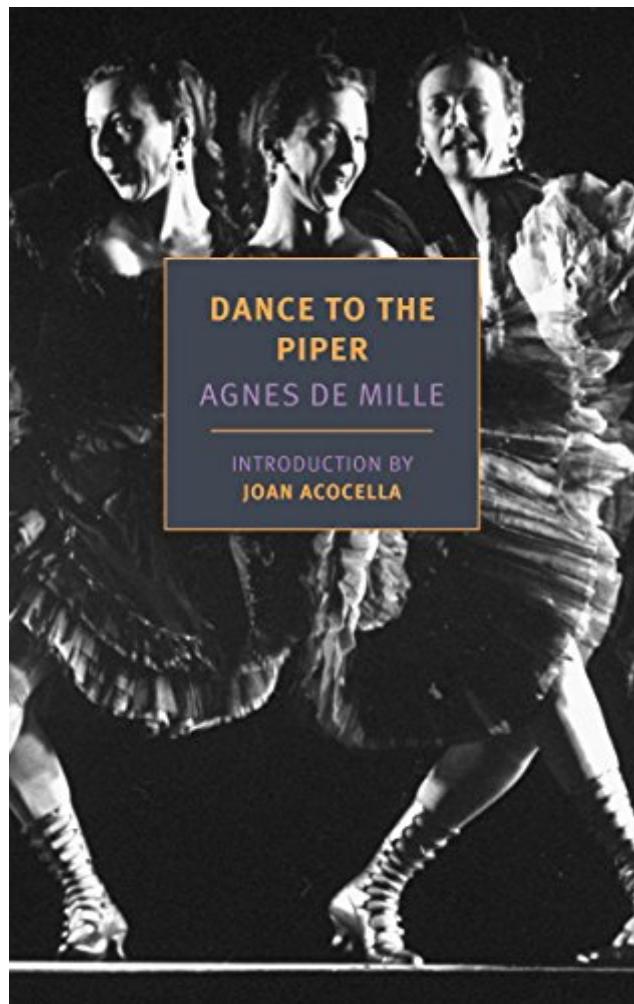


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Dance To The Piper (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

Born into a family of successful playwrights and producers, Agnes de Mille was determined to be an actress. Then one day she witnessed the Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova, and her life was altered forever. Hypnotized by Pavlova's beauty, in that moment de Mille dedicated herself to dance. Her memoir records with lighthearted humor and wisdom not only the difficulties she faced—“the resistance of her parents, the sacrifices of her training”—but also the frontier atmosphere of early Hollywood and New York and London during the Depression. “This is the story of an American dancer,” writes de Mille, “a spoiled egocentric wealthy girl, who learned with difficulty to become a worker, to set and meet standards, to brace a Victorian sensibility to contemporary roughhousing, and who, with happy good fortune, participated by the side of great colleagues in a renaissance of the most ancient and magical of all the arts.”

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Customer Reviews

Agnes de Mille writes extremely honestly about herself in this memoir, often self-deprecatingly. Her tremendous skill as a writer is evident from the start. She comes from a family of intellectuals: Father was William C. de Mille (playwright, writer and director) and uncle Cecil B. de Mille (renowned

producer-director). Her father and uncle built the name that is synonymous with movie making and production... Hollywood. The filming lots in those days were little more than scrub land with snakes wondering around the grass. She says of her father that: He was a display of intellectual pyrotechnics when speaking. And of her uncle: He was a delightful conversationalist and an exuberant raconteur, leaning on exaggeration. Not forgetting her mother, Mrs. de Mille, who also possessed a great intellect and was a tremendous influence on her. And that is where Agnes grew up. Amongst some of the most famous stars of the silent movie era and the talkies, surrounded by creativity and intellect. After meeting Anna Pavlova, in person (the famous ballerina of the period), Agnes decided that becoming a ballet dancer was her true calling. However, her lack of physical attributes needed for the art form impeded her progress. After much hard work, struggle and other avenues, she eventually turned to choreography. This is the best thing that could have happened. Most people may not know the name Agnes de Mille, but they would have seen her choreography without realising. Productions such as: Rodeo, Oklahoma, Carousel, Brigadoon and many more. Her style was unique, a blend of American, Modern and sprinkles of Classical. I was myself a principal ballet dancer in the UK and danced with The Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet.

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