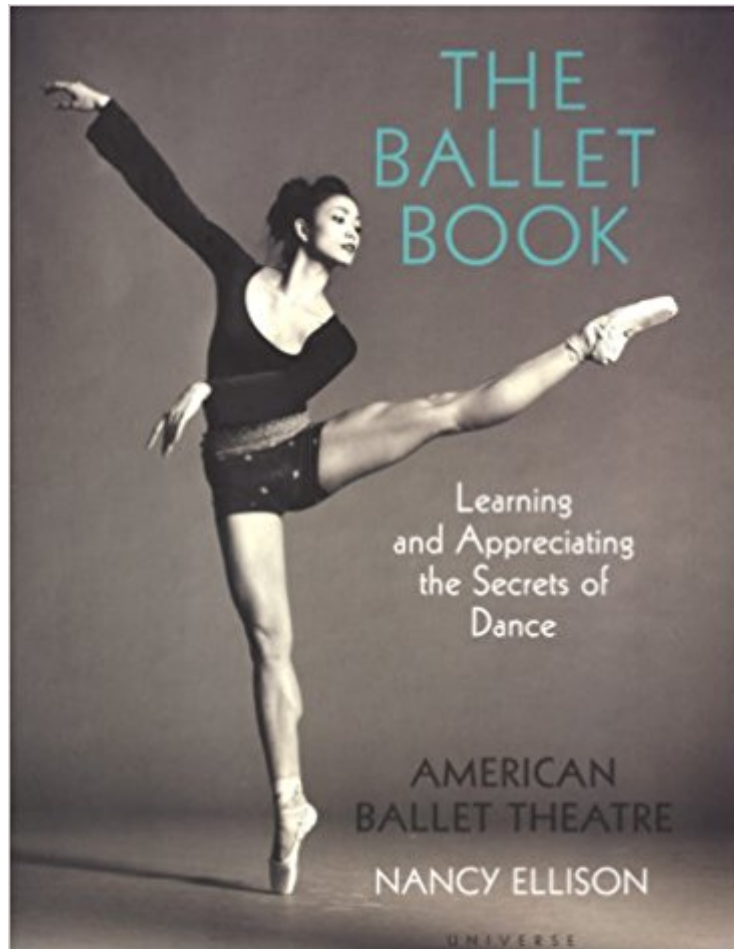




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# **The Ballet Book: Learning And Appreciating The Secrets Of Dance**



## Synopsis

The definitive book for learning and appreciating ballet, *The Ballet Book* goes behind the scenes to the classes, rehearsals, and performances that have shaped this prestigious ballet company. Readers will learn from the best as American Ballet Theatre dancers show how to stretch, stand, dance, and perform like professional ballerinas. Featuring photographs of dancers at their most dramatic--and most intimate--this fully illustrated book shares ballet's best-kept secrets and, by demonstrating how to watch and appreciate as well as to dance ballet, is indispensable for every dancer and lover of dance. The book offers a thorough explanation of each step in a dancer's routine: from preparing the shoes and stretching to classwork and rehearsals to the finale--the performance itself. Both a how-to and a privileged glimpse at the hours of practice and fierce determination that go into making the finest dancers, the book features ballet's brightest stars, including Nina Ananiashvili, popularly known as Nina Ballerina, and Ethan Stiefel, who has become a celebrity both onstage and off.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nancy Ellison is a photographer whose work has been the subject of several books, including *Romeo and Juliet* (Universe) and *Swan Lake*. Hanna Rubin is a freelance editor and writer who has written extensively for *Martha Stewart Living* and *Playbill*. American Ballet Theatre is recognized as one of the great dance companies in the world. Few ballet companies equal ABT for its combination of size, scope, and outreach. ABT annually tours the United States, performing for more than

600,000 people. It has also made more than fifteen international tours to forty-two countries as perhaps the most representative American ballet company.

I got this book because I've recently taken up drawing again and wanted to do some exercises in drawing full body length and bodies in motion. I found many wonderful pictures in this book. You don't have to be interested in drawing to appreciate the photographs in this book. This was my main motivation but I also enjoyed just looking through the many pictures and also reading some of the text describing assorted aspects of the beauty, art, and discipline of ballet.

I loved this book when I used to borrow it from work-so I had to get a copy for my personal library. Thank you!

