

Mr. B

author: Jennifer Homans

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Synopsis

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Arguably the greatest choreographer who ever lived, George Balanchine was one of the cultural titans of the twentieth century—the New York Times called him "the Shakespeare of dancing." His radical approach to choreography and life reinvented the art of ballet and made him a legend. Written with enormous style and artistry, and based on more than one hundred interviews and research in archives across Russia, Europe, and the Americas, Mr. B carries us through Balanchine's tumultuous and high-pitched life story and into the making of his extraordinary dances.

Balanchine's life intersected with some of the biggest historical events of his century. Born in Russia under the last czar, Balanchine experienced the upheavals of World War I, the Russian Revolution, exile, World War II, and the Cold War. A cofounder of the New York City Ballet, he pressed ballet in America to the forefront of modernism and made it a popular art. None of this was easy, and we see his loneliness and failures, his five marriages—all to dancers—and many loves. We follow his bouts of ill health and spiritual crises, and learn of his profound musical skills and sensibility and his immense determination to make some of the most glorious, strange, and beautiful dances ever to grace the modern stage.

Reader's comments

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