


Aria of the Sea

Dia Calhoun

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On the island of Normost, in the kingdom of Windward, 13-year-old Cerinthe Gale is a folk healer who dreams of being a dancer. When her mother falls ill, Cerinthe fights to save her but fails. She blames herself for her mother's death, gives up healing, and decides to pursue dance. Cerinthe travels across Windward to audition at the School of the Royal Dancers, which accepts her even though she is a commoner. It should be the beginning of a brilliant future, but Cerinthe feels an emptiness she can't identify. A disagreement with a young man, a conflict with a cruel teacher, a rivalry with an aristocratic classmate, Elliana, and a meeting with a mederi a healer with magical powers add to her anguish. When the rivalry between the two girls causes a terrible accident, Elliana's life hangs in the balance. Cerinthe faces the same awful choice she had faced with her mother: Should she try to heal Elliana herself or hope that the mederi arrives in time? Only the song of the Sea Maid holds the answer.

Aria of the Sea is an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, a Book Sense 76 Recommended Children's Book, and a New York Public Library Best Book for the Teen Age.

Aria of the Sea Details

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From Reader Review *Aria of the Sea* for online ebook

Abby says

I didn't appreciate the main character because she drove me absolutely bonkers almost the entire book! It was difficult for me to like her even though she is a good person, and she is young so its understandable why she is the way she is, but personally I was not that foolish when I was her age. It was written well though, the author did do a good job.

Daisy Honeywell says

Il sogno di Cerinthe Gale è quello di diventare una ballerina, esattamente come ha espresso sua madre poco prima di morire. Desiderosa di superare l'audizione all'Accademia Reale di Balletto, Cerinthe si reca a Faranor, capitale di Sopravvento. Lascia la sua casa e, al fianco di suo padre, si trova nella prestigiosa Accademia. Il modo di scrivere di Dia Calhoun è molto particolare, la trovo molto dotata nel fare le varie descrizioni; il lettore è immediatamente catapultato nell'Accademia e ogni luogo ed emozione è ben descritta. Ho studiato danza per anni quindi so un po' di cose in merito e le ricerche della scrittrice sono molto buone.

Cerinthe Gale scopre di non essere ammessa ai corsi e, nonostante la delusione sia cocente, non ha intenzione di tornare a casa, dove i ricordi di sua madre che muore sono troppo vivi e lascia partire solo suo padre. La nonna di Cerinthe è una guaritrice e grazie all'uso delle erbe anche Cerinthe ha cercato di imparare qualcosa in merito. La sua improvvisazione nel curare gli altri sembra essere un dono ma quando, tempo prima, Cerinthe cercò di salvare sua madre, ammalata, però la uccise. Da quel giorno Cerinthe ha deciso di lasciar perdere l'arte della guarigione e non pensa quasi mai alle Mederi, le varie garitrici. Adesso più che mai Cerinthe non può più pensarci, visto che non è stata presa all'Accademia e vuole trovare una soluzione per studiare comunque danza: la scrittrice ci mostra una protagonista abbastanza determinata che decide di realizzare il suo sogno a tutti i costi, così si ritrova a lavorare come sguattera nell'Accademia Reale di Balletto. In un modo o nell'altro vuole riuscire a salire i piani che la porteranno a danzare nelle sale di danza! Dopo vari eventi e incomprensioni, Cerinthe diventa una bravissima ballerina e, non appena diventa una studentessa, le invidie intorno a lei salgono. Ci sono chiacchiere, pettegolezzi, sudore, prove, liti... quella scuola improvvisamente per Cerinthe rappresenta soltanto la parola terrore. Era questo ciò che si aspettava? La scrittrice descrive molto bene l'ansia della protagonista e i suoi dubbi sulle scelte che la vita le mette davanti. Non è una trama profonda ma ho decisamente letto libri peggiori! Anche gli altri personaggi sono ben approfonditi, specialmente Elliana, un'altra studentessa di danza, che si trasforma nell'acerrima nemica di Cerinthe. Un altro personaggio che mi piace è Tayla, una domestica che sogna una vita migliore e che è amica di Cerinthe.

