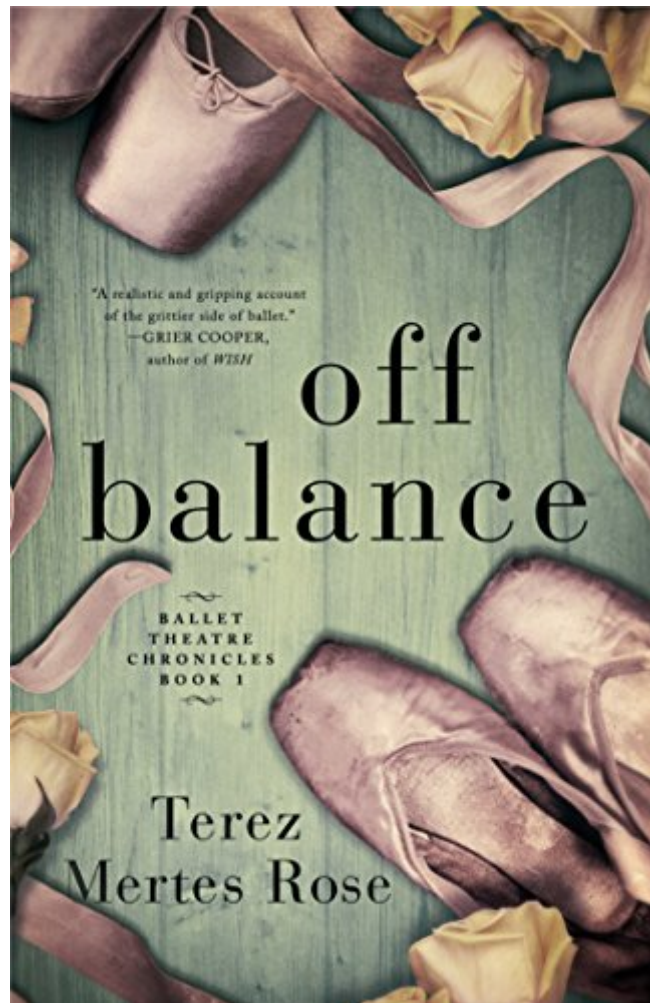




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Off Balance (Ballet Theatre Chronicles Book 1)



Synopsis

Alice thinks she's accepted the loss of her ballet career, injury having forced her to trade in pointe shoes onstage for spreadsheets upstairs. That is, until the day Alice's boss asks her to befriend Lana, a pretty new company member he's got his eye on. Lana represents all Alice has lost, not just as a ballet dancer, but as a motherless daughter. It's pain she's kept hidden, even from herself, as every good ballet dancer knows to do. Lana, lonely and unmoored, desperately needs some help, and her mother, back home, vows eternal support. But when Lana begins to profit from Alice's advice and help, her mother's constant attention curdles into something more sinister. Together, both women must embark on a journey of painful rediscoveries, not just about career opportunities won and lost, but the mothers they thought they knew. OFF BALANCE takes the reader beyond the glitter of the stage to expose the sweat and struggle, amid the mandate to sustain the illusion at all cost.

Advance Praise for OFF BALANCE"Any readers who have ever grappled to find the courage to strengthen or to soften, to embrace a dream or to let go of one, will find themselves rooting for the two willful, yet wounded, protagonists in Terez Mertes Rose's edgy debut, OFF BALANCE. I loved this exquisitely written, fast-paced novel from the first page to the last." -- Sandra Kring, bestselling author of The Book of Bright Ideas

"The demands of the stage or memories of it bring two lifelong dancers into an unlikely friendship that helps them face their respective breaking points. Powerfully rendered, sensuously artistic and hauntingly beautiful, OFF BALANCE is on track to become one of my favorite reads of the year." -- Tara Staley, author of Need to Breathe and Conditions are Favorable"... A realistic and gripping account of the grittier side of ballet." -- Grier Cooper, author of Wish

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Customer Reviews

This is a very entertaining ballet novel that is accessible for those outside of the ballet world while not being condescending for ballet insiders. As someone who has danced, I enjoyed reading a ballet novel from an author that can actually describe a ballet combination accurately (again, without leaving those unfamiliar feeling lost) and who understands that there are more than one cast for ballets. Its plot explores the dynamic between a former dancer, Alice, whose career was cut short by injury, who still grapples with the pain of having left dance behind her, and a young rising company star, Lana, amidst the backdrop of company politics, individual romances, and richly drawn supporting characters. While it can be difficult to manage successful relationships between two female protagonists without falling into cliques, Mertes Rose does this well by providing both Alice and Lana with well-rounded stories of their own with which to interact as whole people. While I felt that some descriptions of the musical passages may have included a bit more detail than necessary, overall the novel was an interesting, engaging read that I would highly recommend--even for non-dance lovers. It is a page-turner; I finished it in one night. I look forward to seeing more from this author.