The photography and content was everything I had hoped but the book spine came unglued the first day I went through it. Sections of the book started falling out as a result.

I received this book last Christmas as a present and was so thrilled to have it that I literally sat down for 2 hours slowly flipping through the pages and forgot about the rest of the presents to open. My husband and father-in-law actually left me with my book to do other things since I wasn't going to budge. I cannot open this book without looking through it entirely. There are very few vivid and enticing books of ballet. I love seeing dancers, true professionals at the top of their game, performing or posing to evoke emotions from their audience. Since I am a perfectionist, I am looking at their form, their shapes, seeing what I can do better. Books such as this one renew my mind and push me harder in class to create that perfect line, find that correct position. I am one of the few that love ballet as much as breathing, and this book captures my love quite excellently. If you are looking for an excellent visual reference for technique, get *Classical Ballet Technique* by Gretchen Ward Warren. This is full of step by step photos of rudimentary and advanced steps.

The editorial reviews for "The Ballet Book" tout it as telling all about the fascinating world of ballet: "Readers will learn...how to stretch, stand, dance and perform like professional ballerinas", "...a thorough explanation of each step in a dancer's routine...". The reality, however, is a bit different. This is a gorgeously illustrated book with lots and lots of photos by dance photographer Nancy Ellison. We see the dancers of American Ballet Theatre in the studio, in performance, in costume, and even in some hilarious candid shots. But if you're looking for a book that explains the technical

side of ballet in depth, you're going to be disappointed. The book touches on some of the basic elements of ballet such as plies and the positions of the body and shows the dancers demonstrating the finished result, but it doesn't explain how to get there; there is almost no discussion of turnout, placement, or anything of that nature. The book also offers extremely brief (think one paragraph) synopses of several famous and less-famous ballets like "Giselle", "La Fille Mal Gardée", "Apollo" and "The Leaves Are Fading" along with carefully posed studio photographs of dancers in the appropriate costumes. There's a brief section on choreography and, unusually, a short chapter on retirement in which recently retired ballerina Susan Jaffe discusses her farewell. All in all this is a lovely coffee-table book, but if you want a technical manual you should probably look elsewhere.

A comprehensive overview of the workings of a major ballet company, in this case American Ballet Theatre, with detailed insights from administrators, students, staff, and principal dancers. Not only are various levels of experience explored (from corps to principals) but also some of the training involved and differences between styles of performance: Virtuoso/bravura, Lyrical/Adagio, Allegro. In short, what makes a dancer great or a performance work. There are also explanations of rehearsal scheduling, tech/dress rehearsals, and why time is money too. The section on the details of partnering--especially lifts and preventing mistakes in timing or perception--was interesting because this is an area not usually covered in simple manuals of positions. Also the sections on what aspects of technique matter--e.g. purity of line, consistency of positioning--besides the pyrotechniques of 32 fouettes or soaring ballon may help others see it's not all tricks. And finally someone shows proper hands and says no to 'droopy wrists'! There are a wealth of photographs: Both corps demonstrating positions and rehearsing; Irina Kolpakova, Kevin McKenzie, Kirk Peterson, Guillaume Graffin teaching; Lar Lubovitch choreographing; and the principals in performance of the major repertoire. Enjoy the pictures of current and up-and-coming soloist/corps members--some of whom are now principals. There are also one or two photos of principals prepping in their dressing rooms and/or the wings. The contrast between the dancers and the backstage gaffer/fly/grip staff and big\$-donors observing rehearsals is also amusing. All in all, a lovely overview of ABT busy at work bringing insight and enjoyment to us fans, however knowledgeable we are--or not. A good purchase, especially for the details provided and knowing comments of the dancers and teacher/coaches.

I bought this book because I am a big fan of American Ballet Theater and ballet in general. As the title implies, it does indeed give the reader an inside look and overview of ballet history and

technique. More importantly, the photos capture the beauty of ballet and showcases the current generation of ABT's stars. For a book that is supposed to represent the ballet world however, it is disappointing to see errors in ballet terminology and not much insight or depth about ballet. As a showcase of today's stars and upcoming ones, I also wish there were captions naming the dancers on each page more clearly and consistently. Personal interviews with corps de ballet dancers would have been interesting, too. Though this shouldn't serve as a reference or informational book, I think many devoted fans will enjoy seeing the beautiful photos.

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