



The Music and the Mirror

Lola Keeley

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Anna is the newest member of an elite ballet company. Her first class with her mysterious idol, Victoria, almost ruins her career before it starts. When she shows she might be a potential star, Victoria chooses Anna to launch a new season around.

Now Anna must face down jealousy, sabotage and injury, not to mention navigate the circus of friends and lovers within the company. The pressure builds as she knows she must pour everything she has into opening night and prove to her rivals and herself that Victoria's faith in her is not misplaced.

In the process, Anna discovers that she and the daring, beautiful Victoria have a lot more than a talent for ballet in common, and that not every thrilling dance can be found on stage.

Themes: elite ballet company · romance

120,000 words

The Music and the Mirror Details

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From Reader Review The Music and the Mirror for online ebook

Diane Wallace says

'Ylva-Publishing ARC provided in exchange for a honest review'

Remarkable debut!

The mystery of the body in motion. The surprise of seeing what seems impossible. And the pure joyful optimism of it all. THE MUSIC AND THE MIRROR presents one thrilling spectacular ride after another of ballerinas leaping, spinning, lifting, kicking--but in the midst of daily life or not: in a library, a restaurant, a park--there was also a love story developing, betrayal, enemies lurking etc.. With each image the readers felt buoyed up, eager to read on and get the next fill of what other magic is in store about the opening performance. And in that image Ms. Keeley found what she's been searching for: a way to express Anna's feelings of being fully alive in the moment, unself-conscious, present when she's dancing (take it all in). The rebel, the orphans, the misunderstood, the injured ex-ballerina--this storyline is a rich, poignant, emotional book that captures nothing short or less than the entirety of how life is for some in the ballet world. One that spans two or more continents and a few US states that involves the life of both its heroines (leads). Every character is so true to life, you might wonder if you know them in real life and their destinies intertwine in beguiling ways as the search for the ultimate truths in their lives--dancing & future. An unforgettable tale: this paean to romance & genuine love and bittersweet sorrow of a first heartbreak endures, good supporting cast, mature dialogue, great storytelling. While the main tale might belong to Anna (and we root for her, like crazy) we are also privy to Victoria's story, which only adds many more levels to an already well-layered storyline. This sometimes holier than thou, tizzy, angst filled but charming page-turner serves up a twist I never remotely suspected, followed by an utterly satisfying and lovely conclusion. Highly recommend to everyone!

Tiff says

There are books out there that you love, 5 stars all the way, you read the book, you love it and depending if you are like me you will most likely read them again. There are some books though and these are the truly great ones. You know these books, The Blind Side of Love, How Sweet It Is, and And Playing the Role of Herself. The books that are truly in another realm of greatness. Outstanding books that pull emotion from you, that the story wraps you in a cocoon and all you see and hear is the characters on your page. Those books are the ones when you find them you treasure them forever. I found one!

The Music and the Mirror by Lola Keeley isn't good, it isn't great, its next level amazing. This book is exceptional in every single way. No flaws, no lags, no character misses. Nope, it is phenomenal. Yes, I used my thesaurus for adjectives. You cannot just say awesome eleven billion times, come on now.

Anna Gale is a new dancer at the Metropolitan Performing Arts Center. She has been a ballet dancer all her life, she lives and breathes it. Coming to New York from Dubuque, Iowa to studying and dance under the greatest ballet dancer of the modern era is her dream come true. Anna embodies this wholesome rock solid nature. She's one of these really good people that others cannot dislike because she is just a noble person. She cares for others, even when it's in her best interest not too. She works harder than everyone else without complaint and eager to do so. Ballet literally fuels her soul.

Victoria Ford is known as the greatest ballet dancer in modern times. When she danced audiences were

captivated by her skill and artistry. An injury to her knee has sidelined her from dancing so now she choreographs and runs the Metropolitan Performing Arts Center. Victoria is not an easy woman to please, she is beyond tough, she expects excellence from everyone around her and when it's less than that you can expect biting, caustic remarks intended to sting. She is truly the emotionally detached ice queen.

