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Massine: A Biography



Synopsis

With 69 photographs in text

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Customer Reviews

An engaging and essential portrait of a titan of 20th-century dance, this colorful biography of Russian-born Leonide Massine (1895-1979) profiles an astonishingly inventive choreographer who was also a consummate "dancer-actor" capable of creating rounded, convincing characters. Massine's early choreography, reflecting his collaborations with Picasso, Matisse and Andre Masson, and with composers Igor Stravinsky, Manuel de Falla and Erik Satie, embodied a cubist-influenced assault on the body image. In the late 1930s, he produced abstract symphonic ballets suggesting cosmic conflict, violence, loss of love, destruction—a corollary to the global anxiety engendered by the rise of fascism. Later, he did story ballets like the film *The Red Shoes* (1948) and embraced eclecticism, but the public moved away from his stylized idiom. The late Garcia-Marquez (*The Ballets Russes*) interviewed Massine extensively in 1978, yet the very private, demanding, possessive, often tyrannical genius remains elusive, although we get a fairly candid account of his stormy affair with impresario Sergey Diaghilev, his four marriages and his increasing obsession with art as a substitute for human relationships. Photos. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

International superstar ballet dancer and choreographer Leonide Massine (1895-1979) created a

body of work that has had a significant impact on this century's choreographic developments. Massine's symphonic or abstract ballets have been most influential, but certainly his skill in characterization, his elevation of the male dancer to an equal status with that of the ballerina, and his constant experimentations with regard to movements, music, and design set new standards for ballet. Massine was strongly focused on work, and his creativity was fueled by numerous personal and professional liaisons, the most notable with impresario Diaghilev. The late Garcia-Marquez (The Ballet Russes, 1990) was meticulous in his research, but, by his own admission, he fails "to capture the persona, the man's inner life," perhaps because Massine was so introspective. By the book's end, the essence of the artist eludes and baffles both the author and the reader. Still, in comparison with and as a complement to *My Life* (1960), Massine's guarded autobiography, this book will serve as the definitive record of Massine's career for some time. Recommended for all dance collections. ?Joan Stahl, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This biography was published as a first edition in 1995. I received the book promptly and in mint condition. Massine was arguably the most important choreographer in ballet in the 20th century. He was affiliated with the legendary Ballet Russes De Monte Carlo. His *Gaite Parisienne* is on YouTube. The biography carefully traces his life from birth, early childhood, through his amazing career as a dancer, choreographer and teacher. Illustrations are adequate, sources are numerous, there are extensive notes, a good bibliography and good index. The author interviewed a great number of people who knew Massine. I can only praise this wonderful book, similarly the distributor for .

good bio but I wish more bios on Massine is done.

An intimate look (although admittedly a bit biased, as the writer was an admirer of Leonide Massine) at a man who was a premier male dancer and chief choreographer of European ballet from 1914 through 1939. Historian Vicente Garcia-Marquez helps to ensure that Massine is recognized for his role in 20th century ballet history, as a dancer who collaborated with other prominent figures such as Diaghilev, Stravinsky, Falla, Cocteau, Picasso, Matisse, Miro and Dali...among others. High points of the book include vintage photos and passages such as these, where Massine, while dancing, gives insight into the creative process of ballet: "I felt instinctively that something more than perfect technique was needed here, but it was not until I had worked myself up into a frenzy that I was able to transcend my usual limitations. I felt an almost electrical interaction between myself and

the spectators....until I was dancing with a sustained force that seemed far beyond my reach at other times."

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