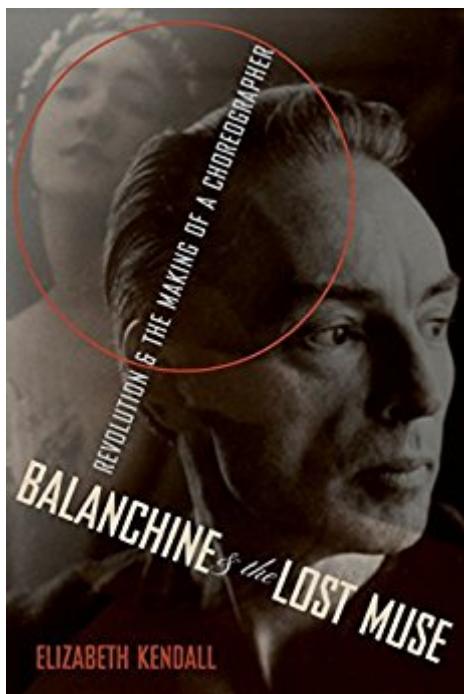


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# Balanchine & The Lost Muse: Revolution & The Making Of A Choreographer



## **Synopsis**

Here is the first dual biography of the early lives of two key figures in Russian ballet: famed choreographer George Balanchine and his close childhood friend and extraordinary ballerina Liidia (Lidochka) Ivanova. Tracing the lives and friendship of these two dancers from years just before the 1917 Russian Revolution to Balanchine's escape from Russia in 1924, Elizabeth Kendall's *Balanchine & the Lost Muse* sheds new light on a crucial flash point in the history of ballet. Drawing upon extensive archival research, Kendall weaves a fascinating tale about this decisive period in the life of the man who would become the most influential choreographer in modern ballet. Abandoned by his mother at the St. Petersburg Imperial Ballet Academy in 1913 at the age of nine, Balanchine spent his formative years studying dance in Russia's tumultuous capital city. It was there, as he struggled to support himself while studying and performing, that Balanchine met Ivanova. A talented and bold dancer who grew close to the Bolshevik elite in her adolescent years, Ivanova was a source of great inspiration to Balanchine--both during their youth together, and later in his life, after her mysterious death just days before they had planned to leave Russia together in 1924. Kendall shows that although Balanchine would have a great number of muses, many of them lovers, the dark beauty of his dear friend Lidochka would inspire much of his work for years to come. Part biography and part cultural history, *Balanchine & the Lost Muse* presents a sweeping account of the heyday of modern ballet and the culture behind the unmoored ideals, futuristic visions, and human decadence that characterized the Russian Revolution.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This was the most comprehensive study of Balanchine's early life I've ever read. His family tree, his school days and his early marriage and career. It describes his amazingly rich background in music, dance and the changing culture of the time. His first muse and her affect on his life and his early works of genius are carefully and lovingly described. Elizabeth Kendall is a scholar who has written a spellbinding book.

This is an important book for anyone interested in Balanchine's works and early life. The author has a poetic imagination and gives substantive details about Balanchine's early works. She gives a fascinating account of Lidia Ivanova, and describes the incredibly stressful and chaotic environment in which these young artists found themselves during and after the 1917 revolution(s).

This is a fascinating read, one I couldn't stop until finishing the story that centers on George Balanchine but goes deeply on his life when he entered ballet school unwillingly as a child and follows him through the period of revolution and unrest in St. Petersburg for 10 years. Detailed research is the basis for a story that would be unbelievable if not based on evidence obtained by the author in three languages. As she speculates toward the end about how the early experiences may have shaped Balanchine's creative work in America, I am willing to consider these possibilities when I see the ballets again. And the story of the lost muse, Lidia Ivanova, who never lived long enough to be famous in the world outside Russia's turbulent world during her adolescence.

This book is interesting for the period it describes: life in pre-revolutionary Russia and the birthpains of the Maryinsky ballet School at that time. You learn something about Balanchine, i.e. how he was chosen to enter the famous school, his early leanings towards choreography and the fate of many dancers, some known, some unknown during this period. All of this is very interesting, especially the historical part of how Russia goes from a Czarist regime to one of disorder, anarchy, hunger and suffering. However, the main gist of the book is on this somewhat unknown ballerina who Kendall

claims was Balanchine's inspiration. Although the details of her life are very interesting there is little proof, at least in the book that she was "balanchine's muse". Balanchine seems to have been an aloof, detached figure all his life, from childhood on and there is very little investigation into the workings of the man's mind and soul, perhaps because he was so aloof and perhaps, in the long run, very few if any, got to know the real Balanchine. Perhaps this is true of all geniuses. Still a good book, but not a great one.

This Book is a MUST own for ANY Balanchine Lover..... You will learn New interesting things about Russian Ballet. and MR. Balanchine's approach to choreography. :)

A fascinating portrait of Russian life during the period at the end of the Tsarist reign and the violent transition to Communism. It also reveals wonderful hertil not so well known details of Balanchine's early years that influenced his life and work.

If you are a fan of early 20th century ballet and the cast of characters who created it? This book does not disappoint! The author paints a vivid picture of a tumultuous time in history and the arts, a time that formed incredible performers and was the beginning of a shift in ballet, with Balanchine at the epicentre.

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