This is a dialogue-heavy book, with lots of exchanges between characters. Lola Keeley takes her story and layers it. There is no skipping ahead or fast-forwarding through life moments, hell no. This author takes her time and draws out the story and the tension. The sub-plots are done with craftsmanship and skill. She creates supporting characters that are distinct and authentic. The banter between Anna and Victoria, oh the banter, well it's legendary and they talk like real honest to god people. The key to real-life characters is nuance. Lola Keeley could teach a class on it because her characters have it and it is glorious. As the reader I thank you.

It's bittersweet when this book ends. This is a story that I adored, absolutely cherished. I miss it already, but know without a doubt will visit many times again. Lola Keeley made true love jump off a page like a ballerina in a Grande Jeté. Her first book by the way. Yeah, WOW and that wow is the understatement of the year.

vacatedboat says

Straight to the point: this book was as good as it's been touted as and I recommend it highly.

While this book was great, amazing even, there were a few moments of my reading session interrupted because I'd have to go back and figure out who was speaking, as it wasn't made clear who actually started a conversation....so there was some back and forth going on with no indication of speaker. This wasn't frequent, but it did happen. The good news is, this is really my ONLY complaint for the entire book and I just wanted to get it out of the way before I moved on to the good stuff.

'The Music and the Mirror' is written in present tense, which I always find a very beautiful way to tell a story when it's done right, as it is here. This story is also written from both character's POV, which gives the reader the opportunity to experience each one falling in love. Since this is a slow burn, we're also given a good amount of time to see how these characters change and grow towards one another when they start off miles apart. In the beginning, it seems impossible, but their journey is spectacular and I was just happy to be along for the ride. This is all really well paced out and I didn't find myself thinking, 'just get together already!' That thought tends to happen frequently with me and slow burns, so compliments to the author.

There is a lot of technical talk, but it doesn't feel bogged down like we're being given too much information or reading a manual. I say this because I don't care about ballet, I never have, but that doesn't matter at all because despite my lack of interest in what is a huge piece of this story, it made me care about ballet. Seriously, I feel the need to go buy the first tickets I can to a local theatre. Anyway, all ballet talk is weaved intricately into the development between our two characters and it all feels necessary and important to the storyline. I can't help but compare this to another lesbian ballet book and I hate to say that (to me) 'The Music and the Mirror' was better. I thought the writing was more solid, I thought the storyline was better, and the characters were so amazing that I couldn't help loving both of them.

As an added bonus, this didn't feel dumbed down as I often tend to think some romance books can be. This is an intelligently written book with a lot of emotion. I actually almost cried at the damn end...and I never cry while reading books.

Victoria is the quintessential ice-queen and she is lovely. As a sucker for a good ice-queen, I was oh-so-happy with this character and Keeley did an amazing job bringing her to life. This is ice-queen done right. Too often, these types of characters are given one hard ass trait and labelled ice-queen; true ice-queens need to be complicated. I think Keeley needs to write a 'how to' on characterizing these beautiful creatures. I'm kinda in love with Victoria a little bit and for the first time in my life I'm really sad I'm not a fictional ballerina vying for her attention. She'd probably ignore me, but at least I'd be in her orbit. :p

Really, though, I can't add anything special to the reviews that hasn't already been said. I added this book to my YLVA wishlist a few months ago when it was announced. When the reviews started pouring in, I was even more excited. Admittedly, I was also a little frightened. I didn't want to get my expectations up so high that I was left disappointed. Good news...despite already having high hopes, my expectations were absolutely surpassed because this book is just that good. I have no hesitations saying stop whatever the hell you're doing (especially if it's just reading my stupid review) and read this book!

Netty says

Now that's how its done, This book has Devil Wears Prada all over it, everything from the age gap to the ice queen and I gobbled it up, I really couldn't put this down, I had to finish every last word until I could allow myself sleep and I'm gonna really suffer for that today, all the characters were likeable, Victoria was just the bitch hanging off the dogs bollocks, the chemistry was off the charts and the love scenes were super sexy, I'm not a keen fan of ballet but I am now ?.

I think this could have done with less pages, but I enjoyed it regardless, it's made me want to go back to my dwp addiction.

Highly recommended to all romance fans!

