

MARIA TALLCHIEF
Episode #3 Transcript
Written by Gabrielle Mirabella
Music by Ernie Bird

GABRIELLE: Before we begin today's episode we want to give a HUGE shoutout to our newest sponsors! Thanks to your contribution we can continue to bring the best of both Broadway and Women's History to listeners all over the world! If you are interested in making a donation and exploring some "behind the scenes content", check out our Patreon account at Patreon.com/whatwillshedonextpodcast. That's Patreon *p-a-t-r-e-o-n.com* Thank you!

INTRO MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Hello, and welcome to another episode of "What *will* she do next?"

I'm your host Gabrielle Mirabella and together with composer Ernie Bird, (**ERNIE:** Hello!) we've created a podcast that celebrates some of our *favorite* historical women! On today's episode we examine the courage it takes to "stand-out", when it's much easier, and *safer*, to "fit in". This episode was written & narrated by myself with music & production by Ernie Bird (**ERNIE:** Hello!) Our very special guest star is Singer/Songwriter Marina Vinogradova. And playing today's leading lady we have ...(**CASSANDRA:** Cassandra Murphy)

GABRIELLE & ERNIE: Enjoy!

GABRIELLE: Are you feeling...stuck? Does the challenge presented before you seem pretty "unsolvable"? Or, perhaps, like many of us right now, you feel confined; with no place to go, no room to grow? Well, don't worry, you're not alone.

Join us, as we investigate seemingly "impossible" situations from the lives of history's most famous women, and ask ourselves...what *will* she do next?

THEME SONG PLAYS:

*"What will she do next?
What will she do next?
Her aim is true but will she see it through?
Oh, what will she do... next?"*

GABRIELLE: Today's historical woman: Maria Tallchief. American Ballerina, "Star Dancer" for the New York City Ballet & America's first Prima Ballerina.

Now, before she gets too "stuck", let's see where she's coming from...

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GABRIELLE: Maria Tallchief was born Elizabeth Marie Tallchief on January 24th, 1925 in Fairfax Oklahoma. Her father, Alexander Joseph Tall Chief, a member of the Osage Nation, and her mother Ruth Porter of Oxford, Kansas, lovingly nicknamed their daughter “Betty Marie”. And not soon after she was born, Maria was joined by little sister Marjorie.

Maria’s mother was eager to start her daughters in ballet lessons, and at the age of three-years-old Maria took her very first class in the basement of the Broadmoor Hotel.

TEACHER: Stand up straight, students. Now, gently turn your feet out towards the side. This is called “first position”.

(YOUNG) MARIA: (*studiously*) First position... Got it!

GABRIELLE: Dance came naturally to the young girl, and over the next few years she quickly learned the techniques crucial to ballet training. Each new dance move brought a complicated challenge, and conquering these challenges left Maria feeling exhilarated!

(YOUNG) MARIA: I’m ready to learn “second position”!

GABRIELLE: Ballet classes weren’t the only source of inspiration for Maria. Throughout her childhood, Maria participated in community celebrations known as “Pow-wows”. These special occasions gathered together members of the Osage Tribe to honor their traditions through song and dance. These memories of music, movement, and family would remain with Maria forever.

In 1933, at the age of eight years old, Maria and her family moved from Oklahoma to Los Angeles, CA. Big city life was a change for the family, but they quickly settled in and enjoyed their new home by the Pacific Ocean.

Dance was now Maria’s number one priority, and she started lessons with world-renowned ballet instructor, Bronislava Nijinska. Madame Nijinska as she was often called...

NIJINSKA: (*cutting off the GABRIELLE*) Eh-hem! Class has begun.

GABRIELLE: Sorry...As the ballet mistress entered the room, a hush fell upon the students. Maria’s heart was pounding with excitement, and surprisingly, she found, nerves. Maria was a strong dancer, for she practiced her craft every day, but Madame Nijinska was a famously rigorous instructor. And even more important, if Nijinska took a liking to Maria, she might have a chance of becoming a *professional ballerina!* A dream the young girl was now firmly set upon.