I was going to take a break from posting reviews for a couple of days, in order to avoid burning myself and everyone else out, but in a stunning display of my basic nature as an over-achiever, I just pledged to read and review 200 books on Goodreads this morning. Whether that was an act of unrealistic hubris or completely justified self-confidence will be revealed in the coming months. Meanwhile I guess I'd better get on with it. I received a review copy of "Outside the Limelight," the second book in this series, and I liked it so much that I went out and bought this, the first book in the series. In it we meet Alice, a former dancer who was forced to retire from the stage and switch to

administration after being hit with a terrible injury just as her career was really starting to take off, and Lana, who has just been hired by WCBT as a soloist and is struggling to adjust to leaving her family behind and moving from Kansas City to San Francisco. The relationship between the women starts off rocky, but they find themselves helping each other through hard times when no one else seems to be able to stand by them. The author is a former dancer herself, and there is plenty of dance-related detail for those of us who enjoy that kind of thing, but at its heart this is a story about mothers and daughters and growing up and friendship between women. Alice and Lana are both multi-dimensional, struggling characters who undergo major metamorphoses over the course of the book, as they learn to face their own issues and gain some understanding for those around them who are dealing with different things (e.g., Lana is from a close-knit but poor Midwestern family and had to work as a maid to pay for her ballet shoes, while Alice has always been comfortably off but lost her mother as a child). The book straddles the line between genre and literary fiction, and, in my opinion, embodies the best of both worlds: while it's comparatively short and written in a simple, straightforward prose style, it also explores complex internal and interpersonal dynamics. I found it a quick, easy read with plenty of "candy" in the form of descriptions of handsome men and gorgeous dance productions, but it's still a wholesome, nourishing dish, not mental junk food. A really enjoyable read that I would recommend to anyone interested in reading "women's fiction," romance, "dance lit," or just a fun, entertaining book.

In this book, a work of fiction, are some realistic looks into the world of ballet: the exercises, the physical discomforts, debilitating injuries, the demanding rehearsals, strict choreographers, crazy schedules, professional jealousies, short-lived accomplishments and self-lingering disappointments, etc. There's even a look into the administrative side of this great art: the meetings, the schmoozing with hopes of receiving the necessary financial backing. All of this is offered to readers from a reliable source: the author, Terez Mertes Rose, a former ballet dancer. These are things that the fan of ballet doesn't often see or hear about. What we usually get is the final product - the actual show; and the actual show we also get to attend in this book. The author also takes us on a journey into the private lives of the characters. This part most of us can relate to: the struggle to make ends meet financially, the friendships, the occasions of manipulation, the struggles with family, the joys, the sorrows, romance, and trying to balance it all with work. I suppose that's why this book is titled "Off Balance" - a clever title, especially when the work portion of this quaking life is the art of dance. I think this book is very well-written and was able to enter into that part of my brain that creates fantasies. I've never been to a ballet rehearsal, but after reading this book I feel like I have. I've

never attended a soiree hosted by a billionaire in his mansion, but I was there, looking around at the decor, the expensive artwork, drinking cocktails, eating gourmet food, watching an intimate performance of classical music, conversing with people whose lives are very different from mine, and yes...a behind locked doors usage of cocaine...okay, for that part I was just an innocent bystander :-)) If you happen to be a person who likes to broaden your horizons, believing that one can learn something new everyday, this book may offer the opportunity. I'm a fan of ballet but am completely unfamiliar with its lingo. The author uses real ballet vocabulary to describe dance movements/steps. Whenever I came across them during my reading, I paused, went online to look them up to learn what is being described, to get the image in my head. Now I have added some knowledge to my fandom. There's also some untranslated French dialogue in this book initiated by the story's resident Frenchman Denis (de-NEE). Thus, if the French language is "all Greek to you" it could be fun to pull up the Google Translator, for example, and get comfortable with Denis. If there's a criticism to be made about this book, for me personally, I lost sleep because I did a fair amount of reading it when I went to bed, retiring for the night. I was fascinated by the storyline and found it more compelling than sleep. I will definitely be purchasing volume 2 of the "Ballet Theatre Chronicles" titled: "Outside the Limelight".

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