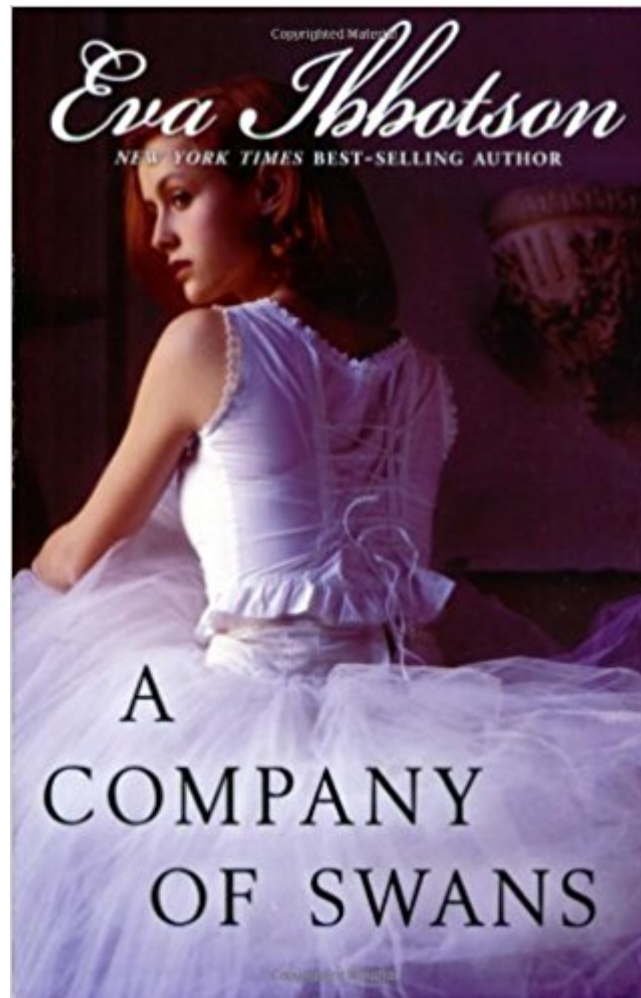




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A Company Of Swans



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

Eva Ibbotson, born Maria Charlotte Michelle Wiesner (21 January 1925 – 20 October 2010), was an Austrian-born British novelist, known for her children's books. Some of her novels for adults have been successfully reissued for the young adult market in recent years. For the historical novel *Journey to the River Sea* (Macmillan, 2001), she won the Smarties Prize in category

9
At 11 years, garnered unusual commendation as runner up for the Guardian Prize, and made the Carnegie, Whitbread, and Blue Peter shortlists. She was a finalist for the 2010 Guardian Prize at the time of her death. Her last book, *The Abominables*, was one of eight books on the longlist for the same award in 2012. The following interview appeared in the Fall 2001 Preview Magazine.

Do you have any rituals? I can write anywhere if I have to because I still use a pen and paper -, but when I am at home I go to the old carved desk I inherited from my mother who was a writer too, and told some fantastic stories. The morning is best for ideas, and I have to be wearing warm clothes because when I am thinking hard I get cold. And I have to have a waste paper basket handy for all the pages that have gone wrong.

Whom do you share your writing with first? I don't really share my work until it is published, I feel too uncomfortable about unfinished work.

When did you know you wanted to be a writer? I don't think I ever knew, it just happened. One day I wrote 'author' in my passport and that was that.

What were you doing when you found out that your first book was going to be published? Cooking supper for my husband and children. My agent phoned and I shouted and we all danced about, except my husband who saw to it that the sauce did not burn.

What did you treat yourself to when you found out that your first book was accepted for publication? My first money as a writer came from a short story in a magazine. It was a very small sum, and I bought Mars Bars for everybody in the family.

What was the first book you remember reading as a child? Did you have a favorite book as a child? I don't remember the name of my first book, but I know it had a picture of very bright berries, green and red in a forest- and people lived inside the berries... Perhaps that's where my passion for forests comes from!

Do you read reviews of your own work? Yes, when I am sent them, but I don't go out and look.

What's the best question a teen has asked about your writing? I don't know what the best question is, but by far the most common is 'Where do you get your ideas from?' - and the answer to that is very difficult (and therefore interesting).