ARC was provided by YLVA for an honest review

Agirlcandream says

The Music and the Mirror is another full on thawing the Ice Queen romance and my oh my it is a beautiful slow burn romance. The prologue is breathtaking and the writing is eloquent. It is clear the author has an inside track/close relationship with these artists en pointe. It was easy to fall into the grueling schedule of workouts and feel the jealousies, suffering and joys experienced by everyone from the chorus to the prima ballerinas. What a life.

Balance the drama on stage with the enthusiasm of newbie dancer Anna Gale and her interaction with Victoria Ford. Their scenes together sizzle and I loved the natural progression of their relationship from teacher/student through master/protege and finally lovers. Bonus points to the author for allowing these two dynamic women to communicate. Wonderful stuff.

The author's name choice for her ingenue was not lost on this reader. Anna Gale shares a surname with another famous wide-eyed girl. Seeing the world of professional dancers through Anna's eyes felt very similar to Dorothy Gale's first peak at the Emerald City in the Wizard of Oz. Both are awed and overwhelmed. Both are sweet but carry within them a spine of steel and the resourcefulness to succeed where

others would shrink away in fear. I loved Anna's determination and resourcefulness in her pursuit of stardom and the woman of her dreams.

Ms Keeley has set a high bar(re) for future books. Lucky us.

ARC received with thanks from publisher for review.

<https://latenightlesbianreads.wordpress.com/>

Gaby LezReviewBooks says

This book is in my list of recommended books of the month:

<https://lezreviewbooks.wordpress.com/>...

"Jump before you are pushed. In love, war and pas de deux"

I feel that my words won't be enough to do justice to this book properly. What a fantastic read and even more so considering that this is a debut novel.

This is the story of Anna, a newbie in a successful dance company, and Victoria, former prima ballerina and its current artistic director. It gives us an insight of the ballet world with its high competition, the physical demands, the threatening of injury looming all the time, the jealousy and egocentric behaviours. Written from the point of view of both main characters, the change of pov flows naturally. Everything is so realistically described that you'd expect a dancer to leap out of the book at any time. Thanks to Ms. Keeley's talent, she depicts ballet without sounding technical, boring or pedantic.

Victoria is the epitome of the British stiff upper lip, ice queen of ballet, in such control of herself that the reader feels her tension like a string about to snap any time. Her sarcastic comments, her strong discipline, even her wardrobe - always dressed in black - gives her an air of inaccessibility. Anna, on the other hand, is much younger, very eager to please, unaware of her incredible talent and friendly to the point of annoying, bringing a breath of fresh air to the dance company. She is almost the complete opposite of Victoria. And boy how opposites attract.

There's a delicious slow thawing of the ice queen, step by step, jump by jump. Victoria's sarcastic renaming of Anna as Annya and gradually accepting Anna in all her honest-to-god self, is a beautiful example of how their relationship evolves. Slowly they copy certain traits of each other, hinting the reader how they are falling in love even before they realise themselves. Their relationship is a huge dancing foreplay, Anna and Victoria's chemistry is off the charts. Their scene in the wardrobe room is in my opinion, one of the hottest ever mastered in lesfic. Just for this brief but incredibly sexy scene this book is worth a read.

Overall, a fantastic debut novel. Highly recommended even if you are not interested in ballet. This book goes straight to my 2018 favourite books. 5+ stars.

ARC provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

See all my reviews at

Rosi says

Well, I finished the book and as in some other review has been said before that I do now, the book has not been so much after such good reviews received, great expectations and all that fouetté en tournant.

So I'm not going to dwell on repeating the story itself, which is not bad at all but which has not seemed extraordinary either, I just like to say that I have made a comment below others.

In such an apparently closed environment as is the ballet, it seems incredible that Anna appears from nowhere, with all that talent and technique, is not very believable as I say.

And a super diva like Victoria accepting her substitution so easily? As I said before, incredible.

After this, the development of the story seems a little forced and the chemistry between the two protagonists did not seem outstanding.

And sometimes it exceeds you with so much ballet slang.

And I'm going to stop with my criticisms.

