



DISCOVERY GUIDE

## Edward Scissorhands

Devised, Directed  
and Choreographed  
by Matthew Bourne

Dec 12–31, 2006  
Ahmanson Theatre

## HOW TO USE THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE

This Discovery Guide is designed to help you understand and interpret the production of *Edward Scissorhands*, a work of dance theatre that provokes audiences to think about the relationship of music, gestures and other forms of non-verbal communication to storytelling. To create his version of *Edward Scissorhands*, Matthew Bourne drew from Tim Burton's film of the same title. Like the film, Bourne's production uses humor. However, it differs from the movie in that it conveys the story and emotion through movement and music rather than dialogue.

### Objectives of the Discovery Guide

Become acquainted with choreographer Matthew Bourne

Critically and creatively engage with dance theatre as a form of storytelling

Understand the process for creating dance theatre

Create a piece of dance theatre from music that inspires you

Write a theatre critique of *Edward Scissorhands* that you can send to P.L.A.Y.



Sam Archer, *Edward Scissorhands*, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.

The Discovery Guide provides a range of activities that promote critical discussion about dance theatre as a form of storytelling and the role of the outsider. The Discovery Guide also offers various exercises and theatrical vocabulary that will lead you through the process of creating your own dance theatre piece. Like Matthew Bourne, you will focus on music and movement to tell a story.

### Vocabulary

Vocabulary words are in **bold type**.  
Definitions are located within each section.

#### DISCOVERY GUIDE CREDITS

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# ✿ Once there was a boy named Edward...

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# Introducing MATTHEW BOURNE



**MATTHEW BOURNE IS** a choreographer critically acclaimed for his inspired interpretations of classic and popular theatre pieces. While dance, such as ballet, focuses on expressing emotion through the dancers' movements, **dance theatre** uses movement to communicate a **narrative**. Non-verbal communication expresses an emotion or message through physical gestures or visual cues. In *Edward Scissorhands*, Edward's outsidership is communicated through music (a **theme**), costuming (a gothic leather jumpsuit) and movement (the careful way he keeps himself from touching others). These elements work together to tell the story of Edward's journey to find family and community in American suburbia.



Matthew Bourne

*There's a bit of Edward in anyone who's been different at some point in their lives, particularly growing up during their teenage years. I remember those years. I had interests that nobody else at school had or knew about. I was into movies, old movie stars, musicals, dancing—things I would never talk about at school. I think everyone has that in some way. So, yeah, there's a little bit of me in Edward as in all of us.*

—Matthew Bourne, Interview



## Exercise: The Outsiders

Name a fable or fairytale about an outsider, someone made to feel different from the rest of his or her family or community:

Which character in this story feels like an outsider?

What traits make this character an outsider?

What are this character's talents?

How do the other characters in the story treat him or her?

How do the character's differences and talents mark him or her as someone special and/or misunderstood?



