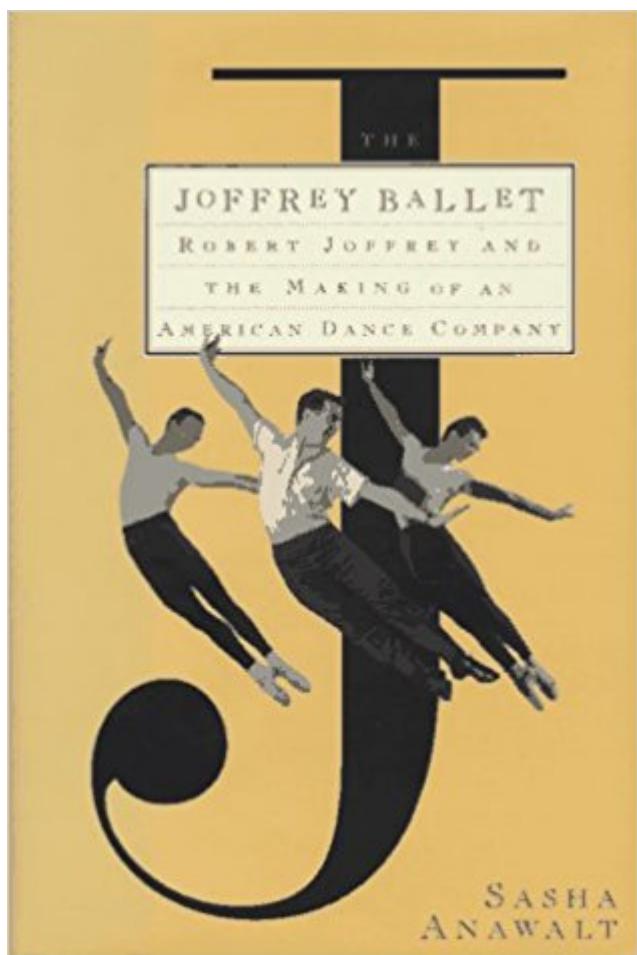


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The JOFFREY BALLET: Robert Joffrey And The Making Of An American Dance Company



Synopsis

Published in conjunction with the fortieth anniversary of the renowned group, a portrait of founding member Robert Joffrey shows how he build a ballet troupe and includes an examination of the company's repertoire as well as photographs. 10,000 first printing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Robert Joffrey took ballet from its lofty and often inaccessible perch and helped popularize it to a broad audience without once compromising the level of its art. His company was metamorphic, infusing its performances with both tradition and innovation, seriousness and wit, and highbrow and lowbrow, producing much of this century's most memorable dance. Anawalt's biography not only elegantly describes how the company developed but how it helped shape American dance.

Launched in New York City in 1952 by Robert Joffrey and his companion, Gerald Arpino, the Joffrey Ballet embodies an innovative approach that combines classical form with modern techniques. Its dancers, loaded with energy, have expanded the sphere of ballet as a popular American entertainment with works by Twyla Tharp, Arpino and with the multimedia rock ballet Astarte, which filtered the sexual revolution through myths of the ancient Babylonian fertility goddess.

Joffrey?choreographer, teacher and artistic director?also pioneered meticulous revivals of the 20th-century repertoire, such as Kurt Jooss's antiwar ballet, The Green Table, and Leonide Massine's Le Tricorne. After Joffrey's death in 1988 at the age of 59, the company faltered, and in its present incarnation as the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago it gains few grants and survives mostly on

box-office revenue. In this sparkling, substantial chronicle, written with the cooperation of Arpino and other Joffrey stalwarts, dance critic Anawalt ably follows the troupe's continual metamorphoses. The Seattle-born, secretive Joffrey, who rebelled against his working-class immigrant parents (his father a devout Muslim from Afghanistan, his mother an Italian-born waitress), emerges as a gutsy entrepreneur who struggled against underfunding, homophobia and a hierarchical arts system.

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Having lived through most of the history of the Joffrey and enjoying their years in NYC, I was pleased to read this comprehensive bio of the man and the company. Interestingly, I ordered it used for 30 cents and got a copy signed by the author - worth every penny.

A fascinating, incredibly well-researched history of the Joffrey Ballet -- and its place in American dance. I myself had worked as an intern backstage there when I was younger, and I must say it really captured the company's spirit and the personalities of the major players, such as Mr. Joffrey and Gerald Arpino. Answalt has a knack for presenting the complexities of running a dance company in the US and for fairly examining the disputes between artists and board members that nearly destroyed the Joffrey. If I have any quibble at all, and it is small, it is that from time to time certain events are a little rushed and merit more detail. But that's a small problem, indeed.

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