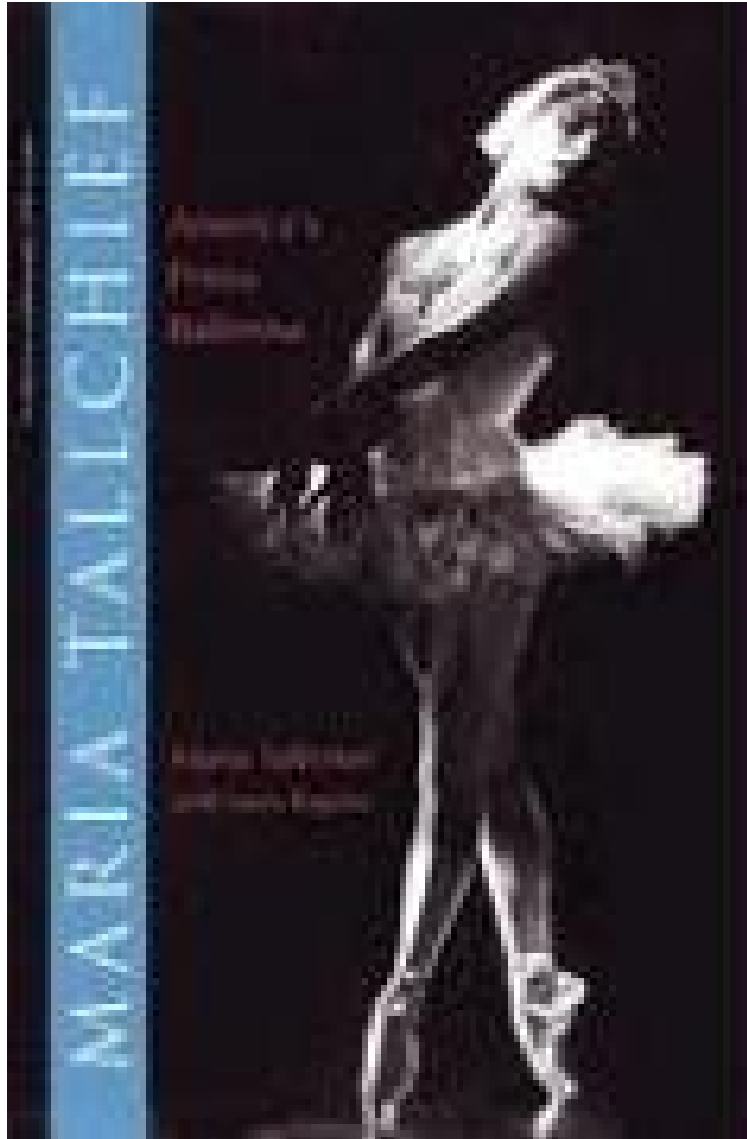


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## Maria Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina

*Larry Kaplan, Maria Tallchief*  
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**Larry Kaplan, Maria Tallchief : Maria Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Maria Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully written by Kaplan as toldBy Kansas Gal SalBeautifully written by Kaplan as told, I assume by Maria Tallchief! What a memory she had and able to tell us such wonderful details of her journey as a ballerina, the struggles, the successes, all of it.. I loved it and keep re-reading the details! A wonderful book I will pass on to my granddaughters, both studying ballet and loving it!2 of 2 people found the

following review helpful. Amazing, superior woman and her story. By William Durland. Extremely well written bio. Written with a wonderful sensitivity. A great view of an extraordinarily talented artist and performer, as well as an amazing woman. This is the story of an extraordinary woman, written by an extraordinary woman (herself). It has a wonderful female perspective. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Gemma. Great book!!!

The definitive autobiography in a new paperback edition!

.com She was George Balanchine's muse for 20 years and his wife for 6; together they made the New York City Ballet an essential part of American culture with his choreography and her dazzling, technically bravura dancing in "Firebird," "Swan Lake," and other modern classics. Maria Tallchief's dignified autobiography describes their groundbreaking artistic collaboration with satisfying thoroughness. She is reserved about their personal relationship but candid about the increasing favor Balanchine showed to younger dancers, which led to her departure from the company in 1966. Her story captures a key moment in ballet history. From Booklist Tallchief, the daughter of a full-blooded Osage Indian father and a mother of Scotch-Irish descent, was the queen of American ballet in its glory years; and her life story reads like a fairy tale, but one in which the princess must pay a high price for her magical gifts. Tallchief devoted herself to ballet at an early age, achieving instant recognition when she went to New York in 1942 at age 17. Immediately accepted as a member of the Ballet Russe, she caught the fervent attention of the controversial and brilliant choreographer George Balanchine. He made Tallchief not only his prima ballerina--creating unforgettable roles for her that called for "pyrotechnical virtuosity and limitless stamina" --but also his wife. Tallchief, adeptly assisted by coauthor Larry Kaplan, who also cowrote Edward Villella's autobiography, *Prodigal Son* (1991), is modest about her own stupendous talent but expresses undiminished awe for Balanchine's genius. Her descriptions of working with Balanchine and Stravinsky are fascinating and exhilarating, but her accounts of the terrible strain of 14-hour days of practice and performance are sobering. At the height of her career, Tallchief suffered from "perpetual exhaustion" and a fractured personal life, but she has no regrets--only sterling memories and much to be proud of. Donna Seaman From Kirkus sThe tastefully yet candidly told life story of one of America's most gifted dancers, a former wife of George Balanchine. Tallchief was born Elizabeth Marie Tall Chief in 1925, to an alcoholic but loving Osage Indian father and a white mother in small-town Oklahoma. When the family moved to Los Angeles, she began studying ballet with Bronislava Nijinska ("It was from Madame Nijinska that I first understood that the dancer's soul is in the middle of the body"). Tallchief joined the Ballet Russe while still a teenager and changed her name to Maria at the suggestion of Agnes de Mille. She first worked with Balanchine in 1944, when he was hired as a choreographer by the Ballet Russe. A year later, the much older man of few words shocked her by saying casually that "I would like you to become my wife." Although this collaboration between Tallchief and ghostwriter Kaplan (*Prodigal Son*, 1992) does not include much about Tallchief's firsthand view of Balanchine's revisionary classical technique, the book abounds with droll tales and with detailed descriptions of her roles in Balanchine's *The Firebird*, *The Nutcracker*, *Orpheus*, and *Sylvia*, among others. She chronicles, too sketchily, doings among her famous fellow dancers at the New York City Ballet. Her marriage to Balanchine ended in an annulment. Tallchief is equally frank and lively in describing her career after Balanchine's, including an affair with the nubile Rudolf Nureyev. ("I taught him the twist . . . he picked it up right away.") She also offers penetrating, if tactful, criticism of NYCB's post-Balanchine regime: "The irony of George's remark that 'ballet is woman' is that today most of the companies in the world are being run by men . . . the contribution former Balanchine ballerinas can make, ballerinas who worked directly with George and who created their roles, isn't being valued, not even in George's own company." What would happen, one wonders, if this remarkable woman were running things? (32 pages photos, not seen) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.