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# Thank Heaven: A Memoir



## Synopsis

One of the best-loved stars of classic American cinema tells all in this wry, funny, and poignant memoir. Leslie Caron is one of the most cherished and admired international film stars of our time. She made her film debut with Gene Kelly in the classic MGM musical *An American in Paris*, created one of the most enduring roles in American musicals as Gigi, danced with Fred Astaire in *Daddy Long Legs*, and starred with Cary Grant in *Father Goose*. In *Thank Heaven* (an homage to "Thank Heaven for Little Girls," the song Maurice Chevalier sings about her in *Gigi*) Caron shares her remarkable life story. From her childhood with her American mother and French father in occupied France to her early success as a young ballerina; to her meeting Gene Kelly and her years in Hollywood; to her love affairs (including a very funny and very public one with Warren Beatty) and motherhood; to her alcoholism and depression; and finally her recovery and continuing success in film and television, Caron offers an illuminating account of her career. *Thank Heaven* is filled with reminiscences of MGM at the end of its Golden Era, of the great stars with whom Caron worked, and of her own struggles as an actress. This is a sharp, unsentimental, and moving memoir for everyone who loves classic American movies.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Caron went from Parisian ballerina to Hollywood movie star at 17, when Gene Kelly tapped her for a co-starring role in the 1951 hit *An American in Paris*. She became a star in the studio system of that era, and via her MGM contract shared billing with Fred Astaire and Cary Grant by day and socialized with Judy Garland and Lena Horne by night. It's been a glamorous life, but, as Caron

reveals, not without struggles. She grew up in occupied Paris, her father a French chemist, her American mother a former dancer. Caron never felt good enough for her parents: The path to excellent was clearly indicated, and my insecurity became chronic. Despite her success, she points to insecurity as the root of her decision to date or marry and divorce several controlling men, including meat-packing heir George Hormel II and actor Warren Beatty, with whom she had an affair in the 1960s. Caron provides countless dishy details about her exploits, which are sure to entertain film buffs, Caron fans and aspiring actors. Today, the 78-year-old two-time Academy Award nominee acts in the U.S. and Paris; in 2007, a role on *Law and Order: SVU* garnered a prime-time Emmy. Caron also runs an auberge, or inn, in France and, she writes, intends to avoid fading into the background. (Dec.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Caron's first movie was *An American in Paris*. Twice nominated for Academy Awards for *Lili* and *The L-Shaped Room* she is a graceful and talented actress who's equally at home in musicals (a song from *Gigi* gives the book its title) and dramas (she recently won an Emmy for a guest appearance on *Law & Order: SVU*). But this is more than a typical Hollywood autobiography. Caron begins the book with a lengthy and moving portrait of herself as a girl living in occupied France during World War II, and when she makes the transition from girlhood during the war to young woman learning her craft, the book's tone doesn't really change. Rather than approach her life in the public eye from a typically Hollywood angle, Caron writes seriously and passionately about her work, her craft, and her relationships with the people she met along the way. The book won't appeal to those who like their celebrity autobiographies full of gossip, but it's sure to strike a chord with those who value classic movies and classic actresses. --David Pitt

Caron's "memoir" is as charming as she is. The book is fast reading, most of it very interesting. If the reader does not know the people she is referring to, it can be boring. Some parts are written very well, those that describe, in depth, the life and personalities of people she was seriously involved with on a professional level. Other parts read more like "name dropping" and I think this is because she wants to put into this short memoir a lifetime of people and memories, and sometimes you feel like she is doing a "rush" job. The book is extremely "politically correct" and she is very careful to restrain herself from both ugly gossip and badmouthing anyone. As I said, she is a very charming woman, at least from the impression one gets from her professional work, her manners

and her the way she writes. What is so enjoyable about the book is to discover her childhood, her sufferings during the war years, the nature of her family (a sweet French, pharmacist father and a neurotic mother who indeed takes her own life at some point), her early start in Hollywood and her development personally and professionally through the years. She may look like a little "gamin" but she was and is a strong, determined woman. I personally felt that her decision to leave dance and concentrate on acting (although she was not a terribly "bad" actress) was a mistake because she really was a dancer and a beautiful one at that but, on the other hand, dancing has a short life span. In short, I highly recommend this book for those who love know and love Leslie Caron and of course are curious about where she came from and where she went.

Leslie Caron weaves a funny and poignant story of her life in France, in the ballet, and in the movies. Caron's narrative presents a positive voice throughout every ordeal in life. I have read many stories of the German occupation of France during WWII, and Leslie Caron downplays that era of her life. She mentions long lines for food and a little hunger, but does not dwell on the terrible hardship of the French population. Then on her first job doing *An American in Paris* with Gene Kelly, Caron cuts her hair, and the film production is halted for 3 weeks for her hair to grow. My opinion of Leslie Caron plummeted at that point, but she continues her positive attitude and her enjoyment of her fellow workers throughout the book. The pictures included in the book illustrate Caron's warmth and generosity.

I think Miss Caron underrated herself along with critics and associates. I personally believe her performance in *Fanny* made it one of the great classic films we have to treasure. Of all the thousands of films I have enjoyed this one is in my top five, alongside such films as *The Bicycle Thief* and *Out of The Past*. I learned in the book that she is a richly endowed intellectual with a streak of courage and unflinching humanity. What a rare commodity I envy those who met her at her hotel without realizing she is one in a billion. What a woman!

Rather good for an entertainment Bio, and actually written by Caron who was an already published writer. I can think of only 2 other 'actors' who wrote their own - publishers never give credit to the ghost writers and just have the actors name as author. Leslie had a very interesting early life and she describes (sign of a good read) not just her life but all that is happening around her. France before the war, and the very hard life of Paris during the occupation, Hollywood in the early 1950's and all the people she met and worked with. She shares the cultural differences between war

recovering Europe and her early life in America, and later, her years living in England. Did you know her mother was an American and that she became a citizen of the US in 2008? Too many actors write only about themselves and unless you are reading it to find out what movies they made or who they slept with, it is generally a self-serving boor. Leslie's Bio is of an interesting, observing, and witty life.

I love her but her book is very boring

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