



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



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Beauty and Grace - Prima Ballerinas

Many of us aspired to be ballerinas when we were little girls. We were mesmerized by the beauty and grace of female dancers. In this month's enewsletter, we profile two women who succeeded in that profession: Maria Tallchief and Suzanne Farrell.

A member of the Osage Tribe, Maria Tallchief was born on an Indian reservation in Oklahoma. She began music and dance lessons at age three. After high school and five full years of study, she joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. There, she achieved soloist status and danced many ballets. The great choreographer George Balanchine saw her dance, fell in love with her, and they married. She danced many roles each week in his Ballet Society; it was the organization that would become the New York City Ballet. In 1954, critic Walter Terry saw her perform in the world premiere of Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* and wrote: "Maria Tallchief, as the Sugar Plum Fairy, is herself a creature of magic, dancing the seemingly impossible with effortless beauty of movement, electrifying us with her brilliance, enchanting us with her radiance of being. Does she have any equals anywhere, inside or outside of fairyland? While watching her in *The Nutcracker*, one is tempted to doubt it."



Maria Tallchief

Tallchief retired in 1965 so that she could pass her love and respect for the art on to younger dancers. She became the artistic director and beloved teacher of the Chicago Lyric Opera Ballet in 1975. Later, she was the founder and artistic director of the Chicago City Ballet. Tallchief received the National Medal of the Arts in 1999 and has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Tallchief is credited with bringing about greater understanding and appreciation of Native Americans.



Suzanne Farrell

Suzanne Farrell also has very strong ties to choreographer George Balanchine. In 1961, she joined his New York City Ballet. During her 28 years on the stage, she danced a repertory of more than one hundred ballets, many of which were composed for her by Balanchine and others. Her numerous performances, her world tours, and her appearances in television and in movies have made her one of the most recognizable and highly esteemed artists of her generation. Since the fall of 2000, Farrell has been a professor at Florida State University. Suzanne Farrell - Elusive Muse (directed by Anne Belle and Deborah Dickson) was an Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary Film in 1997. The Suzanne Farrell Ballet is housed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

Beauty, grace and much hard work and athleticism - the life of a prima ballerina! We salute Maria Tallchief and Suzanne Farrell for their dedication to their art and the incredible artistry of their performances and their teaching that they have brought to the world.

Check out our web site for past editions of our newsletter, articles and columns written about Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America and historical women, book club discussion guidelines, educational resources, and more!

Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America

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