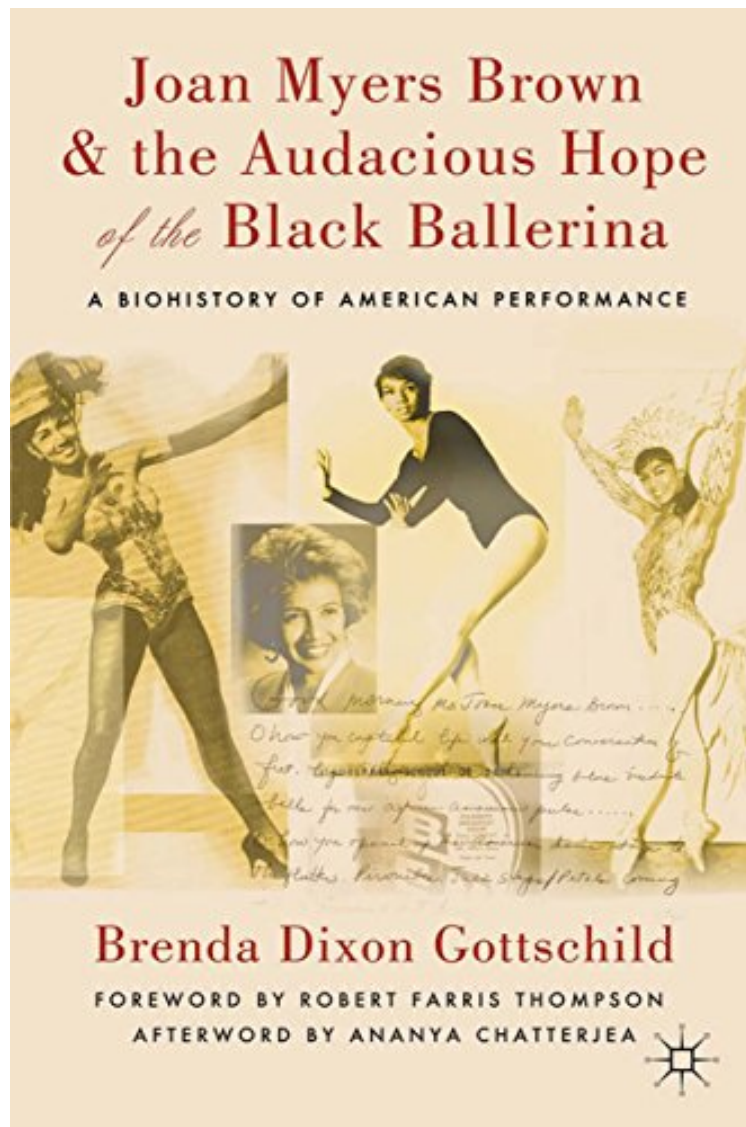


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Joan Myers Brown and the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina: A Biohistory of American Performance

Brenda Dixon Gottschild

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Brenda Dixon Gottschild : Joan Myers Brown and the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina: A Biohistory of American Performance before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joan Myers Brown and the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina: A Biohistory of American Performance:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Important HistoryBy Bonnie RosenstockIt's a terrific book, which I used to help me write up an article on black ballerinas.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An icon in the

modern dance world, Joan Myers Brown is a Philly legend. If only the typeface was easier to read. By Steve Ramm
In Philadelphia (where I live) Joan Myers Brown is a modern legend. Last year she celebrated her 80th birthday and the 40th Anniversary of PhilaDanco, the primarily-Black modern dance company. PhilaDanco's semi-annual weekend-long programs at Philly's Kimmel Center nearly always sell out well in advance. While I've been a big fan of Brown's dance troupe since near its beginning, I knew little about her, except that she formed a dance school in the city to train minority children and give them a place to perform. (Early performances were in a school auditorium in West Philly.) This book by Brenda Dixon Gottschild - a professor at Temple University - Tells the story of Brown's professional career, which began after she injured foot as a child and her mother sent her for dance lessons. She later went on the stage to perform on the cabaret circuit with artists like Sammy Davis Jr. Returning to Philly she formed the Philadelphia School of Dance and sought out creative collaborators like Robert Battles, Rennie Harris and Ronald K. Brown to create a true competitor to the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Company, which often overshadows PhilaDanco in image, but not in talent. You won't learn a lot about Brown's personal life in this book and don't be swayed by the "ballerina" in the title. Brown does train her students in ballet but she's best known for modern dance moves. The book is hefty and not always smooth reading. Gottschild is, after all, a college professor. And the 282 pages of basic text (there are Appendices and an Index as well) are deceiving in size. This book has a typeface that is not easy to read and one of the smallest size fonts I can remember seeing in a book recently. The book will appeal to anyone interested in dance culture as well as how a Black dancer succeeded in a mostly White dance world. I hope you found this review both helpful and entertaining. Steve Ramm "Anything Phonographic" 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A timely testament to a legendary role model. By Troy of AALBC . com Against the odds, Ms. Brown built her organization, The Philadelphia Dance Company, aka Philadanco a professional company for her top students who found themselves unwelcome at lily-white institutions still practicing racial discrimination, over the ensuing decades into a leading ensemble with an international reputation for excellence which simultaneously served as a career springboard for top artists of color. This phenomenal accomplishment is glowing recounted in Joan Myers Brown the Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina, a biography which actually is as much a an intimate memoir about an intrepid pioneer as it is a chronicle of the African-American struggle for civil rights during the 20th Century. Read the full review and more book reviews from AALBC.com on your Kindle Edition

Founder of the Philadelphia Dance Company (PHILADANCO) and the Philadelphia School of Dance Arts, Joan Myers Brown's personal and professional histories reflect the hardships as well as the advances of African-Americans in the artistic and social developments of the second half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries.