## Vocabulary

**Choreographer:** The person who creates, or composes, dance

**Dance Theatre:** A play without words that employs movement and music to tell the story

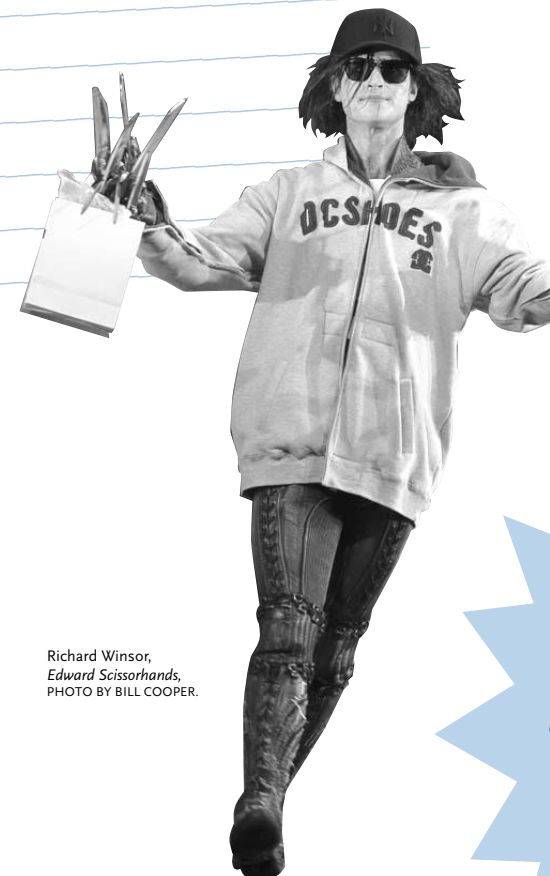
**Narrative:** A story

**Theme:** In music, a recurring melody; often used in film or dance to represent a particular character, setting or relationship



## Exercise: Who am I?

- Sit in a way that conveys the age of the character you describe above.
- Perform his or her gender: walk to convey maleness or femaleness.
- How do you communicate what it is that makes your character special or different? Perform his or her outsidership.



Richard Winsor,  
*Edward Scissorhands*,  
PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.

# HEARING

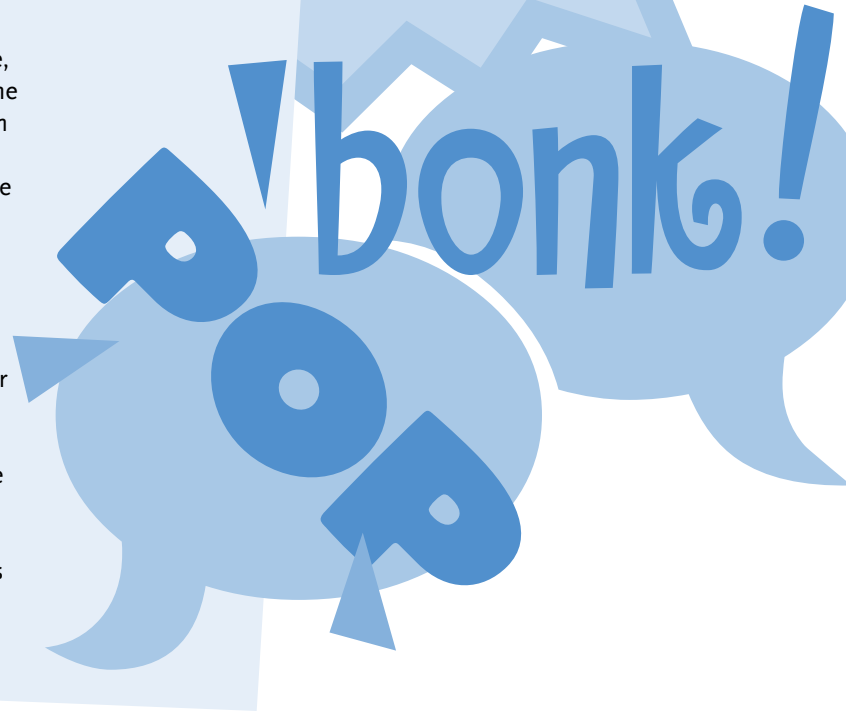
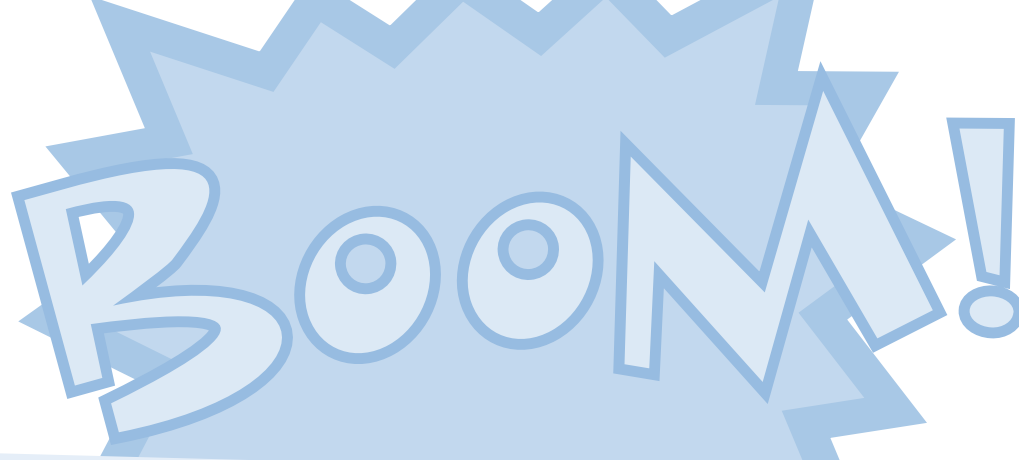
## the story



