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Edward Stewart

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This exciting tale of friendship, dance, rivalry and love centers on Christine and Stephanie, two young women who share the dream of a career in the ballet. A richly authentic story that offers an inside look at the harsh realities of the romantic art of ballet.

Ballerina Details

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Author : Edward Stewart

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From Reader Review *Ballerina* for online ebook

Erin says

ARC for review.

What a fun palate-cleanser of a book after a disappointing last read. Originally published in 1978 (but really not dated other than prices) *Ballerina* is the fictional story of two young girls in the ballet corps of two companies in NYC and it's lots of frothy goodness - all the competition, jealousy and pushy stage moms you would expect, but also a fair amount of loyal friendship. Professional dance is like modeling in that they are the only two industries I can think of where women are paramount and the men are nothing more than lower-paid accessories, so I love that. However, in the lives of Steph and Chris men are still so very important and ultimately one becomes the breaking point between the women and even though you might roll your eyes at some of the actions you'll also remember what it's like to be young, in love/lust and stupid.

It's all the enjoyment you would expect plus the added bonus that, hey, there are lots of French phrases and ballet so it's ART mixed with the soap-opera-ish elements so you can feel totally noble (or at least not completely guilty) about reading it. If that's your thing, I'm happy to be proud about my trash. Recommended for your next trip to the beach or long airplane ride.

Diana Moll says

I read this book years ago as a teenager and loved it, now as an adult I still really like the book. It is an easy read, not too complicated of characters. I am not sure how much of the ballet world is true, but I did enjoy rereading it.

Tracie Trog says

Read this old favorite during a sick day.

Akeating2003 says

I read this book years ago and re-read it many times over the years. It may not be perfect writing but it remains one of my favorite books. And yes, I did want to be a ballerina but sadly lacked the talent :(.

J.M. Cornwell says

My first thought after reading the description of *Ballerina* by Edward Stewart is that it was a modern version of *The Turning Point* with Anne Bancroft and Shirley MacLaine. I was wrong.

The story is about Stephanie Lang and Christine Avery, aspiring ballerinas in New York City in the 1970s, which is the time that *The Turning Point* was filmed, and also mentioned in the last half of the book. Where Bancroft and MacLaine faced off after about 20 years of guarded friendship and rivalry, Steph and Chris are beginning their journey through the ranks of young girls struggling to learn from the best and brightest, gaining positions in New York ballet companies, and braving the rough waters of career, dance, and men, and not always successfully.

Chris is the daughter of a very wealthy family from Chicago. Her parents are resigned to allowing Chris to pursue ballet and have agreed to Steph's mother's compromise of letting Chris live with them while training and working. Chris's parents never show up for any of the big moments in Chris's life: premieres, opening nights, etc. and she remains in many ways a scared and immature child even to the point of being horribly backward.

Steph is the product of genetics (both parents were ballet dancers in the 1950s) and her mother's failed ballet career. Anna Barlow Lang was going somewhere until Marius Volmar fired her and her husband. Neither could get a break after that and Anna poured all of her time and attention into Steph's career, starting at the age of 3 or 4. Anna pushes and manipulates Steph so Steph can have the career Anna always wanted and works to recreate her past in her daughter, regardless of what Steph wants.

There are men in the mix as well, from Marius Volmar, the director of National Ballet Theater, to the young men who want to be part of Steph and Chris's lives and either fail to understand what it means to be a dancer or get caught up mixing the business, pleasure, and passion of ballet. It is a heady -- and often destructive -- life fraught with friendship walking the tightrope of dance and emotion. Add in blackmail and a defector from the Kirov in Communist Russia and you have the quintessential late 20th century ballet novel.

Michael Stewart first published *Ballerina* in 1978, which is why the novel seemed to be more a product of the 1970s instead of merely depicting the times. The novel is full of ballet references in French, of course, and is not a quick read. One must pay attention and be familiar with the terminology, or willing to stop and look all the words up. What Stewart does very well is portray the world behind the scenes in all its glorious shades of light and dark, and there is a lot of dark to go around.

Stewart's characters may be true to life for the times, but I doubt that little has changed in ballet. Chris and Steph exist on coffee, cigarettes, bee pollen, and honey for that quick burst of energy. Anna Barlow Lang is as determined and manipulative a ballet mother as one could hope for (or fear) and Marius Volmar is intent on one thing -- his vision of ballet as art -- and just as manipulative and vicious as Anna.

Steph and Chris are supportive and kind, but Chris's constant fears of inadequacy wear dangerously thin and tend toward whining while Steph, although at times anxious and struggling, is more assertive and willing to let go and fly as she struggles to break free of her mother's machinations.

