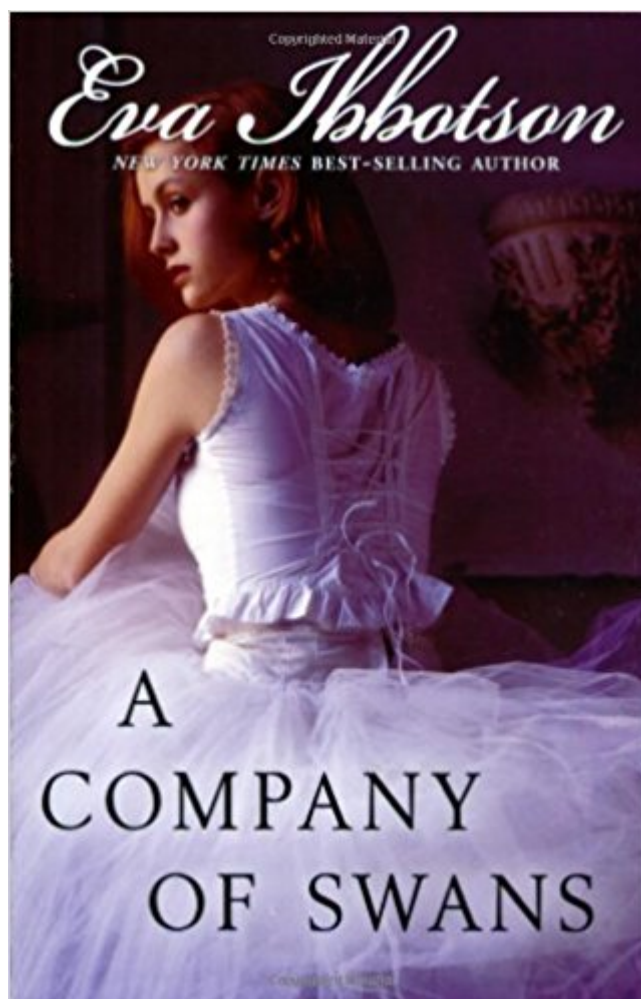


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A Company Of Swans



Synopsis

Ballerinas and exotic rogues abound in this charming and lyrical historical romance for fans of Amanda Quick. For nineteen-year-old Harriet Morton, life in 1912 Cambridge is as dry and dull as a biscuit. Her stuffy father and her oppressive aunt Louisa allow her only one outlet: ballet. When a Russian ballet master comes to class searching for dancers to fill the corps of his ballet company before their South American tour, Harriet's world changes. Defying her father's wishes and narrowly escaping the clutches of the man who wishes to marry her, Harriet sneaks off to join the ballet on their journey to the . There, in the wild, lush jungle, they perform Swan Lake in grand opera houses for the wealthy and culture-deprived rubber barons, and Harriet meets Rom Verney, the handsome and mysterious British exile who owns the most ornate opera house. Utterly enchanted by both the exotic surroundings and by Rom's affections, Harriet is swept away by her new life, completely unaware that her father and would-be fiancé have begun to track her down. . . .

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

In 1912, Cambridge, Harriet Morton lives in an oppressive household with her dry, clutch-fist aunt and narrow-minded father. Like Anna (of *A Countess Below Stairs* by the same author), Harriet possesses the pure, luminescent quality that Ibbotson seems to favor in her leading females. Harriet's main joy in her life is her dancing lesson; she is offered a chance to become part of a troupe going to the s. She meets at a neglected Yorkshire mansion an endearing, odd little boy

named Henry that begs her to find The Boy; Henry is sure that The Boy is in the s and that he will save the ruined household. Struck with this serendipitous sign, Harriet takes the chance to follow her dream to the far-away land. We meet the bumbling, insensitive suitor, and the tempermental, aging ballerina; we meet Harriet's roommate and friend, Marie-Claude, a beauty who wants to open an inn by the mountains. Sometimes, the secondary characters can "break-or-make" a story; in this case, they perform their roles to perfection. Like all good books, the plot seems fairly simple until you explain it. I can't go into detail of who The Boy is (surely you must have guessed anyway!) but I will leave in mystery WHO he has become and WHY he is where he is. It wouldn't be fair to compare this book to *A Countess Below Stairs*, which is what I incline to do. This one is longer, and sometimes does drag on; the agonizing love of Anna and Rupert is not repeated because *A Company of Swans* is lighter, and more suited to convention (which you will recognize if you've been a long-time romance reader). There is a villain, but unlike the bloodthirstiness in "modern" historicals (is that an oxymoron?) she does not receive her comeuppance as one is used to.

This book is not hard to find used or at a public library. Otherwise, I would hate to get anyone's hopes up. There is nothing worse than saying, "I just read a fabulous book and you will never be able to find it yourself." This novel is set in Europe and South America in the early 20th century before WWI, a time period I would like to see used more frequently. The heroine, Harriet, meets a little boy at an English estate who tells her she must somehow travel to South America and find his lost uncle to redeem his faltering estate. Harriet enters a touring ballet company of "Swan Lake" as a dancer in the corps by running away from the stifling home of her father-professor in Cambridge, England. The troupe travels to South America to perform and there she meets the hero, Rom, the lost uncle. There are some amazing coincidences in this book that you might not accept in a lesser work. There are also some big misunderstandings between Harriet and Rom. However, this novel is so well written by its Viennese author that those plot devices cause no annoyance whatsoever. The author's writing style is quite distinct from an American's or a UK writer's style which I found a refreshing change since those two writing groups tend to dominate the market. There are also many humorous moments and characters that will have you LOL as you read. The prima ballerina and the insect professor, to name two, are absolutely hilarious. I am now trying to find this author's other novels, all of which seem to be out of print and I can only hope that I beat you other auction aficionados to the punch! Thanks to EP and LLF for recommending this over on an online message board. You couldn't have been more right about this novel.

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