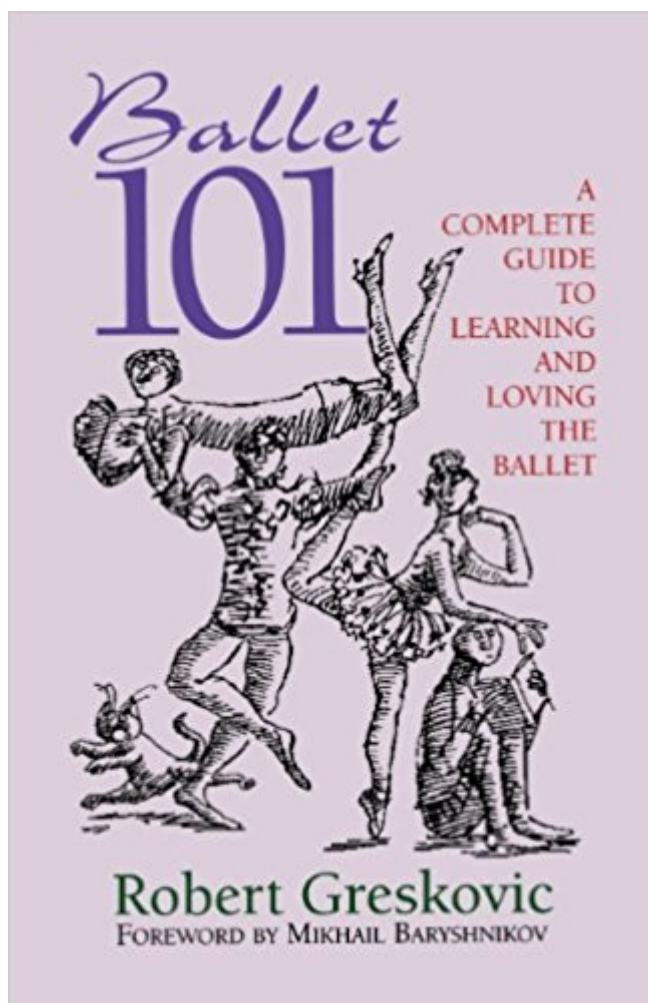


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Ballet 101: A Complete Guide To Learning And Loving The Ballet



Synopsis

(Limelight). Veteran dance writer Robert Greskovic's comprehensive handbook on how to watch and appreciate the ballet is now available in this new edition. It includes a complete analysis of sixteen important and popular ballets, from Swan Lake to Twyla Tharp's Push Comes To Shove . As Mikhail Baryshnikov states in the book's foreword: "All the things that ballet fans talk about at intermission, while newcomers stand there wondering what they mean: those things are here...(Robert Greskovic) has been thinking about ballet --- watching it, reading, writing, and talking about it --- day after day for more than thirty years. He knows it through and through. Now he shares his knowledge."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Greskovic's enthusiasm for ballet is infectious. The combination of ideal bodies moving into wondrous shapes, beautiful music, and often fantastic sets and costumes makes it, in his opinion, a near perfect art form. Still, many art lovers who regularly visit museums and galleries and think nothing of an evening at the opera or theater practically panic at the thought of sitting through a ballet. Ballet 101 should ease those people's fears. Greskovic starts off with a lively but solid history of ballet, then covers the training of a dancer. These two elements alone offer an excellent foundation for understanding what's going on on-stage. The book also includes clear information about the logistics of a performance--from the conductor's arrival in the orchestra pit to the final curtain call, no pique, glissade, or arabesque is left unexplained. After covering these basics,

Greskovic examines 14 ballets in great detail--most are classics like *Les Sylphides*, but a number of modern treasures like Balanchine's *Apollo* are also covered. For readers yearning to take in more dance than their local ballet company offers in a season, the book includes an extensive videography as well as excellent suggestions for further reading. The tone of *Ballet 101* is serious without being dry and informative without being condescending--a great find for anyone anxious to learn more about this often under-appreciated art form. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"There are no rules to making your way through the world of ballet," writes Greskovic in his valuable introduction to the form. There may be no rules, but a little guidance is a good thing, and Greskovic makes a fine Virgil to a hapless Dante. A dance teacher and critic, Greskovic goes far beyond the bluffers' guides that have come before. He begins with a sketch of ballet's historical roots in the courts of Europe, highlighting key characters and influences, partnerships and rivalries, and thereby shows the crucial influence of earlier people and practices on current performance. This sets the stage for an overview of the roles traditionally played by men and women, the various stages a ballet goes through before the performance and an explanation of how to view the structures of the dance and recognize standard movements and positions. Armed with the fundamentals, the reader can see that "ballet is an art of standards and traditions that need room to grow but not license to alter arbitrarily." In the final third of the book, he takes the reader on a guided tour of a dozen of ballet's most popular and significant works, recommending available videos for the critical visual and aural experience. In very straightforward, engaging prose bolstered always by research and understanding, Greskovic demystifies what can seem?especially if you listen to its more jealous adherents?to be an esoteric art form. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Way too complicated and wordy for an intro to ballet. More like a history of ballet. Don't buy this if you are looking for a nice easy basic intro to ballet. It is like a thesis. Maybe suitable only for serious students of ballet.

