



# Dancing in Petersburg: The Memoirs of Mathilde Kschessinka

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## **Dancing in Petersburg: The Memoirs of Mathilde Kschessinka** Mathilde Kschessinka

There have been wonderful books about dancing, and superbly evocative ones about old Russia: but here the two themes are fascinatingly wedded. For these are the memoirs of the prima ballerina assoluta of the imperial Russian ballet, Mathilde Kschessinska (the Princess Romanovsky-Krassinsky), with whom, at her first appearance, the Tsarevitch Nicholas fell in love. As a dancer she had few rivals: apart from her marvellous technique she had a star personality, and was adored by the public. At the height of her fame she appeared in London with Diaghilev's company and danced with Nijinsky: she preferred, however, to dance in Russia, and for twenty years she was the adored darling of the great world of Petersburg. After the Revolution, when she was living as an emigre in the South of France, Diaghilev begged her to dance for him in his new Paris season, but to no avail. Kschessinska's memoirs fall roughly into three parts: the glittering fairy-story of her life as prima ballerina in Russia; her flight during the Revolution; and the era in which she established herself as a teacher of the highest rank. It is an extraordinary self-revelation of a great dancer and an utterly human person.

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