"Dixon Gottschild pays particular attention to those who worked before, alongside, and with her [namely, Joan Myers Brown] to create what is becoming her legacy. She does this deftly, with sophisticated prose that is just as familiar and accessible as it is intellectually sound." - Dance Research Journal "Brenda Dixon Gottschild brings a bracing mix of scholarship and unsentimental compassion to bear on the story of Joan Myers Brown, a classy, feisty, eminently pragmatic visionary whose life and dance company occupy a vivid and important place in the largely unexamined history of dance in Philadelphia. This book is an indispensable good-read about an individual and her epic fight to make a place for herself in a world that did not accept black-skinned dancers like her and then to build and maintain a major American dance company. But the book is much more. In the detail of the day-to-day work of being a dancer and developing dancers against the odds, so vividly evoked, too, in Myers Brown's pithy and unexpectedly poignant observations, Dixon Gottschild has captured the struggle of black Americans to help shape the culture of their country." - Jennifer Dunning, former dance critic, The New York Times "Joan's artistic accomplishments and contributions to the dance world occupy a special place in history. Generations of dancers have her to thank for the doors she opened. For years, I've appreciated her wisdom, enthusiasm, and support. Joan has been trailblazer in her professional life, and I feel fortunate to call her a friend." - Michael M. Kaiser, President, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts "What a wonderful book for a most creative woman! Brenda Dixon Gottschild, we thank you for letting us see a 'genius' at work." - Sonia Sanchez, Poet, Educator, Activist "Joan Myers Brown is a legend in the world of artistic dance. We now have her fascinating story for the world in Brenda Dixon Gottschild's brilliant book!" - Cornel West, Princeton University and author of Race Matters "Brenda Dixon Gottschild's biography of Joan Myers Brown is an audacious springboard for an exhaustive investigation into the racist social structures of 20th-century America that placed almost insuperable double binds on people of color. How 'JB' and the Philadelphia dance community coped with and surmounted class and color contradictions is a testament of enduring courage, resilience, and self-invention. With its eye-opening analysis of the interplay of skin tone, cultural aspirations, and social status exemplified in western classical dance, the book is not only a fascinating, poignant, and scholarly history, but reads like a house on fire." - Yvonne Rainer, Distinguished Professor of Studio Art, Performance, and History of Experimental Film, UC Irvine, and a founder of the Judson Dance Theater "Smoothly-written by our most accomplished chronicler of American dance and race politics, this essential volume demonstrates the impact black Americans have made in the performing arts against long odds. Brown's story will be familiar to every African

American girl who ever wanted to be a ballerina. Newly-mined documentation of the vibrant dance cultures of Philadelphia and the inner workings of Philadanco, the internationally-recognized modern dance company that Brown created to international acclaim, provide cogent context to understand dance, gender, and especially race in the American performing arts. Gottschild reveals a hidden history of black ballet crucial to understanding African American presence in contemporary dance." - Thomas F. DeFrantz, author of *Dancing Revelations: Alvin Ailey's Embodiment of African American Culture* and President, Society of Dance History Scholars "Audacious Hope, a critical analysis of the life and work of Joan Myers Brown, is a visionary study that breaks new ground in several ways: It provides a much-needed history of the development of dance in Philadelphia, examining its unique racism as well as the more general racist values espoused by the entire country. It integrates oral history with a more general portrait of the community and its sense of identity, offering a commanding overview of the changing beliefs around African-American identity and rights from the 1940s to the present. It details the vital relationship between a company, Philadanco, and its school and the staff who administer both. It shows how there are no rigid boundaries between the worlds of concert dance and entertainment and social dance productions. And it provides a brilliant analysis of the motivations on the part of African American middle class to assimilate white culture but also to adapt it and make it their own. As in her other works, Dixon-Gottschild gives us a deeply thoughtful and complex rendering of the participation of dance in the formulation of identity and community, one that also provides a powerful revisionist focus on the importance of Philadelphia in the formation of concert dance in the U.S." - Susan Leigh Foster, Distinguished Professor, Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, UCLA "In telling the story of Philadanco, Brenda Dixon Gottschild not only brings a dance company's history and vibrant present to life, she thoughtfully and insightfully discusses the ethos of Philadelphia, the lifestyles of its black community, changing race relations, and the decades-ago experiences of African Americans who, like Philadanco's spunky founder-director, Joan Myers Brown, aspired to be ballet dancers." - Deborah Jowitt, dance critic and historian, and author of *Jerome Robbins: His Life, His Theater, His Dance* From the Publisher With 46 illustrations! About the Author Author Brenda Dixon Gottschild: Brenda Dixon Gottschild, author of *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance*, *Waltzing in the Dark*, and *The Black Dancing Body*, is Professor Emerita of Dance Studies at Temple University, USA, and a former senior consultant and writer for *Dance Magazine*. She lectures nationally and internationally, using her own dancing/thinking body to illustrate her ideas and blur the division between practice and theory. She is the recipient of the 2013 Scholar Award from the International Association of Blacks in Dance.