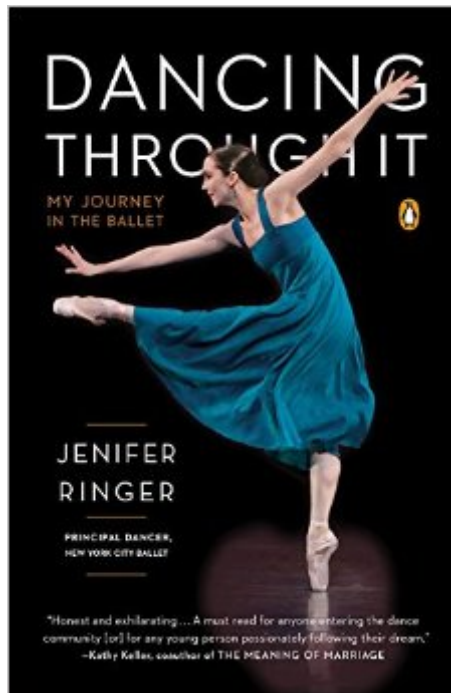


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Dancing Through It: My Journey In The Ballet



Synopsis

“A glimpse into the fragile psyche of a dancer.” —The Washington Post
Jenifer Ringer, a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, was thrust into the headlines after her weight was commented on by a New York Times critic, and her response ignited a public dialogue about dance and weight. Ballet aficionados and aspiring performers of all ages will want to join Ringer behind the scenes as she shares her journey from student to star and candidly discusses both her struggle with an eating disorder and the media storm that erupted after the Times review. An unusually upbeat account of life on the stage, *Dancing Through It* is also a coming-of-age story and an inspiring memoir of faith and of triumph over the body issues that torment all too many women and men.

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Customer Reviews

Jenifer Ringer has been my favorite principal at New York City Ballet for years. I first saw her as an apprentice 25 years ago, and have since followed her career avidly. She is not a pyrotechnic dancer, but she has it all - she has refinement, delicacy, beauty - she is joyous. This book is the appropriate culmination of her life as a dancer, and I hurried to read it and report on it. She has written it herself with editorial assistance, the perfect combination. (There has been at least one prominent biography by a dance legend that was overwritten and lacking editorial guidance.) Jenny describes her early days as a student at School of American Ballet, being taught - and corrected - by the finest ballet teachers - Suki Schorer, Susan Pilarre, Stanley Williams, Alexandra Danilova. Jenny is from the post-Balanchine generation, so she coached with Balanchine stars like Karin von Aroldingen. Poignantly she writes of her first experience dancing in the corps of *Serenade* - "It

almost seemed that with every new step I learned, my heart had to grow bigger."She writes of being chosen as Waltz Girl for the SAB Workshop, then suffering a broken bone in her foot and having to be sidelined for six weeks. She describes the training at SAB: "Even a moment of stillness couldn't be just a pretty, static pose; we needed to look and feel ready to move at all times, and there were supposed to be invisible lines of energy radiating from our extremities."She vividly describes Serenade, a challenging writing assignment as it is so other-worldly. She clearly sets forth the roles she has danced in such great ballets as Dancing at a Gathering. She describes the backstage of hair and makeup and a tutu that fits - a maternity tutu?

Heart of a Philanthropist would like to thank Family Christian bookstores for gifting us a copy of Dancing Through It in exchange for an honest review. This review was first seen on Heart of a Philanthropist blog. Jenifer was a ten year old ballet dancer. Her sister was a pianist. The family didn't demand excellence, but they did take pride in their daughters' talent. Mrs. Ringer drove Jenifer to NYC to try out for ballet school. She was accepted full scholarship. There was still the expense of living quarters. Jenifer's grandma paid for five weeks of hotels so that Jenifer could have this prestigious opportunity. Ironically, Jenifer's family had a job transfer to NY. So, they sold their cars, and moved into an apartment with a doorman. Most everything was within walking distance and what was a bit farther was a taxi cab call away. Jenifer worked hard in school and graduated early so she could further her ballet studies. She went to a highschool for professional children to accomplish her goals. At sixteen she was accepted to the New York City Ballet as an apprentice. Within a year she was promoted to a full time dancer. There was little time for other activities besides school and dance. She soon stopped going to church, and her prayer life slowly began to dwindle. Along with her prayer life, her bodyweight shrunk. People called her too thin (ironic for a ballet dancer). She struggled between not eating to binge eating on a regular basis. For a ballerina, she was too large, and it began to affect her job. One of her employers went so far as to request she come to a separate half hour meeting to see if he was okay with her weight before giving her a job. Eventually Jenifer was fired from the ballet. That was her first year not dancing.

Through the high and lows of professional ballet, a woman comes of age and discovers her true worth and focus. Jenifer Ringer, recently retired from her long-time profession as principal with the New York City Ballet, was lovely and distinctive dancer, with an unusual warmth and graciousness. She had a strong classical ballet technique and an unshowy, unmannered presentational style. And her face was worthy of a beauty pageant. Now, having left the stage, she is faced with a major life

transition. On the basis of this memoir, her first book, she just might have a second career as a writer. What she has produced is both a coming of age story and a love story. Her book also deals with warm family relationships, with the dedication to an ideal that artistic pursuits require, and with failure and redemption. The common threads running through it all are dance and religious faith. In terms of dramatic narrative, the heart of the book is the emotional and spiritual crisis that overtook her as she emerged from late adolescence into womanhood. It nearly ruined her dance career and could well have left lasting scars. But she managed to pull out of it and to continue to perform. Indeed, she had a 25-year dance career. Because dancers must start training so young and must make important life decisions when they are little more than children, they face a unique paradox: as performers they carry responsibility that makes them worldly wise beyond their years, while at the same time they embark on a sheltered and single-minded existence, living in something of a cocoon. Thus they are both young and mature at the same time. Many years later, Ringer told an interviewer: "I was sixteen when I became a professional."

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