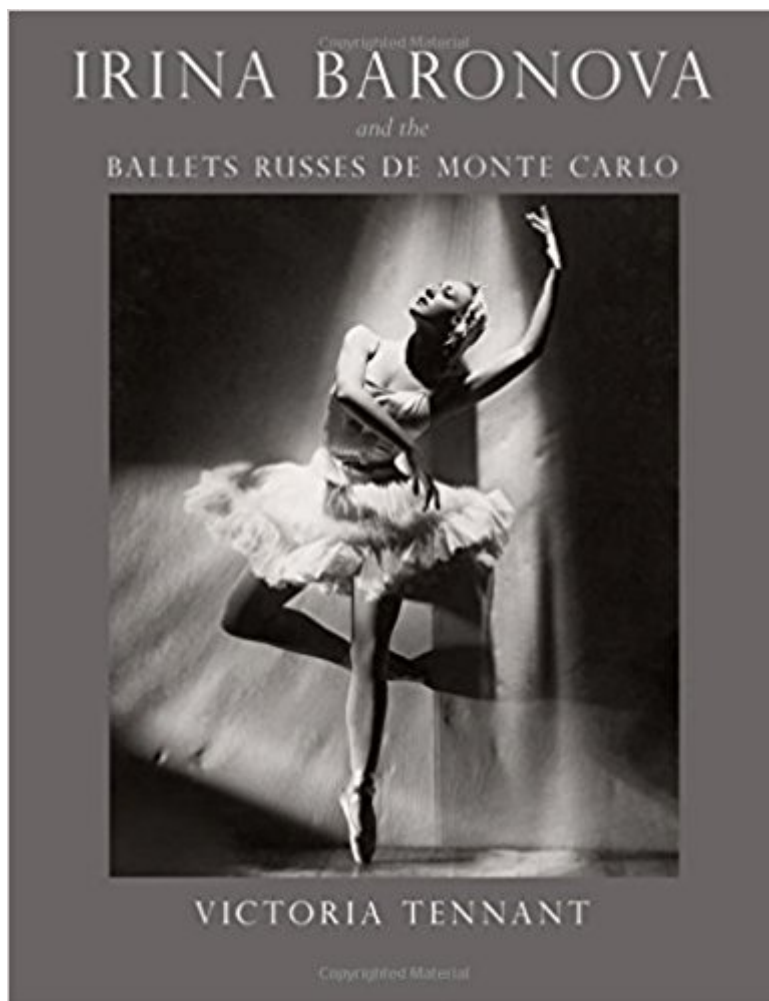




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# **Irina Baronova And The Ballets Russes De Monte Carlo**



## Synopsis

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo toured the United States and the world, introducing many to ballet as an art form, while spreading the enduring image of the ballerina as an embodiment of feminine grace and sophistication. This sumptuous, illustrated history tells the story of the rise of modern ballet and its popularity through the life story of one of ballet's most glamorous stars, Irina Baronova (1919–2008), prima ballerina for the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo and later for Ballet Theatre in New York. Drawing on letters, correspondence, oral histories, and interviews, Baronova's daughter, the actress Victoria Tennant, warmly recounts Baronova's dramatic life, from her earliest aspirations to her grueling time on tour to her later years in Australia as a pioneer of the art. She begins with the Baronov family's flight from Russia during the Revolution, which led them to Romania and later Paris, where at the age of thirteen, Baronova became a star, chosen by the legendary George Balanchine to join the Ballets Russes, where she danced the lead in *Swan Lake*. Victoria Tennant provides an intimate account of Baronova's life as a dancer and rare behind-the-scenes stories of life on the road with the stars of the company. Spectacular photographs, a mix of archival images and family snapshots, offer many rare views of rehearsals, costumes, set designs, and the dancers themselves both at their most dazzling and in their most everyday. The story of Irina Baronova is also the story of the rise of ballet in America thanks to the Ballets Russes, who brought the magisterial beauty and star power of dance to big cities and small towns alike. Irina Baronova and the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo offers a unique perspective on this history, sure to be treasured by dance patrons and aspiring stars.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“My friend Irina Baronova was a legendary Baby Ballerina of the Ballets Russes and an ambassador of classical ballet in America, but this book shows us the kind, funny, and hardworking woman behind the legend. She was a total pro and an elegant human being. If it’s possible, I’m more in awe than ever.” (Mikhail Baryshnikov)