Predictably, there are gay chorus boys carping and venomous in their relationship with soloists who attempt to play both sides of the sexual game and excess and eccentricities to satisfy ballet lovers and voyeurs. *Ballerina* has something for everyone in its sometimes glacial pace and the ending is pure fairy tale with a surprising maturity and grace. *Ballerina* is still as relevant in the 21st century as it was in the 1970s and often just as much fun -- and sad and complex and perplexing and -- ballet. I'd give this 4/5 for holding up so well over the decades.

Stef says

read this sometime during the 80s and there isn't much that was remarkable about it. just remembered the book today because i was reading about skaters, ballerinas, and eating disorders.

Tanya (Girl Plus Books) says

In the mood for a juicy read about friendship, love and ambition set in the competitive world of ballet? *Ballerina* by Edward Stewart gives you that and more.

Steph and Chris are best friends navigating the ups and downs of the ballet world as they struggle to rise in the ranks. Steph is stable and focused; the daughter of a former dancer who as a “dance mom” is pushy, controlling and manipulative. Chris is fragile, hurt by absentee parents who have no understanding, or apparent interest, in her life as a dancer.

There’s an interesting cast of characters in *Ballerina* including a Svengali-like company director, an earnest young law student who pursues one of the girls while feeling shut out of the world she inhabits, a Russian defector/womanizer, and a cast of dancers who are equal parts friend, supporter and competitor.

Stewart either had intimate knowledge of the ballet world or did extensive research. The novel is peppered with ballet history and ballet royalty but is not overdone. Ballet terminology and descriptions of routines are in abundance, though, so those less interested in the mechanics of dance may be a bit overwhelmed. To that end, there is a glossary of terminology for those who want to familiarize themselves with the more common phrases and positions.

Originally released in 1979, *Ballerina*, along with the rest of Stewart’s catalog, is now being released in e-book format. While there are occasional references that seem dated (a record on the phonograph, anyone?) it doesn’t detract from overall story.

Balletomane or not, there’s plenty to enjoy in this novel from Edward Stewart.

Janet says

This was one of my favourite books when I was in my 20's. I found a copy at a used book sale and nostalgia made me buy it. I have to say that I enjoyed this book just as much now as I did back then. If you are a dancer or just love ballet I think you will enjoy this book. I love that it gives you an inside look at the cutthroat world of the ballet. Just as it did back then....it made me cry at the end.

Kirsten says

A typical schlocky 70s novel about two teenaged girls trying out for scholarships at a top-tier ballet school. They become best friends, and move on up through school and into jobs in ballet companies. For schlock,

this was pretty good - not as predictable as might be expected. I enjoyed this quite a bit.

Kirsty Hoggons says

I received this book from NetGalley. Overall this was a very good book and I enjoyed it very much. It was very well written and well researched. I would suggest having some prior knowledge of ballet before reading the book as it could get confusing with all of the technical terms that are used. There is a glossary at the back of the book which does explain these terms (as I do not read the index of books, I only found the glossary when I was finished reading the book) and a lot more terms are explained as well but with no prior knowledge, it might be difficult to imagine the steps. I absolutely did not like the mother, Anna, in this story. She is a selfish, overbearing ballet mom. I could understand why she was like that but she was definitely too much for me at some points. There were a few characters in this book (2 to be exact - I do not want to mention the names of the characters in case I give away a spoiler) who I absolutely loved and I just wish that they could have been in the story a little bit more. I do feel though that if they had been in the story more then the story itself might have been very different and I loved it the way it was. There were some characters that I am not sure if I should have liked or not. A lot of the characters seemed one way and turned into something else and with some of the characters, even after I finished the book, I could not tell if I was meant to have liked them or not. I am unsure about the way that the book ended. That is just a personal preference for me. There are many ways that it could have ended but ultimately, even though it left me a little bit unsure, this was probably the best ending.

Blog post: <http://kirstyhoggons.wordpress.com/20...>

Juli Morgan says

I read "Ballerina" in the early 1980s, and over the years I've thought of it from time to time, remembering the characters and some of the storylines. If a book sticks in my mind for that amount of time then I know it was a good one.

Since I lost that long-ago paperback, I was thrilled to see this book back in circulation again. I enjoyed it now just as much as I did when I first read it. Even though the book is set in the late 1970s, it holds up very well and is a great bit of nostalgia. (A can of Diet Pepsi for 35-cents, anyone?) The writing is pure 1970s, too, with a few instances of head-hopping (not enough to be totally annoying), and there was only one character in whose POV the author really went deep. Anna Boborovsky Barlow Lang's personality, abrasive as it is, came through vividly and was, in my opinion, one of the best parts of the book. I don't particularly like Anna, but I couldn't stop reading about her!

I'm glad to now have this book on my Kindle where I can read it again whenever the mood strikes. And re-read it I will.