But the book can be recommended, if you want to have a nice time with a somewhat different story and, yes, quite romantic.

lov2laf says

I'm in the minority here but I didn't love this. Many others seem to really enjoy this book, though, so your mileage may vary.

Victoria, the lead love interest was someone I never liked which destroyed the book as a good romance for me.

Ice queen stories aren't fun if the ice-queen in question is 100% hostile all the time. I didn't like Victoria and I kept asking myself if that was still the case as I moved through the book. Unfortunately that answer was yes and it took until 80% before I *finally* saw her thaw a teeny bit. I would've enjoyed the book more if Victoria at least showed a sustained soft side at the very least towards Anna and that it occurred much earlier in the book.

The fact that Victoria is unlikable was made all the weirder because half of the story is from Victoria's point of view. I should've gotten some insight into *why* she was so mean or get to know her in an endearing way through her internal thoughts or observations but that didn't happen. I felt frustrated.

I was expecting an intense, warm and fuzzy romance and instead it felt like an unhealthy relationship built more on lust and shared experience than true love. This is a slow burn romance but even when Victoria and

Anna get together many of their intimate moments are off page or they have periods of being distant. Except for discussing dance and the drama of the ballet company, there's very little conversation between them.

I'll put it this way, I was so put off by the romance that when the "I love yous" came around it felt completely forced and I had to stop myself from rolling my eyes.

But Anna and Victoria's relationship isn't the only one that's questionable. There's another couple with a budding relationship depicted in the book but drugs are involved where they both do them, which is seemingly completely out of character for at least one of them, but that's never addressed in any significant way. That and the strange codependency thing they had going on didn't exactly have me rooting for them.

Chemical abuse in one form or another (pill popping, bottles of wine, vodka, scotch, and who knows what else) is fairly rampant which in one way is supposed to depict how severe a ballet dancer's life is but it's also not treated seriously, like it's something that can be resolved at will which, in real life, I don't think would be the case.

My favorite portions of the book were actually the secondary characters all interacting with Anna. I give it credit for not having a long drawn out break up scene at the end of the book that we see all too often in the romance genre these days. I also give it props for the amount of detail put into the world of ballet and theatre. And I do think the epilogue was better for how it played out.

Because I wasn't sold on the romance the book ended up feeling long and, overall, was an okay read.

If you want a story with the behind the scenes look of a professional ballerina's life, this is great. If you want a healthy romance, not so much.

3.5 stars

Pin says

Believe the hype about *The Music and the Mirror*. I read it twice in a row, loved every word of it, and will return to it again and again. Lola Keeley did an impressive job. Brava!

5 stars

Apr 9, 2018

Bethany says

I'm not sure how I possibly skipped over this last year, but I'm so very thankful to have read it now! I know most of you have already read this, so I won't bore you with details on my review this time.

Suffice to say, this is one of the best books I've ever read. I stayed up well into the wee hours of the night just to finish this one.

5 stars, and I wish I could give it a 6th.

Luce says

Wow. 5+ Stars. I often compare a handful of my favorite 5+ Star books to a new book- does it deserve 5 Stars? Well, this book will be on that list that others will have to live up to.

I try not to read glowing reviews before reading the book myself. I want to experience it myself. I did read Tiff's early review and I knew it was going to be good. I tried limit my reading of reviews to glancing at the first sentence. I wasn't always successful.

"The Music and the Mirror by Lola Keeley isn't good, it isn't great, its next level amazing." @Tiff

"I loved it! This is the feel good book of the first quarter of 2018" @Lex Kent

"The mystery of the body in motion. The surprise of seeing what seems impossible. And the pure joyful optimism of it all." @Diane Wallace

"Believe the hype about The Music and the Mirror." @Pin

"I. Am. Blown. Away." @Sprinkles

Unlike many readers of this book who practically devoured it in one sitting. I'm weird. If I'm reading a great book, I tend to take a break from it and read short comfort read. Why? So I don't read it so fast that I miss savoring each bite. I think I highlighted most of the book! There are many, but here are just a few that won't spoil it too much.

"It's magic. Everywhere she looks something beautiful is happening. These aren't just dancers; these people are Anna's heroes and they can *fly*."