La scrittura di Dia è scorrevole e sono andata avanti specialmente per le descrizioni dei luoghi. Se non avessi studiato danza non sono sicura che avrei continuato a leggere il libro, che è molto artistico.

Non ho ancora finito di leggere il libro, quindi sicuramente aggiungerò qualcos'altro alla recensione!

Oggi ho concluso il libro; alla fine credo che finisca un po' troppo velocemente. Il vecchio Skolla, un uomo che intaglia il legno e al quale Cerinthe si confida, si rivela un personaggio molto saggio, com'era prevedibile. A fine libro i dubbi di Cerinthe sono molti: danzare o diventare una Mederi? Come ogni tredicenne (e anche più adulte) Cerinthe ha molti dubbi ma la morale del libro è seguire il nostro cuore e provare a realizzare i nostri sogni.

Infine credo che 3 stelline siano ben date; la lettura è scorrevole, il modo di scrivere semplice ma ben

descritto e la protagonista è piacevole. Le morali ci sono e sono migliori di tanti libri contemporanei.

Cathy says

This book was perfectly written! I recommend it to anyone and everyone! Actually, any book by Dia Calhoun is amazing!

Althea Ann says

Picked this up because it won the Mythopoeic award.

It was OK, but didn't really live up to my expectations - the storyline was just too familiar, and the worldbuilding was only so-so. It's one of those stories where it really didn't even need to be set in a 'fantasy' world; the fantasy aspect is quite beside the point.

It's also very, very message-y. I don't object to the message at all ("follow your own dreams and talents, rather than feeling that you have to live up to others' expectations"), but the attitude of "I will give young girls an important lesson through this book" is a bit overwhelming.

Plot elements follow:

(view spoiler)

It's a nice, feel-good story, but although the author seems like she's trying very hard to give Aria difficult dilemmas, the "right choice" is always blindingly clear. If only real life were so simple!

Kimberly Hirsh says

In Dia Calhoun's *Aria of the Sea*, Cerinthe Gale, a 13 year old resident of the kingdom of Windward, moves from her small island to the capital city in order to audition for the School of the Royal Dancers. As she attends the school, though, Cerinthe finds that her late mother's dream for her to be a professional dancer is in conflict with her own talent for healing and her devotion to the goddess the Sea Maid. Cerinthe blames her own error in healing for her mother's death, and so when her rival, Elliana, is injured, Cerinthe is reluctant to help because she fears another failure. It is at this juncture that Cerinthe must choose who she will become.

I'm afraid to reveal much more of the plot than this, because I don't want to spoil more for you.

There are quite a few things that Dia Calhoun does incredibly effectively in *Aria of the Sea*. First, she conveys Cerinthe's homesickness with startling accuracy. I missed Cerinthe's imaginary home island myself,

reading about Cerinthe's feelings. Second, she paints a true-to-life portrait of teenage rivalry; while my art when I was Cerinthe's age was theatre and not dance, I experienced hostility from multiple corners of my tiny theatre world. Elliana very much reminded me of girls I knew, right down to the realization Cerinthe had that though Elliana may be wealthy, that didn't mean she was truly happy. Nobody wants to be married off according to her parents' will, after all. Third, Calhoun aptly describes the pain one feels when one's faith has deserted her. Cerinthe, who has always heard the voice of her goddess the Sea Maid, ceases to hear her once she comes to the capital. Calhoun describes Cerinthe's sense of abandonment with great intensity.

What *Aria of the Sea* does best, however, is demonstrate the difficulty that lies in a choice between two callings. Cerinthe is a very talented dancer, and well-trained. She is less well-trained as a healer, but displays more talent. The choice between these two callings is heart-wrenching.

I would especially recommend *Aria of the Sea* to fans of fantasy, coming of age stories, and the arts. I would more generally recommend it to anyone who likes a moving story. I'd be especially likely to put it in the hands of girls in the twelve to fourteen age range, whom I think will identify heavily with Cerinthe.

