



I, Maya Plisetskaya

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Maya Plisetskaya, one of the world's foremost dancers, rose to become a prima ballerina of Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet after an early life filled with tragedy and loss. In this spirited memoir, Plisetskaya reflects on her personal and professional odyssey, presenting a unique view of the life of a Soviet artist during the troubled period from the late 1930s to the 1990s.

Plisetskaya recounts the execution of her father in the Great Terror and her mother's exile to the Gulag. She describes her admission to the Bolshoi in 1943, the roles she performed there, and the endless petty harassments she endured, from both envious colleagues and Party officials. Refused permission for six years to tour with the company, Plisetskaya eventually performed all over the world, working with such noted choreographers as Roland Petit and Maurice Béjart. She recounts the tumultuous events she lived through and the fascinating people she met—among them the legendary ballet teacher Agrippina Vaganova, George Balanchine, Frank Sinatra, Rudolf Nureyev, and Dmitri Shostakovich. And she provides fascinating details about testy cocktail-party encounters with Khrushchev, tours abroad when her meager per diem allowance brought her close to starvation, and KGB plots to capitalize on her friendship with Robert Kennedy. Gifted, courageous, and brutally honest, Plisetskaya brilliantly illuminates the world of Soviet ballet during an era that encompasses both repression and cultural détente.

Still prima ballerina assoluta with the Bolshoi Ballet, Maya Plisetskaya also travels around the world performing and lecturing. At the Bolshoi's gala celebrating her 75th birthday, President Vladimir Putin presented her with Russia's highest civilian honor, the medal for service to the Russian state, second degree. Tim Scholl is professor of Russian language and literature at Oberlin College. Antonina W. Bouis is the prize-winning translator of more than fifty books, including fiction, nonfiction, and memoirs by such figures as Andrei Sakharov, Elena Bonner, and Dmitri Shostakovich.

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