“As a dancer myself, I connected deeply to Baronova’s words about what it’s like to feel in your soul the extremes of sacrifice, familial rivalry, and tremendous love that come from committing oneself to the art form. These pages made me realize how lucky we are now, we American dancers, because of the pioneering energy and sheer strength of Baronova and the other great dancers of the Ballets Russes who performed tirelessly night after night, stirring and thrilling hearts in every tiny pocket of America. It is something that should never be forgotten and should be instilled in all young dancers. We could never enjoy the careers we have today without these artists paving the way for us. I really couldn’t put this book down. I was in tears.” (Wendy Whelan, New York City Ballet)

“This is a beautiful record of the twentieth century lived through dance. It is illuminating and passionate and vivid: imagine Nabokov’s *Invitation to a Beheading* photographed and choreographed. I loved it.” (Edmund De Waal, author of *The Hare with Amber Eyes*)

“The passionate life story of the beautiful and dedicated Russian prima ballerina, Irina Baronova, is tenderly recounted by her daughter with wonderful photographs and vivid detail.” (Anjelica Huston)

“Photograph by photograph, Tennant touches on some of the most celebrated moments of Baronova’s career as a professional ballerina, while providing an unprecedented look into the Golden Age of ballet. Although most know Baronova for her grace on the ballet floor, Tennant chronicles her mother’s life from humble and difficult beginnings to her days as a world-renowned dancer.” (DuJour)

“Written by Baronova’s daughter, this lavishly illustrated book depicts the life of one of ballet’s most glamorous stars, Irina Baronova, whose outstanding talent and beauty led her to become prima ballerina of the Ballets Russes and later New York’s Ballet Theatre. . . . The result is an intoxicating glimpse into a lost age, taking in the volatile world of the Russian Revolution and two world wars that formed the backdrop to ballet at the time. With stunning photographs of Baronova and her fellow dancers on and off stage as they toured the world in the 1930s and 1940s, this superb book reveals just how fraught but exhilarating that was.” (The Lady)

“A fascinating story and a touching memorial to a warm, generous artist, the book is a most welcome

addition to any dance lover's library. (Dancing Times) "This is an invaluable book for its coverage of the Ballet Russe companies and for its feast of gorgeous photos. it would make a great gift to any ballet lover. (Dance Magazine) "An inspiring, fascinating read as a portrait of a person as well as a document of the times. (The Stage) "This elegant, informative book documents the path of a memorable dancer from anonymity to international acclaim. (Country Life) "Tennant's lovely book is more than just a coffee-table commemoration of a figure as adored in her day as Greta Garbo. . . . It will also serve as a research tool for historians of one of the most distinctive phenomena of mid-20th-century high culture. Every balletomane should acquire it. (Literary Review) "Irina Baronova and the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo is moving and sumptuous. Evocative, even bewitching, it gives an intimate look at a lost world of ballet as well as the dimensions of the individual career of Tennant's legendary mother. (Ballet Review)

Victoria Tennant played the title role in her first film, *The Ragman's Daughter*, in 1972, and she has since then gone on to work in film, television, theater, and radio, receiving Emmy and Golden Globe nominations. She lives in Los Angeles.

A must for all balletomanes. Baronova's life was extraordinary, as the treasure trove of photographs attests. My only quibble (and it's a small one) was too much text from her autobiography being repurposed here. However, her beautiful spirit shines through, thanks to the devoted work of her daughter. Brava!

This is a wonderful portrait of a woman and a view of both an era and the world of ballet when America knew almost nothing about this art form. Perhaps the best thing I can say is that I have little interest in the ballet itself AND I still found the book fascinating. It gives the reader a wonderful insider's view of a very special world, not just the intense hot-house world of dancers and choreographers, but also the artists, writers and the many emigres from Czarist Russia for whom the ballet became the center of their lives. But you also gain enormous respect for an artist who was also a mother, from the viewpoint of one of her daughters, who just so happened to go on to become a distinguished actress. The pictures are sumptuous and the writing fluid and charming. This is that rare combination of a "page-turner" that is also a gorgeous coffee-table book.

For enthusiast of beauty and excellence, an exciting read for both its rare transformative ability to bring you to an historical place and an immediate present. A conversation that you will have with the author and, undoubtedly, after reading, with your friends. Very fine indeed. Superbly documented and written.

Beautiful photos. Interesting text. Valuable for ballet lovers.

A superb book and a must for all who are interested in the history of ballet

A collection of wonderful images and moments.

AAA+++

This book elucidates why Irina Baronova was such an extraordinary person with such an extraordinary talent. By containing such a personal account which only a daughter could provide, as well as an amazing collection of photos many of which have never been seen before, the book brilliantly captures why Irina was one of the most important and talented dancers and personalities in the history of ballet. Victoria Tennant should be highly commended for the significant effort she has put into further contextualising why the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo made history at such an important and amazing time in history. A great and important book.

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