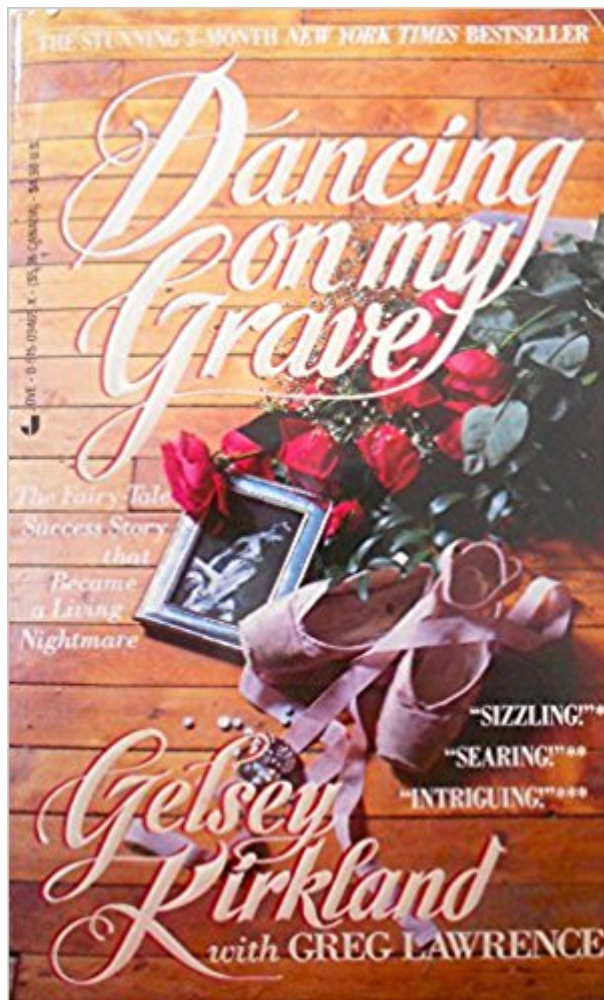


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Dancing On My Grave



Synopsis

The shattering story of a dream which became a heartbreaking nightmare for one of America's most famous ballerinas, Gelsey Kirkland, who chronicles her brilliant start as a dancer with George Balanchine, her legendary partnership with Mikhail Baryshnikov, her agonizing descent into drugs, and her struggles to rise again. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Rarely has a performing artist probed so searchingly and satisfyingly into the wellsprings of creativity as ballerina Kirkland does in this incandescently lyrical memoir written with her husband, whom she met while knocking on the door of a drug dealer's apartment. That is only one item of scandalous interest in an autobiography that resembles Billie Holiday's *Lady Sings the Blues* in its startling, brutal honesty. But, unlike celebrity autobiographies that mistake "juicy" anecdotes for self-revelation, *Dancing on My Grave* is also an intellectually stimulating portrait of the artist at war with tradition, with family, friends, lovers and colleagues, but most frustratingly, with herself. The 34-year-old Kirkland, who triumphed at the New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theater in the 1970s, reveals her one-time addiction to cocaine; that her affair with dancer Patrick Bissell was predicated on their mutual addiction to the drug; that both her romantic and artistic relationships with Baryshnikov were untenable because of his adolescent and unrelenting narcissism ("How was it possible that Misha's resources as an artist, so evident in performance, were different from those of his basic personality?"); that in 1981 she committed herself to a Westchester psychiatric hospital, even as she knew that her anorexia, bulimia and drug addiction were only symptoms of deeper emotional problems. The memoir also serves as a devastating critique of the American dance

establishment that cannot be ignored. New York City Ballet founder George Balanchine (who gave Kirkland amphetamine "vitamins" on a tour of the U.S.S.R.) emerges as patronizing, vindictive, petty but still a genius. Through the 1970s and early 1980s, Kirkland nearly paid with her life for "the passivity and guilt instilled by the Balanchine system" a dance theater that valued speed and form over dramatic content. "Don't think, dance," Kirkland was told. The ballerina's disaffection with that dictum is at the heart of this book: "To speak through the dance, to articulate something beyond the steps, was the precise art for which I struggled." Kirkland spares neither the reader nor herself in this memoir full of poetic insights into art and life, and we must be grateful that the dancer, always "seen but not heard," has at last given her inner soul voice in this magnificent autobiography. 50,000 ad/promo. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Prima ballerina Kirkland and her husband have written an emotional diatribe about Kirkland's dance career. The ballet equivalent of a "tell-it-all" Hollywood biography, this is a horror story of pain, anorexia, emotional difficulties, and casual sex, culminating in four years of cocaine addiction that brought her career to a standstill. At odds with both Balanchine and Baryshnikov in her insistence on putting her own dramatic interpretation into her roles, she is highly critical of Balanchine's training methods and Baryshnikov's partnering skills, which she says lacked finesse both on and off the stage. Her serious accusations that ballet training produces mindless mechanical dolls, and that the rigors of the life drive dancers to drug abuse, are undermined by her shrill, fragmented tone, making this a sad self-justification. Marcia L. Perry, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Mass. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

