ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

JUVENILE FICTION

Summer Dance
Lynn Swanson
CreateSpace
978-1-4637-4216-4
Four Stars (out of Five)

"The qualities we look for…are leadership, cooperation, enthusiasm, and improvement." These words spoken by the Lakewood Dance Camp director are thirteen-year-old Sara's inspiration. In *Summer Dance*, readers watch Sara and her camp friends develop these qualities along with their dance skills.

Sara Sutherland experiences every young dancer's dream—spending the summer at an exclusive dance camp in Michigan's north woods. The camp draws girls from across the country and is located on a picturesque lake directly across from a boy's camp which adds extra color and excitement to the story. Sara establishes strong friendships with her cabinmates, especially Erin. But early on Sara is troubled by one of her roommates, Robin, who has attended the camp in previous years. There is a rivalry between them not only for prime positions in dance recitals but also for the attention of boys at the neighboring camp.

Author Lynn Swanson, a dancer and dance instructor, creates a realistic setting in *Summer Dance*. She lets readers fully experience the challenges of a fine arts camp with its rigorous schedule and highly competitive atmosphere. Swanson builds a strong storyline around her main character, Sara, but also creates an interesting supporting cast of other dancers and instructors. Besides developing new skills, Sara and her cabinmates do the other things kids at summer camp do—go to off-limits areas, have crushes on boys, make secret pacts, complain about counselors and instructors. Most importantly, though, they all grow and mature in ways they don't expect. Watching Sara and the others develop not only as dancers but also as leaders and supportive friends is the best aspect of this book.

Swanson goes into quite a bit of detail on ballet, Sara's favorite dance style, and provides a helpful glossary of dance terms so the unfamiliar reader can better understand and visualize the movements. The book also includes a "What Do You Think?" section that poses questions on the plot and characters. This would be helpful to teachers or librarians interested in holding group discussions on the book. It could also help young students focus their thoughts for writing

a book report.

There is nothing to indicate that the story is not set in the present. And if that's the case, one facet of young teen life not mentioned is the Internet. It's hard to imagine these young women not posting their experiences on Facebook or Twitter.

Summer Dance is a heart-warming read about a young girl's dream that provides an insider's view of summer fine arts camps. Written in short chapters, it will appeal to tween girls, especially those interested in dance or the arts.

Mary Cary Crawford