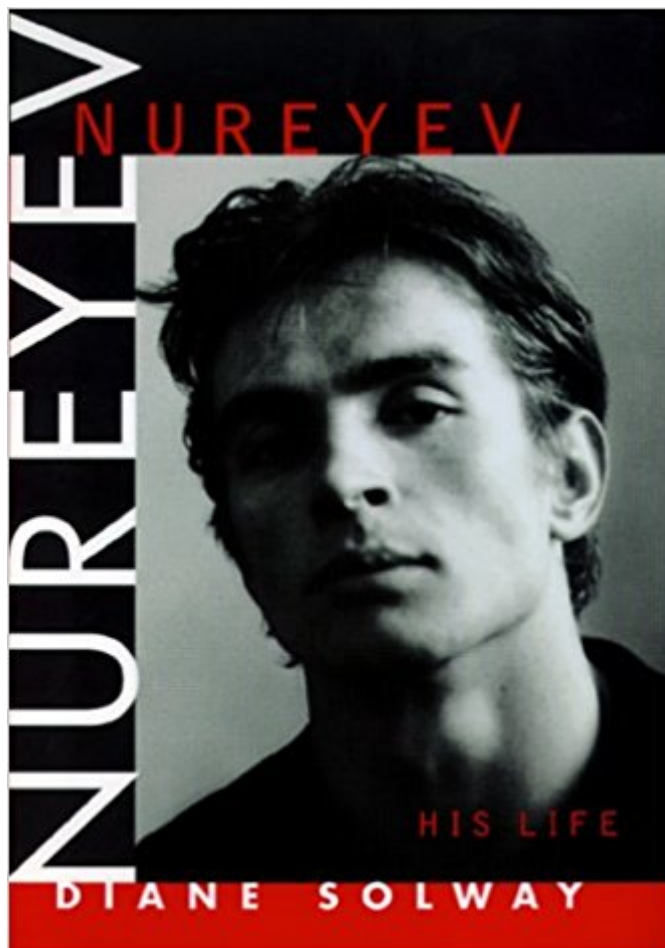


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# Nureyev: His Life



## Synopsis

Everyone knows the name Rudolf Nureyev, but does anyone know the man behind the myth? Diane Solway does; she spent over four years and conducted more than 200 interviews with his family, his friends and lovers, his colleagues, and even his doctors to research *Nureyev: His Life* the first book to capture him as he was onstage and off -- a great artist whose talent was matched only by his steely will to succeed. Here is his professional career: his famed partnership with Margot Fonteyn, his personal transformation of the Royal Ballet and the Paris Opera Ballet, his impact on dance companies all over the world, his collaborations with Martha Graham and Paul Taylor, and, behind all his accomplishments, the athletic grace and profound understanding that was his gift of genius. Here, too, is the private Nureyev: his Soviet childhood, his inner demons, the men and women who were willing to devote their lives to him. Solway chronicles his flamboyant, extravagant lifestyle, his celebrity-studded circle of friends -- Jacqueline Onassis, Andy Warhol, and Marlene Dietrich, to name only three -- his stormy love affairs, his homosexual promiscuity, and his death from AIDS in 1993. *Nureyev* was his own masterpiece, a man always in the process of reinventing himself. Diane Solway's superb biography is as brilliant and as fascinating as the dazzling dancer at center stage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From the moment of his birth aboard a train speeding through Stalinist Russia, until his death of AIDS in 1993, Rudolf Nureyev seemed to travel through life at the velocity of a triple pirouette. His professional accomplishments are stunning. Despite starting his ballet training much later most

dancers, Nureyev won a coveted spot at the famous Maryinsky (later the Kirov) ballet school in St. Petersburg and went on to become one of the company's favorite dancers. By the end of his first year in the West--in 1961 he became the first Soviet dancer to defect when he stayed in Paris after the rest of the Kirov returned to the U.S.S.R--he had performed with the major ballet companies in both Europe and the United States, and formed his legendary partnership with British dancer Dame Margot Fonteyn. He reinvigorated contemporary ballet, particularly the importance of male dancers, by energizing his favorite traditional roles with unrestrained sexuality and unparalleled technical virtuosity. His personal life was equally full. He carried on affairs with men and women alike--most notable among these was his intense, decades-long involvement with his professional idol Erik Bruhn and his penchant for sexy young call-boys. He hung out at Studio 54 and crisscrossed the Atlantic with his socialite friends, but he also made time to mentor talented young dancers, including Paris Opera Ballet star Sylvie Guillem. Biographer Diane Solway, who wrote *Dance Against Time*, a biography of Joffrey Ballet dancer Edward Sterle, has produced an exhaustively comprehensive report on Nureyev's life. The book's most important accomplishment is that it succeeds in correcting many of the myths that still cloak the story of Nureyev's life--she credibly suggests, for instance, that his defection was not premeditated. The flamboyant dancer, known to wear jeweled jock straps, was responsible for propagating most of the stories that grew up around him. He published a ghostwritten autobiography rife with inaccuracies in the early '60s, and much of the information about his first 20 or so years in the Soviet Union has remained inaccessible until very recently. Solway traveled to Russia to piece together her subject's early life with recently declassified documents and interviews with his friends, family, and even a few detractors. She also drew from another rare book, *Rudolf Nureyev: Three Years in the Kirov Theater*. The result is a biography that objectively addresses the facts and fictions of an extraordinary life to create a vivid and balanced portrait.

