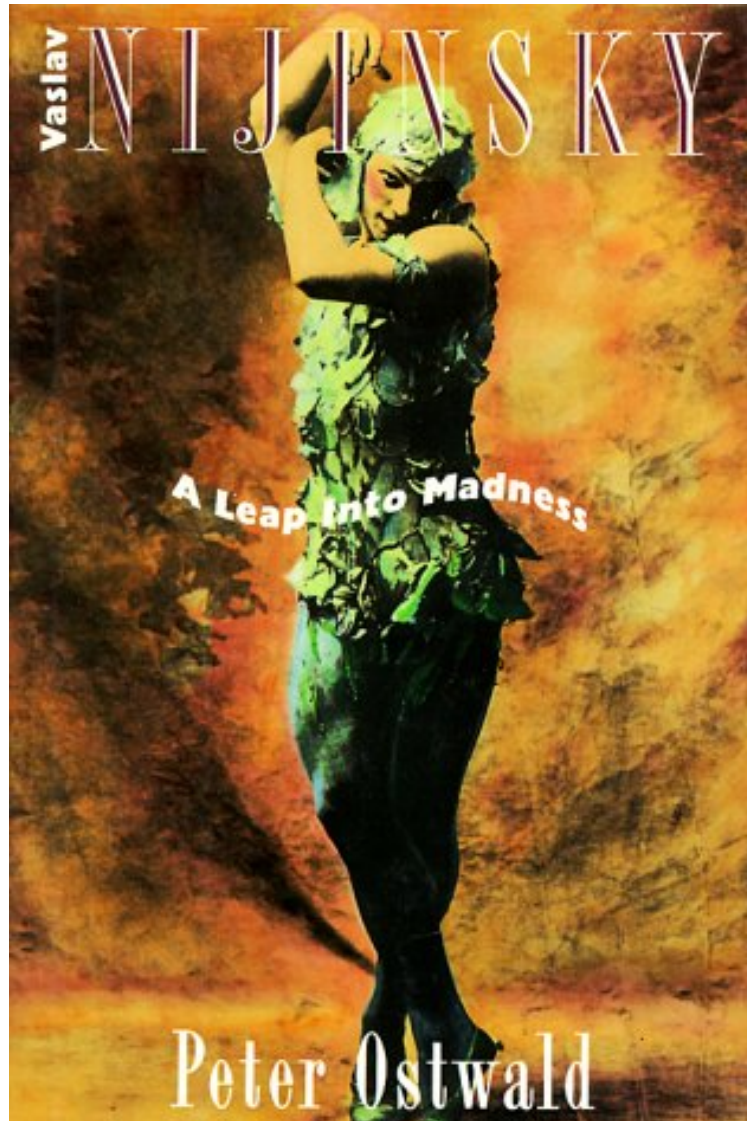


[FREE] Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap Into Madness

Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap Into Madness

Peter Ostwald

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dancer. Nijinsky was born in 1890 and was enrolled as a child at the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg. There he excelled in artistic subjects, but did badly in academic ones and behaved so badly that he was threatened with expulsion. As a person who was unaccustomed to sophisticated life he found it very difficult to adjust, furthermore he was by nature a rather shy and retiring young boy when he found himself patronized by people like Prince Pavel Lvov. Then followed his disastrous marriage to a Hungarian heiress and a series of unfortunate events like a fiasco in London, fracas during the first night of his ballet "Le sacre du printemps" and the outbreak of WW1. In those days there was not much the doctors could do for mental patients and when Nijinsky died in 1950 he had not been dancing for over thirty years. The tragic fate of this gifted dancer has been documented a number of times, but for the first time by a person who has insight in mental disorders. A handsome volume with interesting illustrations, two appendix of medical character, lavish notes and bibliography. 9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating and fully engrossing biography of Nijinsky! By Aimee Kinzler read this book from start to finish in a couple days it was so absorbing and fascinating. My heart was moved with compassion for this 'deeply disturbed' dancer. A great biography for anyone interested in human sociology and psychology!

Book by Ostwald, Peter

From Publishers Weekly Nijinsky (1890-1950) remains, by reputation, the outstanding male dancer of at least one century, and a pathbreaking choreographer as well. Yet his life dramatically demonstrates the uncertain line dividing genius and madness, as psychiatrist Ostwald (Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius) here shows. The "god of dance" spent 30 of his 61 years in the grip of infantile rages and catatonic withdrawal; neither Freud, institutionalization, sedation nor countless insulin shock-treatments could halt his increasing derangement. Using Nijinsky's own notebooks to augment the existing medical evidence, Ostwald examines the dancer's family history, the effects of his personal and professional subjection to Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev--his Svengali-like mentor and lover--and Nijinsky's troubled marriage to a woman perhaps nearly his equal in self-destructiveness. Medically thorough Ostwald undeniably is; his account is interesting at many points. Regrettably, though, this portrait of a savagely intense, erotically charged danseur is written with all the excitement of a doctor's report. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Unlike previous biographers, who focused primarily on Nijinsky's early and most creative years, Ostwald gives equal weight to the 30 years this great artist spent in mental institutions. With access to previously untapped medical records and archival documents, the author (himself a psychiatrist) provides a clinical insight into Nijinsky's troubled life and relationships. This emphasis is timely: since the Joffrey Ballet's stunning 1987 revival of Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, there has been an explosion of interest in the mind behind its choreographic genius. The text is a bit disjointed at times, perhaps because it contains information gleaned from so many varied sources, but Ostwald provides a heartbreaking view into the darker aspects of Nijinsky. - Sheila Riley, Smithsonian Inst. Libs., Washington, D.C. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.