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Rita Moreno: A Memoir



Synopsis

In this *New York Times* bestselling memoir, Rita Moreno shares her remarkable journey from a young girl with simple beginnings in Puerto Rico to Hollywood legend—and one of the few performers, and the only Hispanic, to win an Oscar, Grammy, Tony and two Emmys. Born Rosita Dolores Alverio in the idyll of Puerto Rico, Moreno, at age five, embarked on a harrowing sea voyage with her mother and wound up in the harsh barrios of the Bronx, where she discovered dancing, singing, and acting as ways to escape a tumultuous childhood. Making her Broadway debut by age thirteen and moving on to Hollywood in its Golden Age just a few years later, she worked alongside such stars as Gary Cooper, Yul Brynner, and Ann Miller. When discovered by Louis B. Mayer of MGM, the wizard himself declared: “She looks like a Spanish Elizabeth Taylor.” Cast by Gene Kelly as Zelda Zanders in *Singin’ in the Rain* and then on to her Oscar-winning performance in *West Side Story*, she catapulted to fame yet found herself repeatedly typecast as the “utility ethnic,” a role she found almost impossible to elude. Here, for the first time, Rita reflects on her struggles to break through Hollywood’s racial and sexual barriers. She explores the wounded little girl behind the glamorous façade and what it took to find her place in the world. She talks candidly about her relationship with Elvis Presley, her encounters with Howard Hughes, and the passionate romance with Marlon Brando that nearly killed her. And she shares the illusiveness of a “perfect” marriage and the incomparable joys of motherhood. Infused with Rita Moreno’s quick wit and deep insight, this memoir is the dazzling portrait of a stage and screen star who longed to become who she really is and triumphed.

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Customer Reviews

In a memoir that is affectionately dedicated to her daughter, Fernanda, stage and screen legend Rita Moreno takes readers from her tumultuous move from Puerto Rico to New York City as a small child through the trials and tribulations of a Hispanic woman trying to make it on Broadway and in Hollywood. Moreno is one of the few performers to have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony, along with the National Medal of Honor. She recently concluded a one-woman show about her life entitled *Life Without Makeup* and currently appears on the television series "Happily Divorced" on TV Land. No matter who you are, Moreno has probably touched your life in some way during her nearly eight decades of performing. I discovered her on the PBS children's educational series "The Electric Company," which typically aired after "Sesame Street" in the 1960s/70s. How surprised I was to find that she already had decades of experience under her belt, with a highlight being her glorious Oscar win for Best Performance by a Supporting Actress in 1961's *West Side Story*. RITA MORENO tells the entire story of this incredible and determined woman. The memoir opens with a young girl, suffering from a deadly bout of chicken pox, in a run-down New York City hospital in 1936. She is practically right off the boat from Puerto Rico and barely speaks any English. Rosita Delores Alverio arrived in America with her mother, leaving behind a younger brother and large family in Puerto Rico. Young Rosita survived the chicken pox, but never got over the culture shock of leaving the Technicolor world of Puerto Rico for the dreary, black and white facade of NYC. She also did not realize then that she would never see her baby brother again. Rosita loved to dance and was a natural entertainer.

Most of us probably know of Rita Moreno from her role as Anita in *West Side Story*. Her trademark? Being the Latina "spitfire." She's the "Hispanic Elizabeth Taylor." If you know anything else about her, it's probably that she's the first Hispanic woman to win the Oscar. Or more notably, that she's one of the only performers to EVER receive an Oscar, a Grammy, a Tony and an Emmy. Well, now she can add best-selling author to that ever-growing list of talents. In her self-titled memoir, Moreno

opens up about life on and off the screen, touching on family, love, loss and her tumultuous rise to fame. Quintessentially, she's the all-American dream. Moreno's story is broken down into four parts, each one chronicling her evolution from humble little Rosita Dolores Alverio from Juncos into the sizzling songstress/screen siren, Rita Moreno. It's a tumultuous journey of insecurity, doubt, passion and self-discovery told in the most raw and honest of ways. In it, she describes the lush landscape of her native Puerto Rico, her struggle to break on to the Hollywood scene and her harrowing and debilitating relationship with bad boy, Marlon Brando. On the surface, Moreno's life seems so perfect but underneath it all it's one built atop broken promises --- by her mother and father, by Hollywood and by many lovers --- the strength she pulls from all these experiences though, that's what makes this book such an incredible one to read. Her story is as captivating as she herself is on screen. You can really get a feel for Moreno's personality solely by looking at the way she tells her story --- it's exotic, wild, imaginative, vivid and rich with detail. As a reader, I became keenly aware of all of my senses and was atune to the world in an entirely new way.

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