What are you reading right now? *The Wizard of Earthsea*, by Ursula Le Guin. Susan, your editor, tells me *Journey to the River Sea* is a book you've wanted to write for years. How did the idea first come to you? *Journey to the River Sea* was written quite quickly but it spent years and years inside my head. It started with my hearing about this fabled opera house a thousand miles from the mouth of the and I thought it was one of the strangest things I had ever heard - I meant to go there and see for myself but then I realised it would mean going back into the past because everything is quite different there now. So I went on reading and dreaming and researching and then one day, I picked up my pen to start a new book about witches and ghosts and found I had started to write an adventure story set in the jungle.

I was very disappointed because I had hopes this would be a good story well written by a well known author. She uses far too many metaphors and references to literature and mythology that don't push the plot along. I got bogged down in so much comparisons to whatever I lost interest. Very disappointing.

There were a few scenes that were wonderfully surprising and delighting. I found myself amazed and laughing out loud when I thought about those scenes later. However, I was disappointed to find the author used one of my pet peeves. The hero and heroine made erroneous assumptions about each other that would have been cleared up if only they had communicated in a normal manner. They loved each other and wanted to marry, but each one thought the other did not. Therefore, they separated. I hate this. I wanted to rate this 5 stars due to creativity and ideas I haven't seen elsewhere, but I'm giving it a 4, due to the reasons for the separation. I was also a bit sad at the end thinking about the evil done to Harriet by her father and aunt. CAUTION SPOILERS: Following are brief references to two wonderful scenes. Page 203, after seeing Harriet dance, Alvarez decides to do something he previously was not going to do. Page 233, Harriet's unbelievable delight in describing herself as "ruined" after she sleeps with Rom. Sexual language: none. Number of sex scenes: none. Sexual subject matter: Although there are no specific sex scenes, there are some discussions about or references to sex. Setting: 1912 England and River in Brazil. Copyright: 1985. Genre: historical romance.

I very much enjoy this author and especially this book. I read it before, lost it, and repurchased it to read again.

I am a sentimentalist: I admit it. This book appealed strongly to my romantic, sappy side. It was also very funny in places, especially the "Table Dancing" incident that upset a few reviewers. Ibbottson is delightful when she describes music, and ballet plays a major role in this tale. The side characters are loopy, obsessed with trivia, or just plain funny. The part of the book set in the is moving, touching and well written. One of Ibbottson's great books. Try *A Countess Below Stairs* next if you like this one.

I will be the first to say that the events of this novel would never happen in real life. The timing is too perfect, the coincidences too outlandish, the characters perhaps too black and white to be entirely believable, but it is still a truly lovely story. Taking place in an age appropriately termed "The Gilded

Era", we see both the surface beauties and the realities that lay behind them. Human foibles and frailty, but with the hope and magic of a Fairytale. I come back to this novel often, and I always finish it with a smile on my face.

Eva Ibbotson's *A Company of Swans* is such a great book to read. Any reader would be absorbed in this story because it so richly combines the elements that every reader wants to have in a novel. Ibbotson so smoothly combines ballet, youthful longing, adventure in the , and history that we are "there" in the moment. Her writing is so evocative that we are captured by her protagonist in the first few paragraphs of her book. We are entirely seized by the time period and able to experience the protagonist's joys and pains as she takes the major step to be free of her oppressive father and aunt. The detail in this novel is magical and beautiful as it focuses upon the depressing physical demand of the ballet and the same demands that are made of young girls of this time period. Like Ibbotson's *Song for Summer* there is amazing texture and detailed characters that live beyond the pages of her book. A very good read that makes you long for the days that the book takes place.

This was my first Eva Ibbotson book and after reading it I sought out as many of her adult books as I could find. She writes within a historical background. What a treasure! A wonderful, whimsical writing style, highly literate with a delightful sense of irony and humor. Too bad she is no longer with us.

It started slow and I do believe at one point I actually asked my husband to poke out my eyes with a spoon, but goodness did I end up loving this book. Darling. The writing is quaint and lovely, and the characters perfection. I loved it. The romance was so sweet and to have a female lead with a brain? Delightful. Truly I was a bit desolate when it ended because I could no longer live in Ibbotson's world. I've read it again twice.

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