



Would you like to introduce yourself?

My name is Ana Luisa, I was born in Porto in 1988, and I'm an illustrator. Although my academic background is in architecture, since 2015 I have fully dedicated myself to illustration and teaching ballet. I have always been deeply curious about the publishing world, especially children's books, and the way illustrations interact with storytelling. This curiosity led me to create small author books, experimenting with different graphic styles and visual narratives — skills I wanted to refine to build a strong portfolio and start illustrating professionally. In 2016, a publisher noticed these projects and gave me the opportunity to work on my first book. Since then, I have collaborated with several Portuguese publishers and have 24 books published to date.

Beside the picture books I develop illustrations for other clients like brands and companies and I also work on my personal projects and goodies to fill my little shop space that I incorporated in my studio.

How would you describe your style in three words?

I think it's delicate, detailed and some kind of poetic.

What subject areas do you specialize in with your illustrations?

I really enjoy drawing architecture. Because of my background, I often sketch it in my travel journals and also in some commissioned illustrations of buildings.

I also love exploring the body in movement in my drawings, and my ballet training helps me understand anatomy in specific positions, like in this book.

Nature is another theme that is always present in my work—sometimes close to scientific illustration, other times focusing more on capturing the delicacy and ephemerality of landscapes and natural elements.

What did you enjoy most about working on *Ballet*?

I loved working on everything because this book brought together the two things I love most: illustration and dance. I particularly enjoyed the research to find the



children we would see developing throughout the book. I really enjoyed illustrating the ballets, and of course, creating the longitudinal section of the grand theatre—where you can see all the details of the building and all the movement happening behind the curtains—was incredibly fun for me to do.

You have been dancing since childhood and, in addition to your work as an illustrator, you teach ballet to children. How did this help you in your work on the book?

I think it mainly helped me understand the proportions of children in different positions, both in the more technical poses and in the more expressive, natural movements. It also helped me shape the physical aspects and personalities of the children in the book, some of whom were inspired by my own students.

What was the biggest challenge when working on the book?

This book was very challenging, especially when it came to maintaining consistency in the visual language. It is quite a long book, with many illustrations that combine highly technical drawings, such as ballet positions or the spaces where the scenes take place, with more atmospheric and poetic illustrations, like the ballets, which need to transport us into the magic of each story.

Which of the classics described in the book, i.e. “Giselle,” “Swan Lake,” “The Nutcracker,” or “Bolero,” do you like best and why?

Personally, I have always loved The Nutcracker, since my childhood. I remember I received a beautifully illustrated book of the story that immediately drew me into that magical world. Of course, it is also a classic for any child who loves Christmas and Ballet. Every Christmas, I try to take one or two of my classes to see a ballet live, and this is the one that most easily engages the students and always leaves us happy with its ending. Beside it, I simply love the incredible Sylvie Guillem performance in Bolero.



Is there a dancer who inspires you in particular?

Yes, very much, the ballet dancer Marcelino Sambé! His life journey is simply inspiring. Despite the challenges he faced, he always found the right people who helped him reach higher and progress in his dream of becoming a professional dancer. When he joined the Royal Ballet, he was the only Black dancer, and that also made him realize that it is in our differences that we become special. I always get very emotional when I see Marcelino dancing, and of course, he is the Black boy illustrated in this book, Ballett."