



Balasaraswati: Her Art and Life (The Driftless Series)

Douglas M. Knight Jr.

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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's dancing.

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