(YOUNG) MARIA: (*to herself*) Just be yourself. You’ve got this.

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NIJINSKA: *Maestra.* Begin.

The PIANO begins.

NIJINSKA: To become a dancer you must not *act* the part, you must *live* the part!

MARIA SINGS.

(YOUNG) MARIA:

ARMS IN FIRST, SECOND, THIRD,
I HANG ONTO HER EVERY WORD,
BUT, HOW CAN I MAKE HER NOTICE ME?

NIJINSKA: (*spoken*) When you sleep, you sleep as a ballerina! When you walk down the street, you *walk* as a ballerina! When you miss the bus, you run as a ballerina!

(YOUNG) MARIA:

BATTEMENT TENDU, BATTEMENT FLEX,
I CANNOT WAIT TO LEARN WHAT'S NEXT!
BUT, WHEN WILL SHE EVER NOTICE ME?

NIJINSKA: A dancer must have *courage* most of all! If there is any doubt in her, it will keep her down.

(YOUNG) MARIA:

I HAVE TO SHOW HER I WANT THIS!
PUT MY HEART IN EACH STEP, EACH STRETCH, AND TURN!
THERE IS FIRE THAT'S RAGING-
IT COURSES WITHIN, AND I LOVE THE BURN!

I MAY BE AFRAID,
I MAY EVEN FALL
BUT WHAT SCARES ME IS NOT EVEN TRYING AT ALL!
IF I WANT THIS FEELING TO LAST, THERE CAN'T BE ROOM FOR DOUBT!
I HAVE TO JUMP HIGHER.....

The glissando of MARIA doing an impressive leap.
Sounds of the ballet students in awe!

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NIJINSKA: *(spoken)* Very good, Maria!

(YOUNG) MARIA:

I HAVE TO STAND OUT!

NARRATOR:

Maria's dedication was unwavering, and at age seventeen, she followed her dreams to New York City where she became an ensemble dance member for the *Ballet Russe*, a Company led by director Sergei Diaghilev.

SERGEI: *(in a panic)* Our soloist has gone missing! We must find a substitute for the *Chopin Concerto* at once!

MARIA is now a YOUNG ADULT.

MARIA:

I KNOW THIS ROLE, THROUGH AND THROUGH;
THE SOLO TO THE *PAS DE DEUX!*
BUT, HOW CAN I MAKE HIM NOTICE ME?

SERGEI: This is a *classical* role! Perfection is mandatory! *Mandatory!*

MARIA:

STICK THE LANDING, KEEP IT STRONG
YOU'VE WORKED FOR THIS SO VERY LONG!
BUT, WHEN WILL EVER HE NOTICE ME?

SERGEI: Tallchief is quite good. But, is she ready for a *leading role*?

MARIA:

I HAVE TO SHOW HIM I WANT THIS!
PUT MY JOY IN EACH STEP, EACH STRETCH, AND DIP!
MY WHOLE WORLD IS CHANGING-
I'M RACING AROUND, AND I LOVE THE TRIP!

OH, I MAY BE AFRAID,
I MAY EVEN FALL
BUT WHAT SCARES ME IS NOT EVEN TRYING AT ALL!
IF I WANT THIS MOMENT TO COUNT, THERE CAN'T BE ROOM FOR DOUBT!
I HAVE TO AIM HIGHER.....

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The glissando of MARIA doing an impressive leap.
Sound of SERGEI in awe!

SERGEI: *(spoken)* Perhaps, I spoke too soon.

MARIA:
I HAVE TO STAND OUT!

TRANSITIONAL MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Through hardwork and dedication, Maria landed the leading role. And, with the *Ballet Russe* she began working with famous choreographers of the time such as Agnes de Mille and George Balanchine.

NIKINSKA: *(proud)* My work here is done.

GABRIELLE: Maria was on the brink of stardom, but more importantly she was realizing her goal of becoming a professional dancer. Everything was going exactly as planned, until one day, when Sergei pulled Maria aside...