Bani M says

(*Rating edited- I've changed my mind, this one deserves a 4/5*) Though the Amazon page indicates this book as being aimed at 10-12 year olds, I think it would entertain older readers and many with an interest in YA. The vocabulary is fairly wide and expressive, the atmosphere has a fantastical charm to it though the book is not fantasy. There are some interesting supernatural elements but at its heart, this is a coming of age tale that centers around the heroine's tumultuous journey from childhood to nearing adulthood and the moral dilemmas to be sorted out along the way. The heroine is Cerinthe, an amateur healer living a commoner's life in an idyllic village town. This all changes after her mother's untimely death and final wish- to see her daughter become a fantastic artist, a dancer. Cerinthe is determined to see it through and enrolls in a prestigious, dreamy academy for privileged young dancers. She has clashing social status with many of the people here, especially with Elliana- a rich, lonely, callous, horribly jealous and conniving girl who makes for an intense and compelling rival. If after the years pass I remember nothing else of this book, I expect at least the slight pinch of remembered frustration caused by Elliana's sharp tongue and evil tricks. And also a little bit of yearning for more facets of the character to be revealed. There are other characters of note- a sweet and kindly young maid who becomes a dear friend, a young man who has an awkward almost-romance with Cerinthe, an older girl who seems on the cusp of having it all but has her own inner turmoil, and others. Lots of surprises along the way and a brisk pace. This seems to be a well-edited book, the chapters are laid out sensibly and fly by. The ending is pretty good and overall this is an empowering book for girls and young women. As for why I have little more than praise for the novel and only give it 3 stars.. that's hard to explain. Something about the writing style is not gripping enough despite the briskness. And I guess I didn't come to love the main character enough. The only thing that really grabbed was Elliana's awfulness and the intensity of the rivalry between she and Cerinthe, the propensity for an evolving relationship. A Cerinthe and Elliana novel with romantic inclinations might get a 5 out of 5 from me, heh. Anyway to wrap things up, still willing to try other books by this author. I know this is only one book but I can already tell she deserves more popularity.

Tessa Stockton says

A very deep read for middle grade readers – and it's refreshing! Within these pages you'll discover sweet symbolism in a heady fantasy and a kingdom full of gifted youth. One girl in particular, Cerinthe, is torn between her two natural gifts. Can she discern which talent is more than a passion but a purpose, too? Will she learn of her calling, the most fitting path for her future? I thoroughly appreciated this book. Great for all ages! We could all learn a thing or two in real life by considering Cerinthe's story.

Amy says

This lonely book sat in my library for 10 years without being checked out so I took it home for a spin. Cerinthe is a fisherman's daughter who has danced her whole life and has also trained to be a faith healer. With the recent death of her mother, she wants to fulfill their dream of her being trained by the royal academy. Her journey involves finding out who she is and what makes her happy, dealing with a mean girl, and trying to find a balance in her life. The story has some elements of magic/religion in it which give it some light. Parts of the story are predictable and parts were a bit abrupt, but the message is a good one. Fans of dance or students who prefer 'gentle' reads would like this story.

Eskana says

"Aria of the Sea" tells the story of Cerinthe, a young girl (13) who has traveled from the far reaches of the kingdom she lives in to join the Royal Dancers. (Although this is a fantasy story, they use ballet (including mentioning specific steps), and as a dancer myself, I really enjoyed the realism this gave the story.) Anyway, Cerinthe is admitted despite her age due to her talent and grace, and she quickly rises to the top of her class. This puts her in rivalry with another girl, Elliana... but this isn't the crux of the story. Cerinthe loves dancing and is excellent at it, and she entered the school to fulfill her mother's dying wish, but at the same time she struggles with another desire in her- she is also a trained healer. However, she has abandoned this skill since she has made mistakes that may have hurt people, and so she struggles with the desire to help others through healing and her fear of making a mistake. While this story does mainly focus on the dancing, the rivalry, and the mythology of Cerinthe's homeland, it also is the story of finding your vocation and uncovering your passions.

