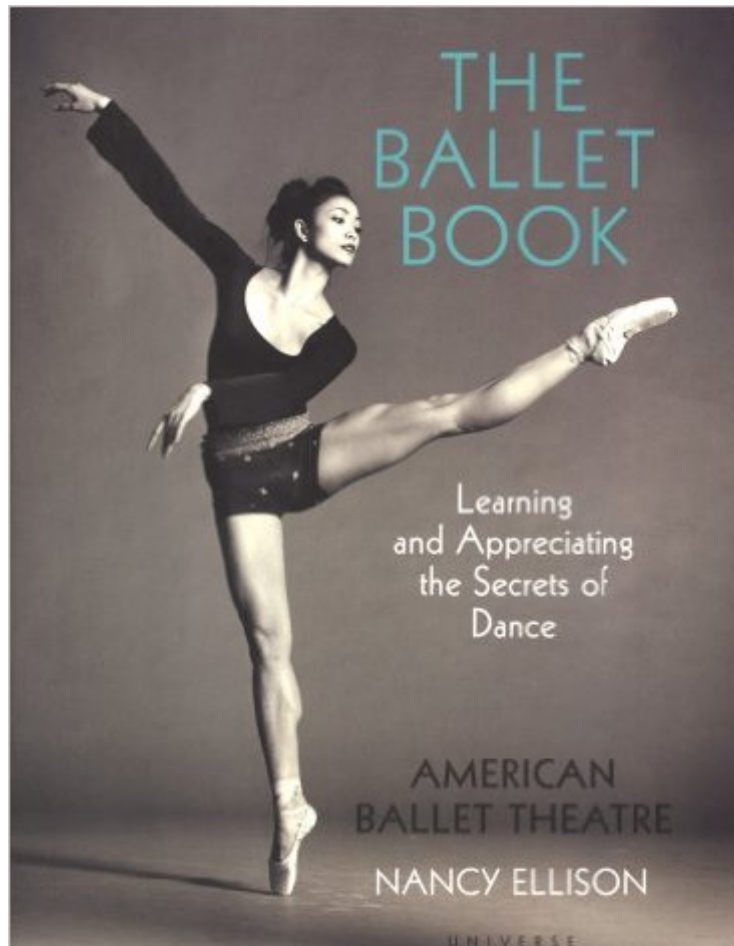


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# The Ballet Book: Learning And Appreciating The Secrets Of Dance



## 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

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 Gardee", "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.

I agree with the other two reviews that you don't buy this book to learn the "secrets of dance". However, if you're a fan of ABT, this is a must to own. Nancy Ellison always captures the dancers beautifully, be it in still or movements. Though her best portraits of ABT dancers was the ABT book published in 1995. (very hard to get now). This book can be a nice reference to have autographs from your favorite dances because there are hundreds of excellent photos of all the current principals, soloists and corpses. The only drawback is that they have a very poorly presented Susan Jaffe farewell on a double page. That actually splits her face in half. I heard they will correct that in the second edition.

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, Guillaum Graffin teaching; Lar Lubovich 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 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.

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