A journalist who specializes in entertainment, Solway conducted more than 200 interviews to get the goods on one of the world's great dancers. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Without a doubt the most thoroughly researched book among all I've read about this incredible genius. After reading, I felt I learned every facet of his driven life Nureyev would allow us to know. A compelling read.

Binding fell apart a quarter of the way through. Content of book was excellent though.

In excellent condition. Came packaged very well. As advertised. Thank you

great volume love anything about this master of ballet fast service

Nureyev's was such a fascinating character & led a very interesting life. The author did an excellent job writing his life account. I can hardly put this book down.

I had some issues with this book. You will learn a great deal about Nureyev in this autobiography, but you'll also learn a lot of petty trivia that distracts from the seriousness of the man's life. The author has crammed far too much material into it with quite a bit sounding like items the author had handy and just felt like dropping into the text. Hence, there's a problem with the flow. Also, the author needs to learn how to write footnotes. Symbols appear mid-sentence, which is distracting when they would work just as well at the end of a sentence, and there's a tendency for the footnote content to be irrelevant to the sentence's content. These problems make the book read more like a great deal of gossip rather than a focused study on Nureyev and how he was created.

Diane Solway's biography on Nureyev is a tour de force that sets out to accomplish what Virginia Woolf aptly christened to be the hallmark of a good biographer: "Almost any biographer, if he respects facts, can give us much more than another fact to add to our collection. He can give us the creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders". Meticulously researched and righting many misconceptions and misleading reports (including Nureyev's very own autobiography which veered towards convenience with the truth, not unlike the genre of autobiographies), Solway's book avoided the usual pitfalls pervading biographies written on famous but controversial personalities. Solway meritoriously stayed on neutral ground in her account of Nureyev's life and many loves, a far cry from biographers who tackled their favorite subject matters with a tad too much schmaltz and partiality. Solway's biography was devoid of sensationalism, not an easy feat considering Nureyev's history marred by self-interest, debauchery and promiscuity. To Solway's credit, Nureyev's story was a matter-of-fact chronology penned in an appreciably elegant prose. The book chronicled the Russian danseur's story in such a way that allows readers to luxuriate in the intricate plots and subplots of Nureyev's affairs, rendering us the voyeuristic satisfaction of living life vicariously through one of the most influential dance performers of our times. The gastronomy of supplemental knowledge presenting ballet as an art form and entertainment; summaries of visionary

dance choreographers that made and continue to make classical ballet/modern dance tick; exposure of the who's who in the dance world plus the plethora of scores that brought ballet performances to life. Supporting the assemblage of all that was written were diligently selected photographs culminating in a phenomenal biography on Nureyev. In summary, *Nureyev: His Life's* is an evenhanded biography on the golden boy who took the world by storm for over two decades and a faithful narrative of the flawed private being underneath the veil of success and glamour. A must-read for anyone in search of an unbiased chronicle to Nureyev's life story and his contributions. 5 stars.

Diane Solway has researched and written an altogether fascinating biography of Rudolf Nureyev, the dancer who changed classical ballet in the 20th century. He was born to a impoverished family in Russia and ultimately died on his private island purchased with the millions he made during his dance career--a true-life rags-to-riches story. But it is so much more...What a career Nureyev had! As a child he danced to provide an escape from the poverty of his youth. Almost forcing his way into Russian ballet schools, he astonished even his detractors by his grace and vitality. Solway recreates the scene of his defection from Russia in gripping detail. From that moment on, Russia's loss--which they tried hard to ignore, not even allowing Nureyev to see his mother until she was on her deathbed--became the West's priceless gain. In the West this amazing young man turned into a human dynamo, insisting that contracts be written to allow him to dance every night rather than the customary once or twice a month. Solway follows his transatlantic crossings in dizzying detail as he dances one night in New York, the next night in Paris, and the following night at a festival in mid-Europe. He extended his career far beyond the usual span for a male dancer, eventually forming his own companies so that he could continue to perform. He insisted on learning the stylized awkward steps for modern ballet, and his name filled many houses for benefit performances with modern dance groups. He staged and choreographed many classical ballets, acted in motion pictures, and acted the part of the king in "The King and I" on stage. In his declining years, he learned conducting techniques, and led several European orchestras in concert programs. My son gave me this book for my birthday, and included with it the video "Fonteyn and Nureyev." What an inspired gift! Words can go only so far in describing dance--even the words of the dance critics whom Solway generously quotes. Nureyev's partnership with Fonteyn is the stuff of legends! This unlikely pair--she supposedly near the end of her career and he just starting his--packed houses and evoked hour-long curtain calls with their emotion-packed virtuoso performances so clearly evident in the video and convincingly described by Solway. In this day and age we are fascinated by

the details of the sex lives of celebrities. Here, too, Solway does not dissappoint, although almost everything she quotes is not from Nureyev's mouth but from companions who may perhaps put their own personal agendas ahead of the literal truth. Nureyev became a icon for the gay community, and some were angry that he did not use his death from AIDS as a beacon for their cause. Whatever his motivation, here is the gripping life story of a man who was driven to accomplish more in his half-century of frenzied life than any of us could possibly imagine. I am immensely grateful for Nureyev's richly creative life and, as well, for Diane Solways carefully detailed account of it.

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