The Good: I really enjoyed everything about this story! I found Cerinthe to be a good character- not perfect, but a hard worker and a kind person, and not a pushover either. I loved how this book used ballet, even though it was in a fantasy setting, and how it twined everything together with the mythology of the kingdom. The Sea Maid, the Black Ship- all fit into the story perfectly, without overshadowing it. This is at its heart the story of someone deciding what they want to do with their life, and while in most books there is only one true path (often, there is the thing that they want to do vs. the thing their parent wants them to do) but in this case there are two, which is much more like real life! In real life you can greatly enjoy more than one thing, and in this book Cerinthe has a passion (and is good at) both healing and dancing. But she must choose, and her vacillation between her two drives, coupled with the scenarios going on around her and how she reacts to them (and how her confusion impacts her daily life) is realistic and relatable.

The Bad: Can't really think of anything! I found this book memorable the first time I read it (about 10 years ago) and still enjoyed it this time!

Suggested for: Anyone! It has enough fantasy to draw fantasy lovers, but it isn't too heavy or confusing and

has enough realistic, real world elements so non-fantasy readers should enjoy it as well. I honestly don't know why this book isn't better known! Definitely recommended.

Kelly says

I found this at a used book store and remembered that I had read it when I was much younger... I remember really loving it, and after re-reading it (it was a super quick read, it's definitely a Middle Grade book), I can see why! This is a book with a strong female protagonist who is driven and has dreams and a good heart. It was a lovely little trip down memory lane with this one! :)

Margaret says

Cerithe is chosen to be a student at the Royal School of Dance, after her mother's death causes her to reject her talent for healing. Cerithe is torn between dancing and healing, and her struggle to choose is beautifully portrayed by Calhoun. The characterization is excellent, and the plot takes some unexpected turns; I particularly appreciated how Calhoun handled Cerithe's incipient romance with a fisherman and her rivalry with another student.

Alyssa says

It was a good story that I enjoyed though it was a bit predictable at times. I liked all the characters (even the mean girl), the plot, and the setting of this book -they gave it a nice almost "mystical" feeling. This book kinda reminded me of "Marie Dancing" since she realizes she's dancing because her mother wanted her to and not because she wants to. I thought the last paragraph of the book was so good and uplifting when she realized what she wanted to do with her life. The only person that kinda bugged me was Thornton (sp?) at the end of the book when he was trying to make Cerithe (sp?) turn into something she didn't want to be. Overall a good book if you like ballet, herbs, forbidden friendships, and the sea. :)

Jennifer Lynn says

As this is the first time I have read this author's work, I was unsure what to expect. I have found many times a plot that is enticing only to have the book fall flat for me. While I was expecting something youthful and pleasing since it says this book is towards ten to thirteen year olds, I was surprised with the level of depth that emerged. This is not some light and teeny ' bopper book but one that actually takes a person to experience wants, needs, pains, and the things you really go through in life. The girl was studying to be a healer but wants to be a dancer because of her mother's hopes she had for her. Her mother had gotten sick and despite her efforts she had failed to save her so now she can not even face trying to heal. She applies to a prestigious dance school where she is accepted but faces bullying and ridicules from a girl who thinks she is the best dancer. Cerithe is actually a really relatable character for anyone of any age. Who hasn't faced problems with a bully, struggles figuring out what you want in life, feeling alone without anyone there? The author creates this fantastical land that is easy to bring to mind with her descriptions and words. Cerithe is a nice, sweet girl that makes you like her. Even the bully, Arianna, defies being the stereotypical mean girl

since the author shows hints of her struggles and insecurities as well. As much as I liked the book though, the things that kept me from falling in love with it were how some of the moments are sprung on MN a you so they did not seem part of the story. The end of the book was one that could not have been predicted except by the last quarter because the solution did not even seem part of the equation through the book. Also this book is one that can be read by all ages which is wonderful, but some issues felt much older than the intended audience whjke others seemed really immature.

Aira says

Great book for young (middle school aged) kiddos. Strong female protagonist. Also wish I had more love for reading when I was a kid but better late than never????????? Plus fantasy!!! ?

Miss Clark says

Flat characters, plays on the "be true to yourself and find your purpose in life" theme nicely, but it was plain uninteresting to me. Plus, the religious element was underdeveloped yet used as a crucial part of the plot over and over again.