Home. Love. Books. says

To read this review and others like it check out my site www.homelovebooks.com

I love ballerinas and ballet, I was one of those little girls who took ballet and loved it, I wasn't any good though. But just because I wasn't any good at it, doesn't mean I stopped liking. That being said, I don't think I have read any real ballet books, a couple about ex-ballet dancers, but not one where ballet is so front and center as it is in this book, so I was actually really excited about this book.

The first thing I noticed was that the narration kind of killed the pacing for me. I thought the book started a little on the slow side, and that was largely because of the narration. I thought that the whole book kind of suffered from a choppy writing style, it's not that the book was hard to follow, but it did feel a bit on the disjointed side.

I also wasn't expecting the stage mom to have such an active role in the beginning, the book is about two young ballet dancers, but yet when I opened the book and started reading it actually felt like I was reading the mothers story and not the two young ballet dancers stories. I really didn't like that about the book. I wanted more of a focus on the two girls.

I did think that the writer did a good job at capturing the essence of the ballerina, it felt authentic to me. I really did find myself becoming immersed in the environment, and I appreciate that about the book. As for the two main characters, Steph and Chris I have to say I enjoyed Steph a lot more than I did Chris. I found Chris to be a bit on the annoying side, it was like she never truly grew up/matured, and a lot of the scenes with her ending up reading as really melodramatic.

A couple of other notes about the book: I felt like the book went on too long, it really was a long read. I didn't exactly enjoy the older characters, from Steph's stage mom Anna to the director the ballet who is so self-absorbed in his vision that I kind wanted to hit him. Overall, the book was a solid one, it turns out this is a release of a book written in the 70s, so it holds up over decades. I think that anyone who enjoyed ballet would enjoy this, especially because of the friendship between the two girls.

Mary Pagones says

I read this when I was in college as a fun, mindless read. While it's trash, it's good enough trash to read twice. The plot sounds and is melodramatic: two dancers--one poor, one rich--are pitted against one another in a ballet company. There's also a mysterious illness and the obligatory stage mothers versus completely uninvolved parents. But the details of what it felt like to be a dancer in 1970s New York City just seem spot on. The smoking, the gossip, the weird eating habits (honey straight from the jar for energy, health food is bran muffins with margarine, steak with frozen green beans or cow's liver), the backbiting, the dangerous neighborhoods where getting mugged is a given, the scrambling for money from wealthy donors...all of this and the book's great atmosphere elevate it above pure trash. The author is a musician and clearly had some inside knowledge, given his depiction of the characters of the two fictionalized ballet companies, one of which is undisciplined and cutting-edge, the other of which is part of the Russian tradition but ruled with the iron fist of an artistic genius and control freak. At least these characters have passion for something, and they're two-dimensional rather than one-dimensional.

Raven Haired Girl says

Ballerina undoubtedly paints the brutal beauty of ballet on stage as well as behind the curtain. A realistic glimpse into the demanding world of this stunning athletic artistry.

Stewart's writing dances off the pages. You not only have a sense of the visual but you move with the words as if you were in front of the barre. Well researched and the inclusion of dance language terminology, and references is appreciated certainly adding to the reading experience.

The narrative is dramatic exploring the athleticism, the physical, mental and emotional demands ballet requires. Political and power struggles along with clashes, competition, the overall stealth dark side unknown to outsiders of such graceful dance brought to the forefront on stage for the reader to be thoroughly entertained. Coming of age personally and professionally as we journey with the differing female protagonists. Sacrifices, challenges, choices, highs and lows expertly drafted.

Stephanie and Chris contrasting young women bridged together by the love of ballet. They misstep on stage and off stage, as they navigate their way through professional and personal demands. The supporting cast just as vital making the story a page turner, keeping the peruser part of the dance corps. We are privy to two young women growing in a world full of intricate steps, coming into their own en pointe.

A dramatic tale of the ballet world and its machinations, backstage as much a performance as front and center. Great story especially if one is fond of ballet, balletomanes will find this novel highly appealing.

<http://ravenhairedgirl.com>

Tom Brennan says

In reading this book, I couldn't help but think of Tchaikovsky's music and the ballets that feature it. While the prose sometimes descends into melodrama, it also rises to the sublime. The story centers around two young would-be ballerinas, Stephanie Lang and Christine Avery, who meet at ballet school auditions and become fast friends. The expected dramatis personae eventually presents itself - a conniving ballet mom (Anna Lang), the implacable company director (Marius Volmar) and socialite with more money than taste or talent (Dorcas Amidon). While the novel was written long before *Black Swan*, there is a certain undercurrent of that sort of manipulation through the book. Still, it's an interesting look into the world of ballet, particularly through the eyes of one of the supporting characters, who knows little about the world of dance, but who is in love with one of the girls and wants to appreciate or at least understand her world. A fine, entertaining read indeed.