Anna about Victoria - "How unfair that someone who could dance so well also communicates so clearly with words"

Victoria about Anna - "It should be infuriating how unbreakable Anna's spirit is, but there she goes again with bouncing right back."

"She dances, she eats, she sleeps."

This is an inside glance of a professional ballet company, all the pain, triumphs, the politics, and the love. Ballerinas in different stages of their careers. The upstart rookie, the star, the pain riddled prima on her last legs, and the former world renown star now a director. Its more than than just the behind the stage, it is also about off stage - the relationships and friendships that form. I can't recommend this higher enough.

SIDE NOTE:

I can't dance. period. But I can say I know a professional ballerina. She was a longtime girlfriend of my nephew, Travis. She wasn't a principal dancer but one of the chorus. When she wasn't dancing, she taught. When I first met her, I thought she didn't look like the stereotype. She was in between jobs, a bit tall, fit, but not a waif and boy could she eat! She did have the posture and grace of a dancer. But when she started dancing with the Denver Ballet, she definitely became more waifish. I only saw her dance once in the Nutcracker in Denver (I live in CA). Well, I knew she was on stage, unfortunately she was one of the sugarplum fairies and we couldn't figure out which one was her - they all looked alike. :-) Travis didn't want to see it yet again, so we couldn't ask him. Dancing in the chorus - they don't pay you much of anything. In fact, I think she was part of a scholarship type program, so she kinda paid them. It was inevitable that their relationship wouldn't last. She was (still is) a nomadic dancer. Every season she is in a different city, a different company. A dancer's career is short, much like athletes. So she is doing what she has to do, while

she can do it. Her current boyfriend is also a dancer and Travis just got married and hoping to have kids.

Lex Kent says

I loved it! This is the feel good book of the first quarter of 2018. Heck out of the 85 books I've read this year, it's my favorite. I'm doing a little happy dance with my laptop right now you just can't see it. I had high expectations for this book, and it hit every single one of them. I absolutely recommend reading this book.

There is something about books, shows, and movies that feature ballet that I find so enthralling. Maybe it's about what the dancers are able to do; the way they defy gravity while torturing their bodies. There are very few other sports that have such high injury rates and short career spans. No matter what it is its impressive and I love behind the scenes stories about it. This book was everything I could have wanted and more. I felt like I was there through every class, rehearsal, injury, performance, it was all so wonderfully described.

It's not just all the ballet scenes that are wonderful, it's the characters. The two mains are fantastic and a few really good secondary characters too. You have the wide-eyed innocence of Anna, mixing with the Ice Queen of Dance, Victoria. For any Devil Wears Prada fans out there, you are going to be very happy with this one. This is an age-gap, instructor/dancer romance. I don't think the age-gap is ever pinned down, but I was guessing about 15 years. Just enough to make the point, but it never feels like Victoria is robbing the cradle. The two women really balance each other out. The dialogue in this book is wonderful, but especially between the two mains.

Of course I loved the romance. No insta love or anything I normally complain about. It went at a real honest pace. But getting to the good part, the chemistry is off the charts. These two steal page after page with their sizzling energy. I think the sex scenes will appeal to just about everyone. They are explicit, but not overly so. The passion in them makes them seem even steamier if that makes sense.

I called this a feel good story and it really is. While there is some conflict and things to keep the story flowing, shocker.... the characters actually communicate! I almost could not believe it, it made me so happy. I don't have anything to complain about. I don't have any pet peeves to mention. The book was great from beginning to end. I don't know why we aren't allowed more of these kinds of books in lesfic. It was such a treat.

I was looking at Keeley's author page on Goodreads and there are no other books. This appears to be a debut. I'm a bit floored right now if this is the case. I can actually name the few authors I have 5 starred debut books in my head, in the past few years. It's pretty rare and just makes this book all the more special to me. It can be hard for me to write a review when I love a book so much. It's hard to do it justice. All I can say is I absolutely recommend this and I hope you all get the amount of enjoyment reading this that I did. I cannot wait to see what Keeley writes next!

An ARC was given to me by YLVA, for a honest review.

