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Attitude!

Katharine Davis Fishman
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eight young dancers

come of age at the ailey school



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Katharine Davis Fishman : Attitude! before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Attitude!:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Nurturing GreatnessBy Kristin DiversThe Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre is probably the most successful modern dance company in the world. The Ailey School is housed in the same building as the compnay. Even so, it is very interesting to see how closely associated the two are. Intense time and attention are given to these young, unproven dancers, by people who truly know, understand, and nuture greatness in the dance world. What a gift! The author also looks into family and developmental traits present in young people

who have exceptional potential in the areas of sports, academics, and the other arts. It is a quick yet intriguing read.

A fascinating exploration of how artistic talent emerges and develops in the lives of teenagers. At an age when many kids flounder, what does it actually mean to pursue a passion? In *Attitude!*, Katharine Davis Fishman follows eight young dancers through a year of study at one of our nation's premier dance schools and reveals how, at The Ailey School, it's about "attitude"-a ballet term that dates back several hundred years, but also refers to that precious mettle we all need a little bit of to survive but best not exhibit too much of in order to succeed. Drawing on the literature of adolescence, socialization, and the development of talent, Fishman discovers a very special brand of determination possessed by these dancers. Providing a poignant window into their worlds, she traces the intricate connection between fierce commitment and innate ability. It is during the adolescent years that young people's ideas about their place in the world begin to crystallize. How is the experience different for teenagers who have organized their lives around honing a performing talent? *Attitude!* is for anyone interested in the world of dance, the psychology of talent, and the nature of adolescence in contemporary America.

From Publishers Weekly "Attitude" is both a dance position and a state of mind. According to journalist Fishman (*Behind the One-Way Mirror: Psychotherapy and Children*), dancers need both technique and determination to succeed as professionals. Fishman spent a year at one of the nation's top dance academies to observe eight gifted students and try to ascertain why some, and not others, go on to pursue dance careers. The students, both boys and girls, are from the East Coast and West, gay and straight, naturally talented and hard workers all united by their love of movement. Fascinated by what exactly it takes to succeed professionally in the arts, Fishman writes about the dancers' families, the Ailey School faculty and the psychology of the dancers themselves: how do they handle victories, failures, weight issues and injuries? Fishman unknits the question: how much does success depend on talent and how much on motivation? While she cites research on the development of gifted teenagers from authorities such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Howard Gardner, Fishman doesn't offer definitive answers. But the questions are fascinating. And she portrays the students, whose lives she follows, with sensitivity and respect. Bw photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Fishman's interest in the mystique surrounding those who have a unique talent led her to the Ailey School in New York, connected to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, where she followed eight students for a year. Also periodically interviewing their teachers and parents, she came away with a good picture of what motivates these Fame look-alikes. Classes at one of several arts-oriented high schools until early afternoon, a long bus ride to Ailey, dance classes until 6:00, perhaps some office work, and finally a long bus ride home: this was the usual routine, not including seven hours on Saturday and rehearsals prior to performances. Teachers agree that the most important ingredients for success are the desire to make dance the "center of their lives" as well as the ability to move with attitude, or "wild abandon." Fishman addresses weight and injury problems, the racial factor at Ailey, and the ever-present question of the sexuality of male dancers; in so doing she opens a fascinating window onto the world of these exceptional yet normal teenagers. Deborah Donovan Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. About the Author Katharine Davis Fishman is the author of *Behind the One-Way Mirror: Psychotherapy and Children*. She has written for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *New York, Town Country*, *Lingua Franca*, and numerous other magazines.