**MUSIC PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART** in dance theatre because without lyrics or dialogue, music becomes the main vehicle for communicating the emotional life of a story. It sets the mood and directs the audience's emotional response (think about the way the theme from *Jaws* evokes fear and tension). Music also provides a powerful way to emphasize **subtext**, the parts of the story that may not be explicitly stated but are nevertheless important to the emotional truth of the performance.

A theme associated with a particular character helps audiences to follow that character's journey throughout the story. As the character changes and evolves, the theme music will vary a bit. (Think about how *Mean Girls* uses music to signal Cady's innocence when she first arrives at school and meets the mean girls, her mixed feelings in joining them and her various responses to the group members.)

Music is also used to cue actors' and dancers' movements on stage and to emphasize the action being made. For example, cartoon music employs sound effects to emphasize the exaggerated nature of physical action, like a punch in the nose (bonk) or eating a hot chili pepper (steam whistle). Another example of how music directs action is found in the ways sporting events use music to elicit crowd support.



### Exercise: Selecting the Song

Matthew Bourne is inspired and moved by music to create his works. What music moves you? Choose a piece of music to tell a story of your own. Because you will be spending a lot of time with this music, select a piece that resonates strongly for you and is something you love listening to. The music you choose should be *instrumental*, music without lyrics, because words in songs already tell their own story. Some instrumental styles of music to consider include jazz, classical, techno, lounge/chill, ambient, new age and various styles of ethnic music. You may already be familiar with instrumental music from some of your favorite CDs.

Select a piece of music. Close your eyes and listen to it at least twice.  
Describe the elements of story that you hear within it.

Title and artist:

Describe the mood of the music:

How does this music communicate its emotion(s)? (e.g. aggressive rhythm, crying violins, playful piano, urgent drumbeats, dancing saxophone, excited slide whistle)

What location does the music suggest? (e.g. A beach or city street? A factory or cafeteria?)

Who do you envision as the character(s) experiencing the emotions?

What is he or she (or they) doing while experiencing these emotions?

*It is the music that initially draws me to a project. I study the music by listening to it again and again. By the time I start to choreograph a new work, I will have listened to that music every other day for at least a year. So I must love the score I am working with and feel the need to communicate that love to an audience.*

—Matthew Bourne, Interview

### Vocabulary

**Instrumental:** Without lyrics; used to describe music  
**Subtext:** A hidden level of meaning found in interactions between characters and subtleties of language and behavior





# ✿ Synopsis of EDWARD SCISSORHANDS



**IF YOU HAVE SEEN THE ORIGINAL** Tim Burton movie *Edward Scissorhands*, you have a strong sense of the **plot** Matthew Bourne adapted to create his dance theatre piece of the same title. Bourne's *Edward Scissorhands* diverges from the film in several ways. The play begins with the image of a boy hit by lightning while playing outside with scissors. His grief-stricken father, an inventor, creates a new boy he calls Edward. He then gives the boy hands made from scissors, the object his son loved to play with. Soon after completing Edward, the inventor dies tragically. Hungry and alone, Edward wanders into town looking for food. He is discovered by Mrs. Peg Bogs, who warmly welcomes him into her home. When Edward sees a photo of her beautiful daughter, Kim, he falls deeply in love. In his new suburban home, Edward sees his reflection in the mirror for the first time and only then realizes his difference from others. While he craves acceptance from the community, he most longs for their genuine love and inclusion.

