The Dancers
A Photo Exhibition by Nina Alovert
Curted by Natasha Sharymova

Exhibit Opening
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Harriman Atrium, The Harriman Institute
12th floor, 420 West 118th Street

Wednesday, November 6, 2013 to Friday, December 20, 2013

"As a part of the audience, I come to the theater to watch a complete performance: choreography, stage design, and dancers. As a photographer, I am mostly interested in the performers themselves. I try to capture the dancers at the moment when they are most emotional and expressive."

Nina Alovert

Nina Alovert, born in Leningrad, USSR, has followed the ballet companies of the Kirov and Bolshoi theaters since the 1950s. Her dance photographs have been featured in many books on ballet by the Iskusstvo Publishing House, as well as in various magazines and newspapers in Russia.

In 1977, she emigrated to the United States and started working as a freelance ballet critic and photographer for Dance Magazine and other U.S., European, Japanese and Russian-language publications.
Then, in 1984, she published *Baryshnikov in Russia*, a collection of photographs highlighting his career. For two years, she wrote and broadcast reviews of New York culture on Voice of America radio station, but has recently turned her attention to a large retrospective collection of her dance photography.

After perestroika and the collapse of the USSR Nina Alovert again started taking pictures of ballet in Russia and on the tour in other countries.


Ballet photography is a unique art form. "Stop time..." (Johann Wolfgang Goethe) and "ballet is the castle of beauty" (Joseph Brodsky) are wonderful poetic phrases that have become clichés. But one cannot escape them, these two elements are always present in Nina Alovert’s work. According to Alovert, the motivating factor for her work has always been her love for the talent of an extraordinary dancer. She seeks to transfer through her works the performer’s artistic expressiveness and ultimate professionalism.

As a photographer, she seems to melt with the object of her love... Mikhail Baryshnikov flying through the air, Diana Vishneva and Marcelo Gomes as if frozen for a moment in an embrace; we see them through her eyes. Having assimilated, like many born in St. Petersburg (Leningrad), the strict harmony of the city, she strives in her work for carefully disciplined compositions in order to transfer the beauty and totality of each dancer. Nina searches for beauty not only in classical dance, not only in the exquisite pose of The Swan-Ulyana Lopatkina, but also presents many photographs of modern dancers, among them: the perfectly flexible Desmond Richardson, Valery Mikhailovsky in "The Dying Swan", Christine Dakin in the final pose of "Requiem," and others. The photographer seeks to catch and freeze the internal world of the artist on stage, as well as, in an unguarded moment, for example, Alexander Minz relaxing during an intermission in his dressing room. Alovert is a master of capturing a fixed moment in flight. She has several triumphs in that genre that are featured in this exhibition, including photos of Svetlana Zakharova, Vladimir Malakhov, Nikolai Tsiskaridze, and David Hallberg, soaring through the air. Prima ballerinas Nina Ananiashvili, Yulia Makhalina, Diana Vishneva, and Irina Kolesnikova seem like otherworldly celestial beings. Their hands are so expressive, so magnificent, both in movement and in stillness...Even in our present unsettling times, the dancers in Alovert’s photographs appear like visitors from other, more poetic, worlds.

Photographs by Nina Alovert are in the collections of the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, the Theatre Museum (St. Petersburg), and the Public Library (St. Petersburg), as well as in many private collections, including those of Virginia Minges and Howard Gilman, which was later transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
The exhibition of Nina Alovert’s “The Dancers” at the Harriman Institute (Columbia University), which includes photographs of Russian and American Ballet (from the mid 1950s to 2012), sums up her many years of creative activity and Alovert’s contribution to world culture.