SERGEI: Brava, Maria! You will soon become a world famous Prima Ballerina!

GABRIELLE: Sergei congratulated her.

SERGE: But, I will tell you what to do next to ensure your success.

MARIA: I must continue to practice and remain dedicated to my art?

SERGE: Well, sure of course, but, no. You must become more Russian!

MARIA: More... *Russian?*

GABRIELLE: Maria replied, tilting her head in confusion.

SERGE: Think about it! There has never been a great *American* Prima Ballerina. Maybe one day- but, not now. If you want this new role, you must fit the part. No more Tallchief. You shall now change your name to *Tallchieva!*

MARIA: *Tallchieva?*

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GABRIELLE: She exclaimed!

SERGE: Precisely! Maria *Tallchieva*, the world famous Prima Ballerina!

TURBULENT CLASSICAL MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Along the path to success, obstacles come in many shapes and sizes. And, surprisingly, they can even come from those who care for us the most.

MARIA: Maria *Tallchieva*?

GABRIELLE: Maria shook her head.

MARIA: But, I'm a Tall Chief.

SERGE: Of course, my girl, and you are *remarkable!* But, who has ever heard of a ballet star from Oklahoma? Haha! But, seriously. If you do not change your name it will end your career before it has begun!

GABRIELLE: Maria was confused.

MARIA: I want to keep dancing, it's my dream! But, am I willing to change who I am?

GABRIELLE: She sighed.

MARIA: What will I do?

UPBEAT MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Good question, Maria. What *will* you do?
Before we find out, let's first take a look at her options....
Will Maria choose option 1?:

MARIA: If Sergei thinks I have to change my name in order to dance...

SERGEI: *You do!*

MARIA: Then, I guess I have to.

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GABRIELLE: Or, will she choose option 2?:

MARIA: Perhaps this ballet career isn't for me. Maybe I should try tap-dancing!

GABRIELLE: Or, will she choose option 3?:

MARIA: I'm proud of where I come from, and proud of who I am. I won't change my name!

GABRIELLE: Now that we can clearly see Maria's options, which one do YOU think she will choose? Take a moment to think it over...

THINKING MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Alright, got your answer? Now, let's find out which option Maria will choose...

MARIA: I'm proud of where I come from, and proud of who I am! The world will know me as Maria Tallchief!

MARIA SINGS.

MARIA:

I MAY BE AFRAID,

I MAY EVEN FALL

BUT WHAT SCARES ME IS NOT EVEN TRYING AT ALL!

IF I WANT THIS DREAM TO COME TRUE, THERE CAN'T BE ROOM FOR DOUBT!

I HAVE TO STAND STRONGER...

CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER...

THE WORLD MUST KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M ALL ABOUT!

I HAVE TO SOAR HIGHER...

The glissando of MARIA doing an impressive move.

Sounds of an AUDIENCE in awe!

AUDIENCE: *Tall Chief! Tall Chief! Tall Chief...*

MARIA:

I HAVE TO STAND OUT!

DANCING FULL-OUT!

I HAVE TO STAND OUT!

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GABRIELLE: Maria Tallchief was faced with a seemingly impossible situation. But, instead of “joining the crowd” like so many before her, she remained true to herself, thus securing her position as America’s first Prima Ballerina.

So, the next time you find yourself feeling “stuck”, I wonder...what will *you* do next?

KID’S CORNER MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: At the end of every episode we will be featuring a very special guest star...*you!*
Today we have Maddy from Florida!

GABRIELLE & ERNIE: Hi, Maddy!

GABRIELLE: Tell us all about your favorite historical woman!

MADDY: My favorite historical woman is Jane Goodall. Jane Goodall was born April 3rd, 1934 in Hampstead, London. She was most remembered for time spent living with chimpanzees in the wild. She inspires me because she cares about animals and doesn’t want forests cut down, so they have a place to live.

End of Episode.