Farah says

First off , a huge congratulations and thank you to Ms.Keeley for a job well done on her debut. It is quite

impressive as she puts in a lot of effort, not taking any shortcuts, get me to check out ballet performances on You Tube to get a clearer picture and googling the ballet terminology. Authors who are able to make their readers do research willingly while reading their stuffs deserve a certain level of respect.

I love Victoria but I'm in love with Anna. From her first scene, I know that we're going to get along just fine and I'll be joining her fanbase by the 2nd page. Her innocence, generosity and unselfishness are some of her greatest attribute besides being a semi geek - her faith towards Pluto is cute. You'll need to experience the rare beauty that Anna has on your own and I truly wish that you'll be wowed by her characterization too.

I'm reluctant to read this at first, to read all the hardships of workplace politics that Anna has to endure being the chosen one might not work with the wannabe rock band playing inside my head but kudos to Ms.Keeley for not letting such issue takes the center stage. Nepotism never shows its ugly face as Anna earns her spot as a prima fare and square.

Anna and Victoria - It starts off as a working relationship between an eminent mentor and her eager to learn protege then slowly turns into a beautiful love story that interweave with the magical world of ballet from start to finish. Ballet plays an important element in this book and not forgotten once the hs change their relationship status and if you're not a fan and decided to give this story a missed then you're missing out on a good book and a promising author. Give the ballet a chance, fangirl over the ice queen and fall in love with Anna.

Sprinkles says

I. Am. Blown. Away.

I knew. I just *knew* from the impressive cover art that this would satisfy me. Well, The Music and the Mirror surpassed my expectations. This here is an excellent book.

From the first damn paragraph, I was swept away. After reading Melissa Brayden's First Position, I already knew I found the world of ballet interesting and attractive. Then, Lola Keeley grabbed me by the head, smashed my face onto my phone screen, and exposed me to one of the greatest romances I've read this year. Okay, she didn't do that literally, but I'm book high and loving it.

Its fanfic origins comforted me by giving me what I, the reader, wanted. That being an intense, beautiful slow burn journey to love between the main characters, Anna and Victoria.

Segway: Victoria Ford is a bitchy, brilliant fox of an ice queen. She's everything and I wish to marry her, thanks.

Lola Keeley with the research or life experience, she was spot on! I learned a freaking lot about ballet and it never got dreary. There's cursory knowledge and then there's the info in this story. My only small, insignificant nitpick on that part is the taxi cab use. Yeah, they're still a thing, but Uber or Lyft are way preferable in our city for millenials. I can't remember the last time someone my age hailed a cab.

The secondary characters worked marvelously. Their contributions to the movement of plot were spot-on. They added a well-done mix of dramatic and supportive. If I had any nitpicks on them, it'd be (view spoiler)

I'm running out of steam, so I'll wrap this up. Don't let the page count scare you off. Just bask in the epicness, readers. Five stars ?????

Jem says

It's hard not to notice how 'fanficky' the story feels. The classic ice queen and the innocent newbie dynamic. Fairytale premise. Lots of melodrama. But fanfic or not, the various characters in the book had this incredible ability to grow on me and in no time at all, I was firmly hooked and rooting for them. It also helped that I have a thing for literary ice queens, no matter the origin.

The book delves deeper into the inner workings of a professional ballet company than another popular f/f book featuring ballerinas, *First Position*, though the idea of a first timer vaulting over everyone else into the principal role is more fantasy than reality. It didn't take too long before I got sold on that so... the rest of the book is pure enjoyment.

There are a 1001 things that can go wrong with mounting a star studded ballet production with reputations, heads and giant egos on the line, so it was easy for me to get caught up in all of the drama. So much so that I wished the book had been a few chapters longer. The part of me that doesn't want the book to end (and say goodbye to Anna and Victoria) wishes the author had stopped the book at that perfectly bittersweet moment (view spoiler)So much more drama and pathos to be wrung from it all, but alas, we only got an executive summary. Books have a tendency to wear out their welcome after all is said and done but in this case, I make an exception. There's much more that needed to be said and done.

4.85 stars

Not an ARC from Ylva
