



STUDENT  
MATINEE  
PROGRAM

# Discovery Guide

A theatrical poster for Matthew Bourne's Cinderella. It features a man in a dark blue military uniform with a peaked cap, holding a woman in a long, flowing, light blue dress. They are in a romantic pose against a dark, starry night sky. In the background, the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral is visible, along with silhouettes of warplanes flying. The title 'Cinderella' is written in large, ornate, light blue letters, with 'Matthew Bourne's' above it and 'Music by Prokofiev' below it.


## Matthew Bourne's *Cinderella* Music by Prokofiev

### London, 1940...

### THE BLACKOUT... A SIREN SOUNDS...

Set during World War II, Matthew Bourne's *Cinderella* depicts a story of hope and perseverance amidst the stark backdrop of war-torn London. A chance meeting results in a magical night for Cinderella and Harry, a pilot in the Royal Air Force, together just long enough to fall in love before being parted by the destruction of the Blitz. As German bombs continue to fall throughout the night, the two lovers fight to hold onto their new romance after being separated, spurred on by the dream to reunite as one.

Combining visual and movement-based storytelling techniques with Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev's magnificent ballet score, Matthew Bourne's *Cinderella* reminds us of the strength of the human spirit and the power of love.

 Do you have a dream you'd like to make come true?

Who or what gives you the strength to keep moving toward your dream, even when life gets hard?



## Sir Matthew Bourne OBE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, NEW ADVENTURES



Photo by Hugo Glendinning

Matthew Bourne is widely hailed as the United Kingdom's most popular and successful choreographer and director. Beginning dance training at the comparatively late age of 22, he danced professionally for 14 years before becoming Artistic Director of his first company, Adventures in Motion Pictures (1987-2002). In 2002, he launched New Adventures, which soon became the UK's busiest and most successful dance company. Investing in the future of dance and theatre, New Adventures engages in inclusive projects with thousands of people of all ages and ability, as well as emerging artists across the UK and around the world.

Bourne is the creator of *Swan Lake*, the world's longest running ballet production, a seven-time Olivier Award winner, and the only British director to have won the Tony Award for both Best Choreographer and Best Director of a Musical. He was knighted in the Queen's New Year Honours 2016 for services to dance.

Bourne describes his art as "wordless storytelling" or "dance theatre," combining theatre's storytelling ability with the universal languages of movement and music. When you watch *Cinderella*, notice how the movement, design, and music all work together to communicate both the story and the emotional journey of the characters.

**Do you think movement and music are universal languages?**

**What is the power of telling a story without any words?**

# The Cinderella Story

*"If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales."* —Albert Einstein

A "Cinderella story" is an archetypal tale that depicts a hero struggling against all odds to achieve something that was once considered to be unattainable. We often root for these underdog-type characters to dig deep within themselves, to use their innermost qualities to overcome a difficult situation.

There are many versions of the story of Cinderella. The earliest known version was written down in China (Yeh-Shen) during the ninth century, the French version is called Cendrillon, and in West Africa it is Chinwe.

Bourne's Cinderella, like many of the Cinderella figures from different cultures, is isolated within the family home and tormented by the people around her, but she still has love—or the hope of a love fulfilled—to motivate her. "For me it has always been how 'love' can win through," says Bourne, "and how it can overcome adversity. Using 'love' as your inspiration to carry on is a very important aspect to the show."

**Why do humans need fairy tales? Why does every culture tell them?**

**Do you know a "Cinderella" in your own life – someone who has overcome hardship to achieve their dreams? How did love help them "carry on"?**

# The Blitz



Matthew Bourne chose to set his version of *Cinderella* during the Blitz—Nazi Germany's sustained aerial bombing campaign against Britain in World War II. To capture this time and place, Bourne and his design team incorporate the sights and sounds of war-time London into the storytelling, including air-raid sirens, smoke, and rubble of crumbling buildings, as well as archival news reels showing scenes of actual destruction.

The raids lasted for eight months in 1940 and 1941 and killed 43,000 civilians. The damage to buildings, services, and daily life in London and other cities during these raids was immense. Most families could not leave the city and had to adapt to living with the danger of constant night-time bombing. Bourne was inspired by his family's history during the war, using stories he had heard from his parents and grandparents of what it was like to endure the Blitz night after night in his version of *Cinderella*.

**How did Matthew Bourne's choice to set *Cinderella* during World War II change or shape your experience of the story?**

**If you were to retell *Cinderella*, where and when would you set the story?**



PHOTO CREDITS, CLOCKWISE (T-B): Ashley Shaw in *Cinderella*. Photo by Johan Persson | 2010 revival image. Photo by Simon Annand | Andrew Monaghan in *Cinderella*. Photo by Johan Persson | Liam Mower in *Cinderella*. Photo by Simon Annand | Injuries brought about during the bombing of London. Courtesy of NARA.



## Time

Time is always a central part of the Cinderella story but becomes even more important set against a backdrop of war. We see people going about their day to day lives knowing that bombs may go off at any time. There is an urgency in the air that propels our characters forward. In spite of the danger, Cinderella's family plans to attend the New Year's Eve ball. Cinderella and Harry fall in love not knowing if they will have more than one night together.

In this version, Cinderella is guided by a guardian angel rather than a Fairy Godmother. Elegant, ethereal, and dressed in a shimmering white tailored suit, the Angel is both a protective guardian for Cinderella and an "Angel of Death" for others. He has the power to reverse time and to determine when someone's "time is up." Not knowing whether time is on their side of not, the characters in *Cinderella* must find ways to take fate into their own hands.

**Why do you think time becomes more precious during war or destruction?**

**Why do people dance and fall in love even in the most dangerous times? Do you think it is courageous or foolish to continue to live your daily life in the face of violence?**



*“...IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN  
ABOUT HOW LOVE  
CAN WIN THROUGH,  
and how it can overcome  
adversity. Using love  
as your inspiration  
to carry on...”*

—Matthew Bourne



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Liam Mower and Ashley Shaw in *Cinderella*. Photo by Johan Persson.

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