First off- I so disagree with the poor reviews that Gelsey was a narcissist. She did not love herself, and was not preoccupied with herself. She was just trying to find a way to LIVE with herself without destructive thoughts and behaviors. The writing- so real and raw. I believe probably 90% of it, as there's no way she would have been able to recall all of her exact conversations word for word. Also, she makes a lot of assumptions about other people's unspoken attitudes towards her- many could have been true; but who knows. The story- Gelsey was a tortured soul from the beginning. It's like she saw the world in a deeper way than most do. Felt things deeper; saw her imagination as if it were all real in the world; wanted to understand herself and others at all costs. I wrote in the title that it was inspirational because of how she describes her artistic endeavours. She was so concerned with the art of ballet that money and people's opinions didn't matter. Whether she was received well

or not by the public didn't matter. She just wanted to create art as perfectly as possible; an impossible but noble pursuit. It's what sets her apart from the ballet dancer who just performs technique. She strived for every detail, every muscle movement, every emotion, every lift, to be....I can't even describe it because she never seems to quite be able to describe or answer her question of what this art is that she does. It's a beautifully written autobiography; she makes you feel as though you know her personally by the end. It will drive you to look and feel deeper when exploring any artform. Many have read this book and by the end felt they no longer looked up to Gelsey or Balanchine. I didn't feel that negativity or indifference. They were human, and therefore flawed in both their personal and professional lives. Her next book was *The Shape of Love* which I have yet to read. She is no longer married to Greg Lawrence, the co-author of both books. I hope she writes a third. I especially look forward to seeing how successful her ballet school becomes; The Gelsey Kirkland Academy of Classical Ballet.

I bought this for my daughter who is currently studying dance. She will also be attending Gelsey's summer intensive this summer. This book will give you an inside look at the ballet world especially under Balanchine. This woman deserves a medal for putting up with Balanchine and dating Baryshnikov!!! One thing I can say is that this woman is a survivor! Even though the ballet world is full of women it is mostly run by men directors. Men are treated like Gods in the ballet world. I love that Gelsey Kirkland is a strong female Director in a sea of men who don't have a clue about the female dancer. Although her school seems to be doing extremely well, her summer intensive (SI) has been rated #1 ballet SI in NYC, it is extremely expensive to run a dance school/company especially in NYC. I hope that people continue to donate to her school and support more women directors in the ballet world. Please Donate!!! This book is really about a woman trying to survive in a man's world in the 60's and 70's. The competition for these women is fierce. Highly recommend.

I entered another world reading this book. Gelsey is a fascinating woman and this book does not sugar-coat her world of being such a brilliant, delicate, beautiful dancer. Loved knowing what it was like behind-the-scenes and what other famous ballet dancers and teachers are really like in their private lives. Truly, it was a hard book to put down. I think I read it in two days. So happy I purchased this even though it was not available to download but my used "hard copy" was in excellent condition with lots of gorgeous photos. Engrossing and a great read.

For those that love ballet or do ballet themselves, this is a painfully honest story of one woman's

true life events. It shows the power struggle she went through with choreographers and dance partners, trying to earn respect and praise. It's also a cautionary tale of drugs, sex and body image issues. It showcases the mental demons she went through with addiction and battling to overcome physical injuries. I would not allow anyone under 18 read this book due to the graphic nature of the events that happen in her life (almost overdosing on cocaine....etc).

I was pleased to be able to find this out-of-print title for a gift to my dancing niece. (It had been a NY Times best seller). Gelsey Kirkland was the premier ballerina of her time, the early-mid 70s. I saw her perform then, in the Nutcracker, at the Kennedy Center. She had the reputation for having very uneven performances, perhaps due to the drug problems described in the book. That afternoon she was "on," and it looked as if her toes were floating across, and not touching the floor. The book intimately describes the constant high stress load placed upon professional dancers. This includes grueling all day workouts and practices, with virtually no time off; the constant threat of being replaced; working through severe pain; and the demand for physical "perfection." Gelsey developed anorexia, one occupational hazard of that profession. She was pressured into getting breast implants, against her own wishes. She also fell into drugs. The triumph of her spirit over these challenges, and development of a healthy self esteem, is gratifying to share in.

Excellent book. What a powerful, emotional autobiography. Very honest, sometimes sad account of what she went through during her career and how it impacted her life. It is gripping and hard to put down! An excellent read. I read her book when it was first released, and lost it during a move, so I bought it so I can read it again! An incredible autobiography. Buy it and you won't be able to put it down!

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