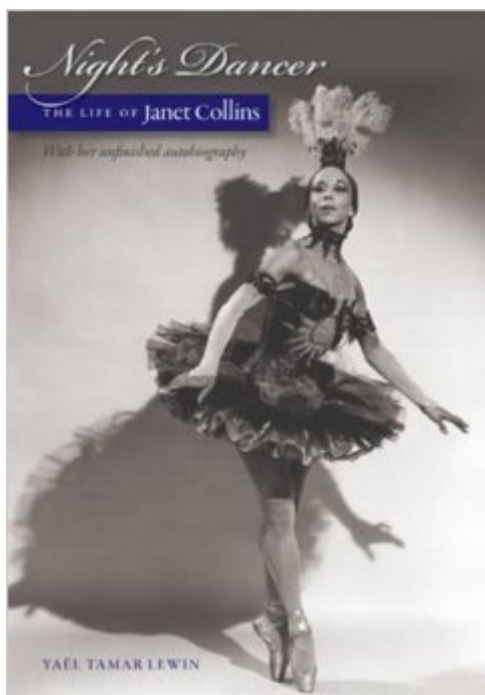


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# Night's Dancer: The Life Of Janet Collins



## Synopsis

Winner of the The Marfield Prize / National Award for Arts Writing (2011) Dancer Janet Collins, born in New Orleans in 1917 and raised in Los Angeles, soared high over the color line as the first African-American prima ballerina at the Metropolitan Opera. *Night*™s Dancer chronicles the life of this extraordinary and elusive woman, who became a unique concert dance soloist as well as a black trailblazer in the white world of classical ballet. During her career, Collins endured an era in which racial bias prevailed, and subsequently prevented her from appearing in the South. Nonetheless, her brilliant performances transformed the way black dancers were viewed in ballet. The book begins with an unfinished memoir written by Collins in which she gives a captivating account of her childhood and young adult years, including her rejection by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Dance scholar Ya-*l* Tamar Lewin then picks up the thread of Collins's story. Drawing on extensive research and interviews with Collins and her family, friends, and colleagues to explore Collins's development as a dancer, choreographer, and painter, Lewin gives us a profoundly moving portrait of an artist of indomitable spirit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Months before Janet passed away, she phoned me to express her excitement in finding someone to help her write her biography. Being her close friend for a number of years and knowing how easily persuaded she could be by an honest face and sweet words, I immediately became cautious and protective even though I am some twenty years younger. I quizzed her about this newly found "friend" - who she was, where'd she come from, what's her background and on and on. Janet was

truly pleased with this Yael Lewin and it turned out that Janet was totally right. (I can just hear and see Janet saying to me through a beautiful smile "I told you so my doubting Thomas!") I have just finished reading this truly fascinating, honest and dramatic work Ms. Lewin has written. I personally had trouble with parts of the book as I had been there and had to relive many things that were difficult to see and feel the first time around let alone to read them in print. I couldn't imagine someone knowing Janet for what might be termed a relative short while compared to those of us who had known her for years, but the writer was amazing and able to see and write about this brilliant dancer, this brilliant human being with all her mercurial moods, fears, strengths and especially her sense of humor. Let me tell you how worried I was when I knew that I would be in parts of this book and I wondered how this stranger could create the love, the passion, the sadness and the honesty that ruled Janet Collins and her life. Ms. Lewin was completely accurate in introducing the 'public' Janet Collins to us as well as the private Janet Collins. Janet would be so pleased. I can just hear her saying "Thank you Yael Lewin". IT'S A MUST READ FOR ANYONE, DANCER OR NOT, BLACK OR WHITE, ANYONE STRIVING TO ACCOMPLISH IN ANY FIELD - IT'S ALL THE SAME! Not only was Janet so very talented with her dancing and her painting, but she opened a door for so many. I miss her.

This is a beautifully written book. Many of us knew the name Janet Collins--that she had trained with Lester Horton, presented concert dances, and was prima ballerina with the Metropolitan Opera. But what was astounding was the discovery of her painting even as a teenager. The illustrations are amazing. And the extent to which she was praised during her dancing career seems absolutely unique. Congratulations to the author for a job well done--challenging indeed.

The moment I opened *Night Dancer* I felt invited into Janet Collin's life in an embracing and inclusive way. From an historical perspective it was a compelling reminder of how many dreadful obstacles gifted Black artists had to overcome in order to follow their passion. Lewin constructs a luminous palette that captures the richness and beauty of Janet Collins during a particularly sad time in the history of our country. In many ways Collin's made it look easy, but the texture and quality of the narrative creates a touching and fascinating story of a more complicated and human performer, artist, friend and loved one. Lewin has given us all a very special gift - Janet Collins and her extraordinary life.

Excellent book describing the journey of the 1st black ballerina at the Met. Janet Collins took the

pursuit of dance into the realm of excellence. Most people have no idea the athletic, artistic, marketing dedication it takes to have any career at all in a discipline that requires complete dedication due to the requirement of simply needing to rehearse with others unless it's a solo dance, (there's not many of those).

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