Edward's scissorhands serve as a **metaphor** for his physical and emotional isolation. While the scissorhands make Edward an outcast, they are also the very quality that makes him special, an artist even. Edward can carve ice-sculptures and craft intricately detailed topiary. Initially, he is accepted by members of the community curious to learn more about him. But when Kim's jealous boyfriend plays a prank on him, the resulting events turn people against Edward.



Rachel Lancaster and Steve Kirkham, *Edward Scissorhands*, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.

## Exercise

*Edward Scissorhands* is a fairytale that evokes powerful emotions, such as desire to belong, or fear of those who are different. It challenges us to examine the ways in which we do – and do not – accept people we think are different from us. It asks us to consider how we define and value these differences. For each of the stories below, identify a moral, message or challenge in the story. Then describe who in the story feels different and why.

*Sleeping Beauty*: Moral/message/challenge:

Who feels different and why:

*Cinderella*: Moral/message/challenge:

Who feels different and why:

*Pinocchio*: Moral/message/challenge:

Who feels different and why:

*Little Red Riding Hood*: Moral/message/challenge:

Who feels different and why:

*Hansel and Gretel*: Moral/message/challenge:

Who feels different and why:

*Beauty and the Beast*: Moral/message/challenge:

Who feels different and why:



Sam Archer, *Edward Scissorhands*, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.