Discuss ballet in a sophisticated way free of jargon.

A Complete Guide to Learning and Loving Ballet also was given as a gift to my younger granddaughter when she was studying ballet. She also found this book very interesting and

informative.

Very Good

Reading this book was a good learning experience -- the author, clearly, knows his stuff; at the same time, it's a bit awkward, hard to read (somewhat meandering, artificially florid, disjointed at times, with proofreading snafus -- for example, "graphein" is said to be a German word: obviously a typo made in haste) -- overall, I wish the writing were simpler, more to the point; it'd be great if an editor kneaded it all into a more graceful literary shape. Recommended though: although the book can be improved, overall it's informative, quite good for a novice. PS. When reading reviews on this page, please be careful to distinguish between bona-fide reviews by real readers and phony commercial blurbs by publishers' flunkies who dishonestly use the review capability to post advertizing copy here. A case in point, a review right above, by "D. Donovan, Editor/Sr. Reviewer": visit this person's reviews page and count the number of reviews posted in a single day. For example, on April 26, no less than forty (40!) reviews were added by this "reviewer", and so on, nearly every day, back to the beginning of time. No one can read forty books a day every day, to say nothing of reviewing them afterwards. I've discovered lately that this is a very widespread practice here. Beware! Not every reviewer posting something here is honest.

I note that the laudatory blurbs on this atrocious book's jacket are drawn from professional dance critics, who may perhaps be excused for overlooking the fact that this book is putatively pitched toward newcomers to the art of Ballet. They are themselves experts, after all. The author, however, cannot be thus excused; he has produced a rarefied book that will be unreadable to most genuine newcomers, and that is singularly unedifying to this newcomer. Consider this sentence plucked nearly at random from the beginning of chapter 5: "Charles-Louis Diderlot (1767-1837), half French, half Swedish, studied and worked under a variety of the eighteenth century's ballet innovators, including Noverre, Dauberval, and both GaÃfÂ«tan and Auguste Vestris." Two questions immediately arise. 1) Are the names Noverre, Dauberval, or GaÃfÂ«tan and Auguste Vestris supposed to mean anything to a likely reader of a book of this title? 2) Assuming that they do not, what is the reader supposed to learn and retain about the unfamiliar name of Diderlot through its immediate juxtaposition with four additional unfamiliar names? Huh. I guess a bunch of people who were really famous a few centuries ago worked together ... too bad I can't remember any of their names. This sentence is highly typical; the entire book is written with this degree of thoughtlessness.

The author breathlessly drops names without context or clarification, and technical terms are used throughout without introduction or explanation. Indeed, the book lacks a basic overview of the technical terminology -- something that one might find useful in a book advertising itself as a complete introduction. The author may be a fine critic (I do not know), but this book warrants a wide berth.

This book is proof that a good editor can make all the difference. This might have been a great guide, but unfortunately its editor let it wander off in the wrong direction. There's no question that Robert Greskovic knows what he's talking about. He is a talented writer with charm and all manner of neat little anecdotes. But the problem with this book is how he spends his time. The book is 600 pages long, but regrettably half of it is composed of cheesy "let-me-walk-you-through-it-and-tell-you-what-you're-seeing" descriptions of twelve famous ballets available for home viewing on videotape. Some 300 pages of that stuff. The remaining 300 pages, though, are very interesting. In fact, in reading that first half of the book, you will get a very good idea of the history of ballet, and the names of its major shapers, stars, and proponents. Also, the glossary at the end of the book is both clear and generous. All in all, this book doesn't really come through on its promise. It's sort of an encyclopedia article on the history of ballet worldwide glued onto "Leonard Maltin Goes to the Ballet." And the whole notion of teaching readers how to go to the ballet and appreciate it sort of gets left in the wings.

A really nice history of ballet, with detailed chapters on key ballets. His comments are all referenced to videotapes of these ballets, so you can watch and read. The appendix with a list of the available ballet tapes is worth the price alone-- we read his comments and then search .com to order the tapes.

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