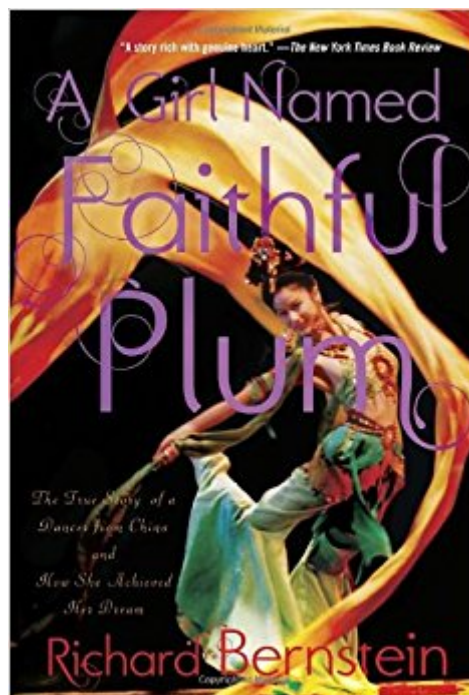


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A Girl Named Faithful Plum: The True Story Of A Dancer From China And How She Achieved Her Dream



Synopsis

In 1977, when Zhongmei Lei was 11 years old, she learned that the prestigious Beijing Dance Academy was having open auditions. She'd already taken dance lessons, but everyone said a poor country girl would never get into the academy, especially without any connections in the Communist Party of the 1970s. But Zhongmei, whose name means Faithful Plum, persisted, traveled for three days and two nights to get to Beijing and eventually beat out 60,000 other girls. But getting in was easy compared to staying in, as Zhongmei soon learned. Without those all-important connections, she was just a little girl on her own, far away from family. But her determination, talent, and sheer force of will were not something the teachers or other students expected, and soon it was apparent that Zhongmei was not to be underestimated. Zhongmei became a famous dancer, and founded her own dance company, which made its New York debut when she was in just her late 20s. In *A Girl Named Faithful Plum*, her husband and renowned journalist, Richard Bernstein, has written a fascinating account of one girl's struggle to go from the remote farmlands of China to the world's stages, and the lengths she went to in order to follow her dream.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review, Kirkus Reviews, September 1, 2011: "A fascinating and memorable account of a life and times difficult to imagine today." Booklist, September 15, 2011: Leaving her poor, remote village in 1978, 11-year-old Zhongmei Li traveled an arduous three-day journey to audition for the Beijing Dance Academy. At the end of the highly competitive seven-stage competition, despite her rural background and lack of connections, she was one of the few girls selected. At the academy, a rigid dormitory supervisor and hostile teacher make life miserable for the young student, but the resolute

Zhongmei survives the eight-year training and becomes a successful dancer. Written by her U.S. husband, this biography follows the steely, determined dancer through many adversities up to her academy graduation. Although the narrative is occasionally overly descriptive, it is packed with cultural information. It explains, for example, how a list of names is organized for posting, as there is no alphabetical order in Chinese. Inspiring for would-be dancers, Zhongmei Li's gritty success story is also a revealing window into post-Mao China. — Linda Perkins

From the Hardcover edition.

Growing up in East Haddam, Connecticut, RICHARD BERNSTEIN always dreamed of seeing the world, and after he finished college he figured a great way to do that would be to become a newspaper reporter. So he became a foreign correspondent for Time Magazine and then the New York Times, which sent him "all expenses paid" to lots of countries, including Hong Kong, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, France, Germany, Poland, South Africa, Mozambique, and about 20 others. A Girl Named Faithful Plum is his first book for young readers, but he's sure it won't be his last. Richard lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife, Zhongmei (who is Faithful Plum!), his son, Elias, and their cat, Lucky.

What a beautiful story and what a great writing style for telling it! I read this book in two days, as I just could not stop. The story of Zhongmei is inspiring and moving. It sets an example of how talent and especially will can take you to achieve your goals, no matter how high you are aiming at and the many obstacles life is disseminated with. But it also sets an example of how the struggle for your goals does not forcibly turn you in a cold hearted person. I will present this book as a gift to the persons I love most.

What a wonderful and touching story and what a great book, definitely one of the most beautiful and intense ones I read for a long time. I feel deeply enriched by its story and protagonist and its extraordinary life and strength. I am glad to have found a book again, which I can recommend to people I care - and look, we are close to Xmas - so I already have an ideal present for all of them!

This is an incredible story about perseverance and fortitude for a life an 11 year old girl could only dream about. A wonderfully written true story that gives the reader a tiny glimpse of life in China in the late 70's and the struggles to become a world class ballerina. The story is a great read for anyone and a good book for young aspiring artists. Lynne

I just finished this book and had the pleasure of meeting both the dancer and the author. This book is a must read for young adults. The struggle and determination of this young woman is nothing short of amazing. Its well written and really pulls you in. I hope to see a sequel to this remarkable story.

My daughter loved the book. She is 11 years old and is a dancer. She has shared it with a friend and she enjoyed it as well.

Engaging and fast paced. Our kid read this very quickly because the story was so absorbing. Kids interested in dance may particularly find this story compelling.

The real life of this amazing dancer who had to fight discrimination, poverty, solitude to achieve a dream. Giving up wasn't an answer. After you finish, you'll agree that she sounds like a beautiful person.

I love this book. It was amazing. I would Definately read this book al over again, Shen I get the chance

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