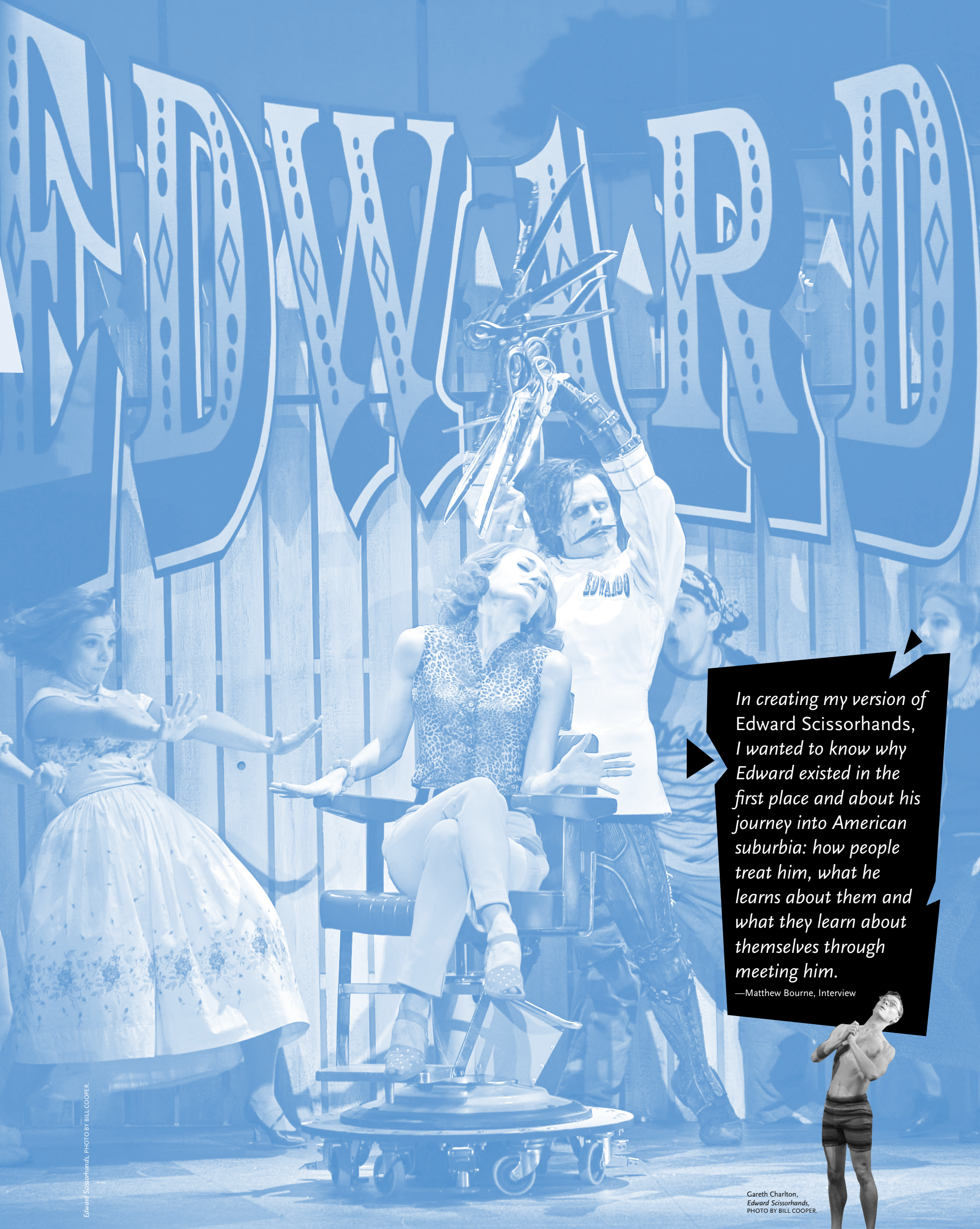
## Vocabulary

**Metaphor**: Something used to represent something else; a symbol

**Plot**: The roadmap of a story, the incidents and events that direct a character's journey



# SALON



Edward Scissorhands, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.

*In creating my version of Edward Scissorhands, I wanted to know why Edward existed in the first place and about his journey into American suburbia: how people treat him, what he learns about them and what they learn about themselves through meeting him.*

—Matthew Bourne, Interview

Gareth Charlton, Edward Scissorhands, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.





# From the Outside Inside:

## THE CREATIVE HISTORY OF MATTHEW BOURNE



IN NEARLY ALL OF HIS DANCE THEATRE PIECES, Bourne explores how his adaptation might help audiences see an old story with fresh eyes or hear familiar music with new ears. He choreographs dance movements that encourage new thinking about the story and a deeper critical understanding. For some, this marks Bourne as an outsider. For others, this willingness to challenge conventional ways of thinking about dance is what makes him a **visionary** and a leading artist in the world of dance.

Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* is the longest running ballet in history. In Bourne's adaptation, male dancers play the role of the swans, which are traditionally played by women. Bourne wanted to draw attention to the physical strength of the swans as well as to their beauty and grace and, in doing so, also complicate the dramatic tension in the story: if the prince is not drawn to the swans for their female nature, what, then, do the swans represent? This artistic interpretation was cause for both controversy and critical acclaim in the world of dance.



Alan Vincent, *Swan Lake*, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER



### Exercise: Setting the Story

For *Edward Scissorhands*, Bourne was moved by both the original film score by Danny Elfman and the character of Edward to create his own adaptation. Because the music so powerfully communicates Edward's journey, Bourne felt the story could be told without dialogue.

Return to your music. What story does your music tell? What you hear might be just a scene or a moment from a longer story, or it may be the whole tale. Look back at the previous exercise on fairytales. Listen to your music again. Refer to page 5 and review your notes on the location, emotion and character(s) suggested in the music. Do your initial imaginings lend themselves to an adaptation of one of the fairytales? Continue listening to your music. Write the story for your music. In creating your narrative, feel free to borrow elements from fairytales, as well as your own experience and imagination. Use the space below for your notes.

Lined writing area for notes.

*I believe that if you watch a ballet such as Swan Lake again and again, you cease to hear the music, so tied it is to the same visual images. The experience can become very numbing unless it is enlivened by an exceptionally riveting performance.*

—Matthew Bourne, Interview

### Vocabulary

**Visionary:** A person with extremely creative vision whose foresight and imagination separate him or her from everyone else



*Swan Lake*, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER







Music in

# MOTION

**DANCE THEATRE IS A FORM OF STORYTELLING** that, combined with music, relies on movement as its principle language rather than lyrics or dialogue. The dancers form a kind of moving canvas that paints a picture of the story. The famous choreographer George Balanchine defined ballet as “music personified” because he understood dancers as vehicles for bringing music to life.

In creating *The Car Man*, Bourne focused on the emotions expressed in the music of the classic opera *Carmen* and freely adapted the existing story. He set the piece in an auto body shop – hence, the playful title change to *The Car Man*. Bourne then worked to create a **movement vocabulary** (the movements that make up the choreography) based on the moving parts of an engine to fully incorporate the setting of the play into the action. This helps to illustrate the way that music and environment work together to generate a story told through physical movement.



