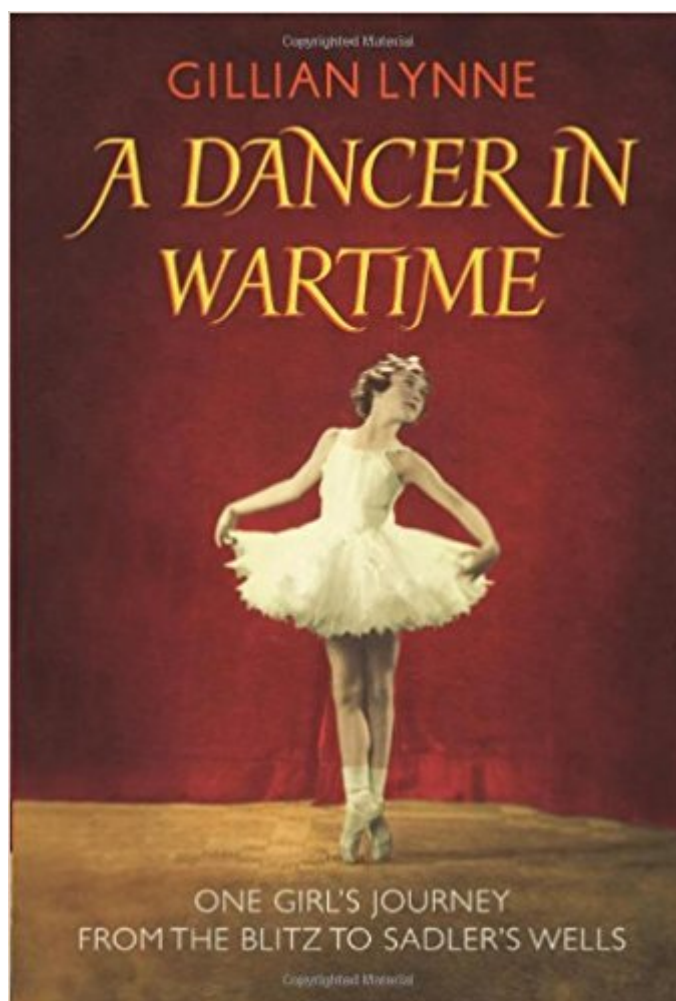


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A Dancer In Wartime: One Girl's Journey From The Blitz To Sadler's Wells



Synopsis

Gillian Lynne is one of the world's pre-eminent choreographers, the groundbreaking creative force behind blockbusters such as *Cats* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. But she started her career as a ballerina, leaning to dance alongside Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, Beryl Grey and Frederick Ashton during the WWII. *A Dancer in Wartime* tells the story of Gillian's extraordinary childhood from Miss Madeleine Sharp's Ballet Class for Young Ladies in Bromley, to being evacuated with her theatre school to rural Leicestershire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"I loved this book ... her energy, enthusiasm and passion are present in every line, and her commitment to the theatre and her determination to excel make for a fascinating and thoroughly absorbing read."
• Dame Monica Mason, Director, The Royal Ballet
"Gillian's journey through dance is a story of passion and devotion that should be read by everyone, not just dance lovers."
• Arlene Phillips

Gillian Lynne is a British ballerina, dancer, actor, theatre director, television director and choreographer, best known for her iconic choreography of *Cats* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. She continues to produce television, film and stage productions and lives in London.

The voice of this fine piece of non-fiction is a young girl and Gillian Lynne remarkably retains this childlike innocence through the story of her life. You believe that this girl loves and lives for the

chance to dance. It remains very fresh in the reading because of that. The pictures are so uniquely apt to the text; snap shots of the life of WW II Britain. I found reading this book very emotive probably because against all the odds (her mother dying months before bombs started to rained down on London) this child succeeds in her dream. Inspirational for all of us as we can feel the heart beat of talent rising like the elevation of the ballet dancer in her well worn toe shoes.

Excellent book.

i loved this book - terribly real and brought to life what it was like during war times, dedication and hard work brings results.

Gillian Lynne is a choreographer, who began her career as a ballerina. Her mother took her to the doctor as a child, feeling she was hyperactive. As the author says, if such a thing happened now she would undoubtedly be given a named condition, but, luckily for her, the doctor suggested dance class for all that excess energy. So, Jill (as she was then) headed for Miss Madeleine Sharp's class for young ladies at the Bell Hotel ballroom in Bromley. At ten, she won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dancing, but life was interrupted by the sad death of her mother in an accident (her supporter and greatest champion) in 1939 and then the outbreak of war, which led to her father being recalled to the army (he had also fought in WW1). Without her mother, Jill could not attend the Royal Academy for classes and ran away when evacuated. However, with the help of family members and the support of her father, she auditioned for the Cone Ripman school. This was a theatre school, strong in dance, but weak in other ares of the curriculum. Bombing meant the school had to move at least twice. A chance concert in London, led to her working with Molly Lake at the Ballet Guild. At the end of 1942 she gave up academic education for ever and was asked to change her name. A professional career was beckoning. This, then, is the story of one girl during wartime. A girl who dodged bombs to make her way across London from her aunts house to dance class. Who was often noticed and approached by those who recognised her talent - she was appalled when her aunt turned down an approach by Ninette de Valois to join her company (Sadler's Wells Ballet and Opera), but they agreed to wait until she was eighteen and ask again. In 1944 she did join Sadler's Wells and danced in the same company as Margot Fonteyn, where she went back to the bottom rung of the ladder and had to make her way up again. The company suffered along with the rest of the country - bad housing, rationing, broken sleep and danger. Yet, the author claims that her love of dance was so great that she felt no fear as she sat in trains waiting for the bombs to pass. The

company were dancing on stage when a doodlebug passed over them and they all stood, poised on stage and listening, until the explosion happened outside and they were able to breath again. There are also tours, to Belgium and France, and later to Germany, to entertain the British and American troops. The author was shocked at the devastation in Germany, despite having lived with bombing for so many years. This is a story told with no self pity and in a very no nonsense way, much as you imagine the author herself to be. She copes with everything life throws at her and simply gets on with things. It is a fascinating account of those years and of the dedication involved in becoming a dancer. At the end of the book you feel how proud her mother would have been of how far her daughter had come from those early dance lessons to the great dancer, and very sensible young lady, she had become. I read the kindle version of this book which did contain illustrations, but they were quite small and hard to see. If you feel that might be an issue, then you might prefer to buy the book. However, I really enjoyed it, felt privileged to read about this remarkable woman's life and recommend it highly.

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