

Maria Tallchief

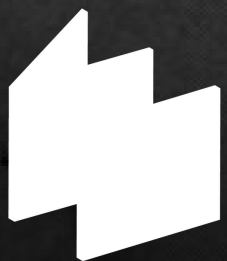
(1925-2013)



America's First Prima Ballerina

Maria Tallchief was one of the most accomplished dancers of the 20th century and was the first Native American woman to hold the rank of prima ballerina. A member of the Osage Nation, Tallchief grew up proud of her Native American heritage and identity. She started dance classes at a young age and made her professional debut with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in New York City after graduating high school.

Her skill and grace put American ballet on the world stage, and she originated many beloved roles—including the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. She empowered and inspired a younger generation, particularly women of color, to pursue their dance dreams. “Above all, I wanted to be appreciated as a prima ballerina who happened to be Native American.”



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