## Exercise: A play without words: Choreographing your scene:

Choreograph a moment from your story to be performed as dance theatre. Describe the moment you have selected and where it falls in the story (e.g. opening, **climax**, conclusion):

What is the character feeling at this point in the story (e.g. surprise, shock, outrage, fear, excitement, joy)?

How does the location you have chosen for your adaptation influence the kind of movement vocabulary you envision?

Describe the movement that will communicate the emotion to the audience:

How do the music and movement work together? For example, what part of the music will play as the actor makes a particular gesture?

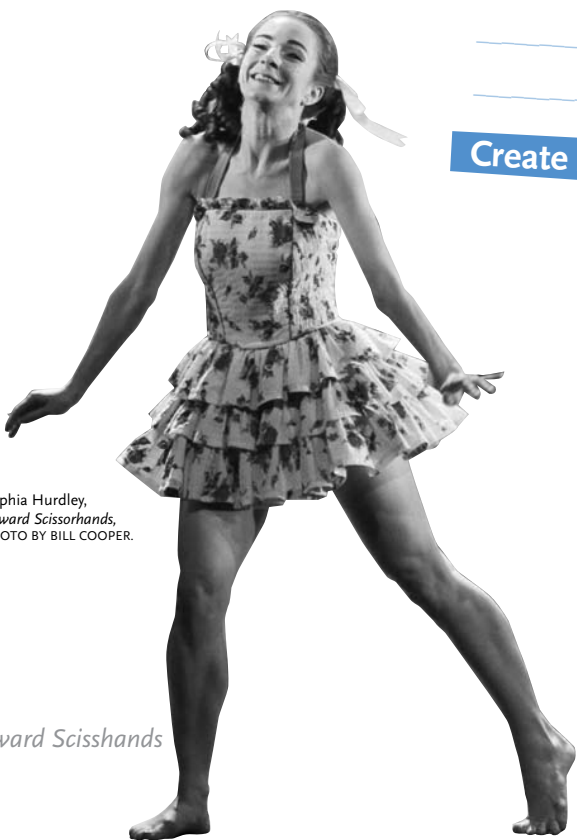
**Create 45 – 60 seconds of choreography. Share your dance theatre with the class.**

L TO R: Shelby Williams, Ross Carpenter, Matthew Malhouse and Rachel Morrow, *Edward Scissorhands*. PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.



*When I first saw the film Edward Scissorhands, I was struck by the title character originally created by Johnny Depp. Edward is the ultimate “outsider” expressing himself through movement rather than words with much of his appeal being physical and emotional. He is not unlike a silent movie actor.*

—Matthew Bourne, Interview



Sophia Hurdley, *Edward Scissorhands*. PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.

### Vocabulary

**Climax:** The pivotal dramatic event that leads to change or growth for a character

**Movement vocabulary:** The gestures and actions appropriate for the mood, location, characters and music of a particular work



# ✿ Concluding REMARKS

Etta Murfitt and Scott Ambler, *Edward Scissorhands*, PHOTO BY BILL COOPER



**AS MATTHEW BOURNE REMINDS US**, one person's outcast is another person's visionary. We hope you enjoyed *Edward Scissorhands* and are inspired by this Discovery Guide to explore new ways of expressing your ideas, perhaps through dance theatre. We are always trying to improve our work and especially appreciate hearing from students. Critique the performance. Write to us with comments about the messages that inspired you, provoked discussion between you and your friends and anything else about the play you most wish to remember. We would also like to know what was uninviting or ineffective about the production of *Edward Scissorhands* and its Discovery Guide.

