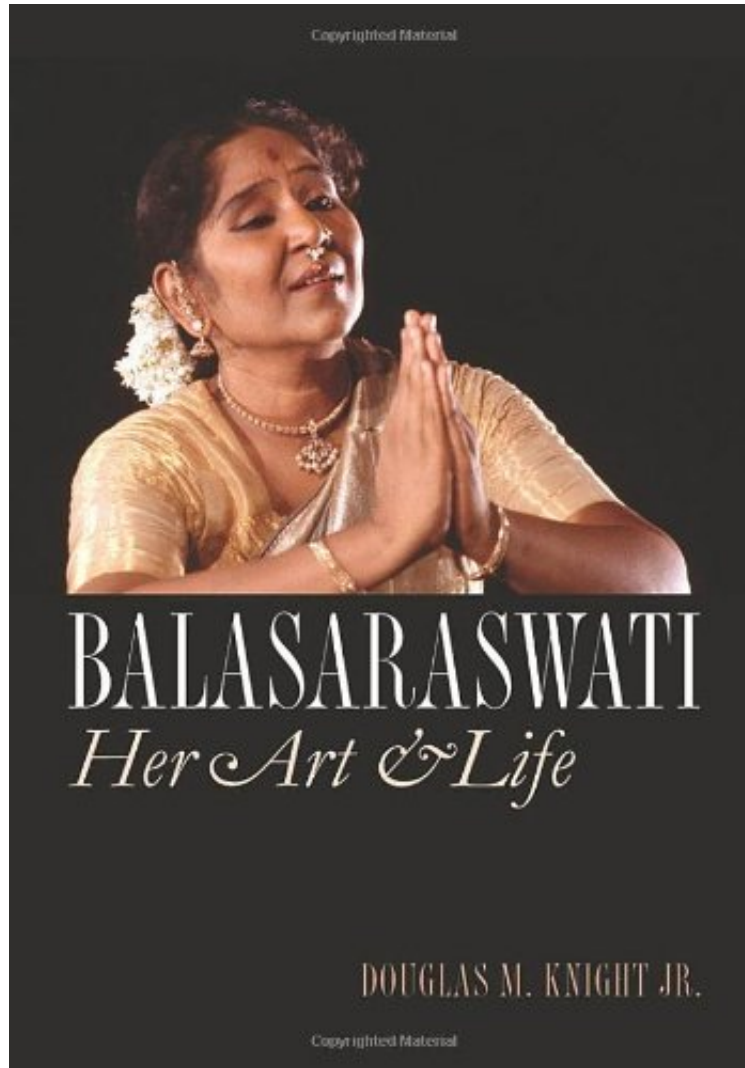


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Balasaraswati: Her Art and Life (The Driftless Series)

Douglas M. Knight Jr.
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Douglas M. Knight Jr. : Balasaraswati: Her Art and Life (The Driftless Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Balasaraswati: Her Art and Life (The Driftless Series):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great introduction the Artist and Bharathanatyam By rpv This is an excellent biography of Balasaraswati who was one of the exponents of Bharathanatyam. My daughter told this book should have 6 stars! It takes the reader through the early life of Balasaraswati. her ascend to become one of the foremost dancers. Her abhinaya was one of the best as per her critics. The biography is written by Douglas Knight who is her son in law. The book also explains the art form at her era. Early life in Madras, life with Veenai Dhanammal, Brinda/Mukhta, are explained in detail. Goes into details of her family life. She spend lot of time in US where she

popularized the art form. Bharathanatyam is a dance form which originated in South India and widely popular now in India, US and otehr parts of the world. If you are interested in Bharathanatyam, this book is for you. People interested will read it in one stroke. The book has many rare photographs of vintage quality and it is a treasure for any art collector. I am completely satisfied and it should definitely belong to library of any art lover, not only people interested in Indian dance forms. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Caste and Corruption in Indian Dance Scene By Arul Selvi Ramiah A must read for any Indian or Western dancer on the role of misguided arts policy and parochial politics in marginalizing a country's national treasure. This is a rare insider's look at the corrupt world of Bharatanatyam. Stripped of its romantic overtones the various anecdotes allude to how caste, money and Brahminical connections eventually trumped mastery, artistry and traditional dance systems as embodied by Balasaraswati. This is a tale about a woman who had great talent and mastery but who could not rise to the top of the game in India and attract the level of national and international recognition she truly deserved. This book pays homage to a very important artist and places her critical contributions in the correct historical context. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A remarkable book By Priya DI loved it as soon as I tore open the package it arrived in. It is hard not to judge the book by its beautiful, glossy black cover. The stunning front-page photo of Balasaraswati, in a way, conveys more about the dancer than the entire book. Another thing I loved (most predictably) was the author's note on the translations and transliterations from Tamil to English. The preface is pretty much a brief summary of the entire book, and a look at Balasaraswati through the author's individual perspective (throughout the rest of the book the author stays clear of that personal touch.) The book is long and the size can be intimidating. If I didn't have to review it within seven days, I would have spent months reading it at leisure. That being said, it was hard to pull my eyes away from the book. The descriptions, the imagery is so surreal. It almost made me guilty that I wasn't as informed about the culture and traditions of my own country. All non-English phrases or concepts are explained in the book wherever they appear - and more information is given in the extensive (and thoroughly fascinating) Glossary at the end. I guess that's what makes the book so much more special; you don't have to be a student of Dance to understand it. The language, of course, is wonderful. The book tells us not only about Balasaraswati's life but about the political and social conditions in the India of the 1800s and early 1900s, the evolution of Bharatanatyam and other forms of art, and many other renowned artists of her time. The fine detail makes you feel like you're living history. It is hardly possible for a biography to get all the facts right, not to mention be completely impartial, especially when it is written by someone closely related to the person. I am hardly qualified to judge whether all the facts are correct. What I do believe, however, is that while this may not be a completely true account, it is a very honest account of the artist's life. It is difficult to do justice to a legend or fit such a glorious life in only three hundred pages. It is apparent that a lot of effort and research was required to write this book, and frankly, the result is commendable. The only thing that bothered me was the chronology of events; I had a hard time keeping up with what happened when. It's a must read for anyone interested in the arts, or anyone interested in getting to know one of the reasons India is known to have a 'rich tradition'! The book has inspired me to read more about India. According to my mother, reading about great people such as these, makes us feel pretty insignificant and thoroughly inspired at the same time; and it's true. If anything, I am going to make it a point to learn more about the history of Indian dance and music; if you happen to know me, you'd know that that is saying something.

This is the first complete biography of T. Balasaraswati (1918-1984), a dancer and musician from southern India who became recognized worldwide as one of the great performing artists of the twentieth century. In India she was a legend in her own time, acclaimed before she was thirty years old as the great dancer of traditional bharata natyam. Balasaraswati was a passionate revolutionary, an entirely modern artist whose impact was proclaimed by some of the most prominent figures in contemporary dance in India and the West. Her art and life defined the heart of a tradition. Her life story offers an extraordinary view of the enigmatic matrilineal devadasi community and traditional artistic practice from which modern South Indian dance styles have emerged. This deeply engaging biography draws together Balasaraswati's personal account of her life and her reflections on the process of making dance and music. It includes the commentary of family members and dozens of contemporaries from throughout her fifty-year career, revealing hereditary artistic values and conventions that have virtually disappeared in modern India. The book is generously illustrated with rare historical photos and a duotone gallery of distinguished photographers' images of Balasaraswati dancing. Hardcover is un-jacketed.

This handsome book is to be cherished. Doris Hering, *Dance Magazine*