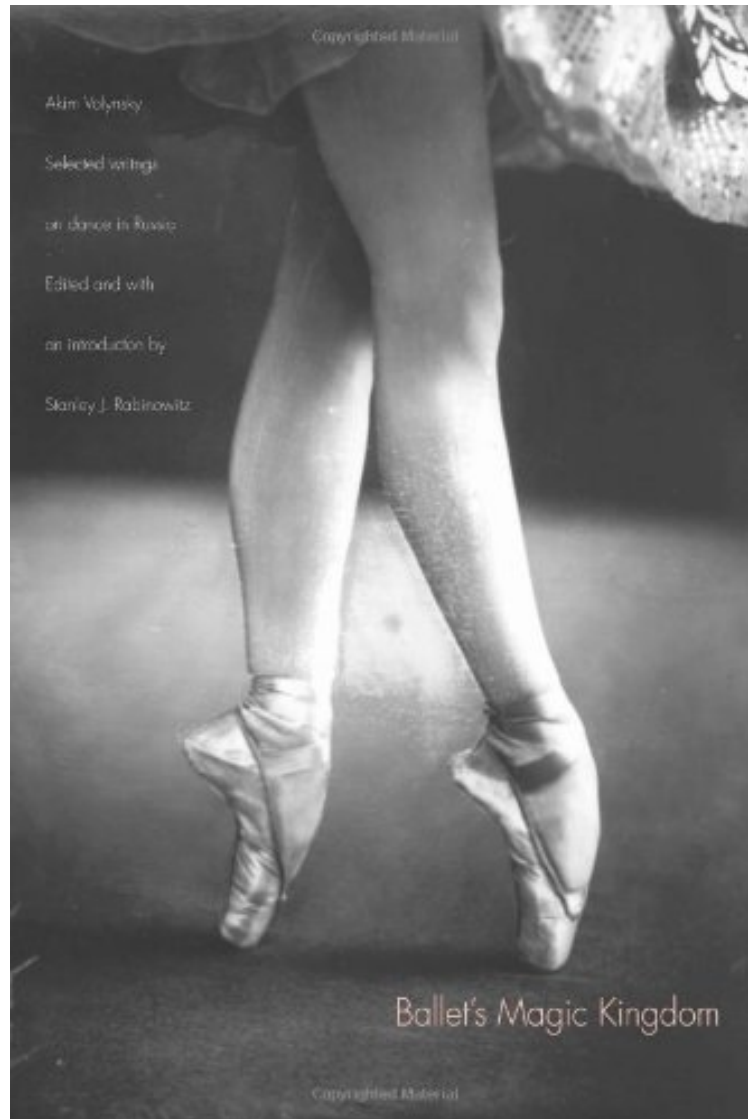


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Ballet's Magic Kingdom: Selected Writings on Dance in Russia, 1911-1925

Akim Volynsky

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Akim Volynsky : Ballet's Magic Kingdom: Selected Writings on Dance in Russia, 1911-1925 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ballet's Magic Kingdom: Selected Writings on Dance in Russia, 1911-1925:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Most vivid accounts of legendary dancers in the Imperial Ballet eraBy Ivy LinBallet's Magic Kingdom is definitely one of the few dance critic volumes that is a must-read for balletomanes (the others are Arlene Croce's great series of books and Edwin Denby's collected writings). Volynsky

was a Jewish writer in St. Petersburg during the last years of the Imperial Ballet era. He saw Mathilde Kschessinskaya, Anna Pavlova, Olga Spessivtseva, Tamara Karsavina and other legendary names dance. His descriptions of them are vivid and illuminating. For instance he says that Mathilde Kschessinskaya's feet had "almost no arch" but that she wowed the crowds with effortless "double and triple turns" and "the most difficult cabrioles." A female dancer dancing cabrioles? Even today that implies a dancer of remarkable strength and virtuosity. His favorite dancer was Anna Pavlova. His description: "Anna Pavlova has a phenomenal arch, which she almost dares not bend entirely when she lifts herself on pointe. If she were to extend it, she'd break her foot." Volynsky is like many balletomanes fiercely opinionated. For instance he loathed the "revolutionary" ballets of Mikhail Fokine. He also loathed the modern dance movement of Isadora Duncan but praised Duncan's "lovely artistry." He follows up with this paean to Duncan's charisma: "Duncan is beautiful in the purity of her emotions, which inspire the viewer more rapidly than any other more perfect form of art." He was a fierce protector of Petipa and the purity of academic classical ballet. The second half of the book is devoted to Volynsky's "The Book of Exaltations: The ABC's of Classical Dance." Think it sounds boring? It's not. Volynsky applies his voluminous knowledge of Greek classical culture to create the most vivid description about the basic structure of classical ballet. His essays on turnout, posture, croise vs. efface, are models not only of dance writing but of descriptive writing. Volynsky is knowledgeable, passionate, opinionated, and a great writer. His book is a must-have.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Absolutely splendid! By CA MomI am so thrilled with this book that I want to kiss the translator's hands. The deep thinker, dance critic, art historian, AND ballet pedagogue Volynsky? Writings during a crucial period in Russian and ballet history? In English? Too good to be true... If only ballet would be taken so seriously today. It should be. It can withstand the intellectual rigor.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Needed More By Sedulous Needed more interpretation by compiler

Akim Volynsky was a Russian literary critic, journalist, and art historian who became Saint Petersburg's liveliest and most prolific ballet critic in the early part of the twentieth century. This book, the first English edition of his provocative and influential writings, provides a striking look at life inside the world of Russian ballet at a crucial era in its history. Stanley J. Rabinowitz selects and translates forty of Volynsky's articles—vivid, eyewitness accounts that sparkle with details about the careers and personalities of such dance luminaries as Anna Pavlova, Mikhail Fokine, Tamara Karsavina, and George Balanchine, at that time a young dancer in the Maryinsky company whose keen musical sense and creative interpretive power Volynsky was one of the first to recognize. Rabinowitz also translates Volynsky's magnum opus, *The Book of Exaltations*, an elaborate meditation on classical dance technique that is at once a primer and an ideological treatise. Throughout his writings, Rabinowitz argues in his critical introduction, which sets Volynsky's life and work against the backdrop of the principal intellectual currents of his time, Volynsky emphasizes the spiritual and ethereal qualities of ballet.

"An exhilarating gathering of writings by a profoundly influential critic, and a striking, startling contribution to the historical record."—Simon Morrison, Princeton University