## ✿ Write to us at:

P.L.A.Y., Center Theatre Group  
601 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

# RESOURCES

## Books:

*Matthew Bourne and His Adventures in Motion Pictures* edited by Alastair Macaulay (Faber and Faber, 1999)

*The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy & Other Stories* by Tim Burton (Harper Collins, 1997)

*The World Treasury of Children's Literature* selected and with comments by Clifton Fadiman (Little Brown and Company, 1984)  
A comprehensive volume of children's literature from around the world with an emphasis on classic stories, fables and tales

*Here Comes the Storyteller* by Joe Hayes Cinco Puntos Press, 1996)  
A collection of Southwestern folktales as told by Hayes with pictures showing the various ways he illustrates these stories through facial expressions and physical gestures

## Films:

*Edward Scissorhands* directed by Tim Burton (20th Century Fox, 1990)

*Billy Elliott* directed by Stephen Daldry (Universal Pictures, 2000)  
A story about a young working class boy who dreams of becoming a professional dancer; includes a scene from Matthew Bourne's production of *Swan Lake*

The following classic stories are referenced in *Edward Scissorhands*:

*Frankenstein* directed by James Whale (Universal Pictures, 1931)

*Pinocchio* directed by Hamilton Luske and Ben Sharpsteen (Walt Disney Pictures, 1940)

*Beauty and the Beast* directed by Jean Cocteau (Centre National de l'Audiovisuel, DisCina, 1947)

## Websites:

[www.new-adventures.net](http://www.new-adventures.net)  
Official Website for Mathew Bourne's company, New Adventures

[www.edwardscissorhands.co.uk](http://www.edwardscissorhands.co.uk)  
Official Website for Mathew Bourne's *Edward Scissorhands*

[www.dancemagazine.com](http://www.dancemagazine.com)  
Online version of Dance Magazine, a publication for aspiring, serious and professional dancers

[www.imdb.com/name/nm0000318/](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000318/)  
Internet Movie Database entry for Tim Burton with comprehensive filmography

[www.imdb.com/name/nm0000301/](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000301/)  
Internet Movie Database entry for *Edward Scissorhands* screenwriter Caroline Thompson

[www.imdb.com/name/nm0000384/](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000384/)  
Internet Movie Database entry for *Edward Scissorhands* composer Danny Elfman

## Performing for Los Angeles Youth

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Special thanks to rhetoric scholar Vorris Nunley and film editor Greg Finton for their expertise and suggestions.

Heather Habens,  
*Edward Scissorhands*,  
PHOTO BY BILL COOPER.



*It sounds obvious, but things really change when you dance. It's not about re-doing the film so that people can see what they expected. I want people to be crying at the end. I want it to be funny. I want it to be surprising.*

—Matthew Bourne, Interview

# ✿ About P.L.A.Y.

**NOW IN ITS 36<sup>TH</sup> YEAR**, Performing for Los Angeles Youth (P.L.A.Y.) is Center Theatre Group's award-winning youth theatre and theatre education program. P.L.A.Y. serves more than 35,000 young people, teachers and families annually through a variety of performances, residencies, discount ticket programs and innovative educational experiences. P.L.A.Y. offers programs that allow young people, teachers and families to attend productions at the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatres for low or no cost. P.L.A.Y. is dedicated to artistic excellence and innovation in its theatrical productions and to the development of young people's skills and creativity through the exploration of theatre, its literature, art and imagination.





# P.L.A.Y.

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**Saturday, Feb. 17, 2007, 2:30pm, Mark Taper Forum**  
Appropriate for all audiences

### Twelve Angry Men

A lone dissenter holds up the jury in the case of a boy accused of killing his father.  
**Sunday, April 1, 2007, 2pm, Ahmanson Theatre**  
Parental discretion advised

### Sleeping Beauty Wakes

You think your parents are overprotective? A 21st century spin on the fairytale set to music by GrooveLily.  
**Saturday, April 21, 2007, 2pm, Kirk Douglas Theatre**  
Strong Language. Parental discretion advised

### A Waitress in Yellowstone

A contemporary musical fable about the hazards of doing the right thing.  
**Saturday, June 30, 2007, 2pm, Kirk Douglas Theatre**  
Complex themes. Parental discretion advised

Have questions? Call audience services at 213.628.2772 or check out the parent guide on our Web site, [CenterTheatreGroup.org](http://CenterTheatreGroup.org).

#### FUNDER CREDITS

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