

Booklist

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First Position: A Century of Ballet Artists.

Singer, Toba (Author)

Nov 2007. 264 p. Praeger, hardcover, \$49.95. (0275983919). 792.802.

Gelsey Kirkland's romance with Mikhail Baryshnikov was characterized by her dramatic walkouts followed by her equivocations, his distancing, her redistancing—"like the chases in a cha-cha sequence." Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, "ballet's most celebrated partnership," were arrested during a police narcotics raid of a San Francisco "freak out," spent the night in lockup, and were photographed by paparazzi the following day as they left the police station. These nuggets spice serious dance scholarship in Singer's profiles of 15 dancers. Her subjects range from such universally known stars as Anna Pavlova and Arthur Mitchell to dancers familiar primarily to aficionados, such as Li Cunxin and Erik Bruhn. In her sketches, Singer discusses each dancer's artistic background, unique style, work with choreographers, among them the great George Balanchine, and her or his critical evaluation. With an excellent context-establishing foreword by Bruce Marks, and ancillary materials, this volume about dance as "as an ever-changing art" is an excellent and enjoyable reference for both novices and ardent fans.

— *Whitney Scott*