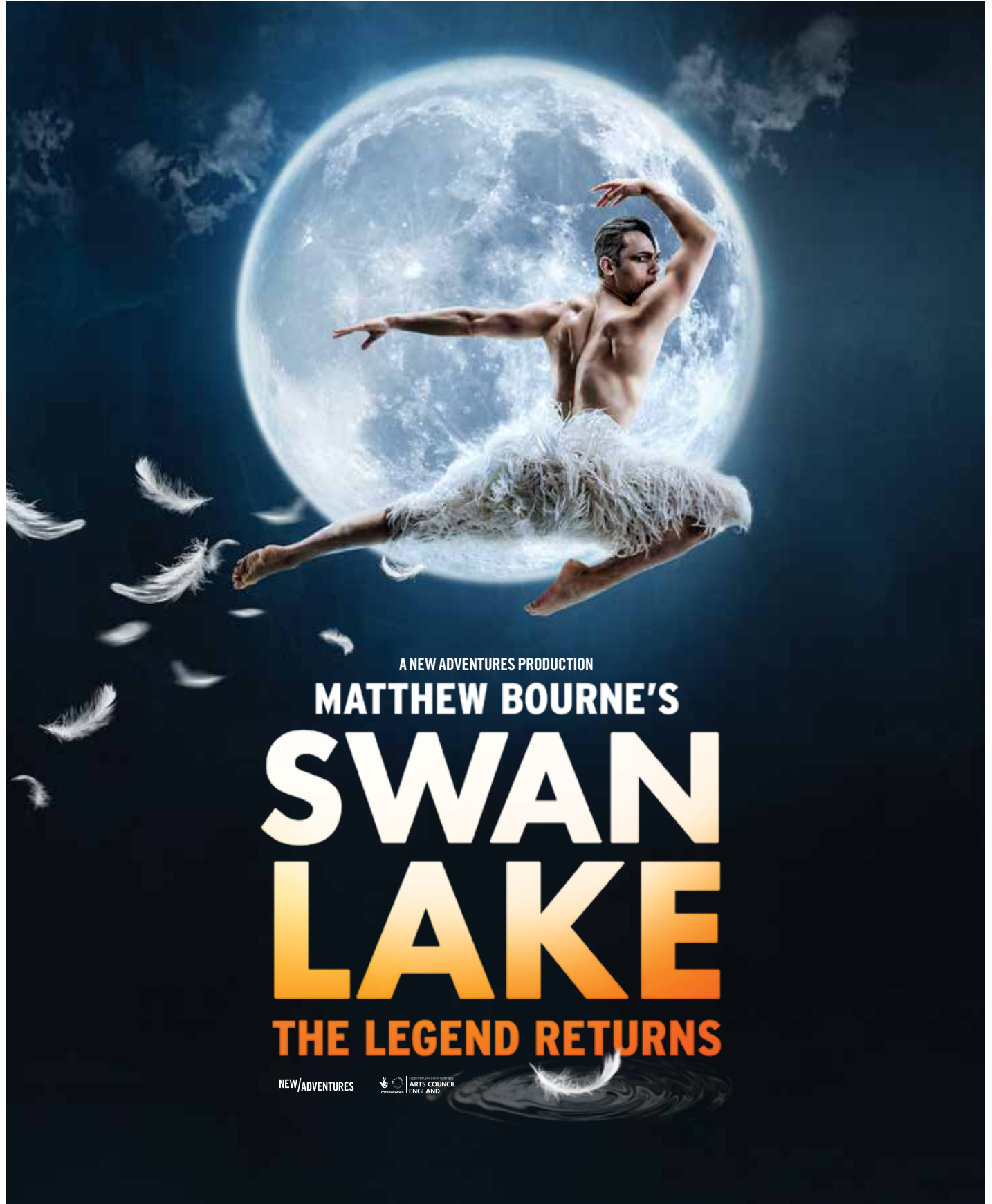


CENTER
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A NEW ADVENTURES PRODUCTION

MATTHEW BOURNE'S

SWAN LAKE

THE LEGEND RETURNS

NEW/ADVENTURES



ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

WELCOME

Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us at the Ahmanson Theatre for *Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake*. The Educator Resources are designed to help you prepare your students to see the play and to follow up the performance with options for discussion, reflection, and creativity. Thank you for sharing theatre with your students.

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“To tell a story without words is a rare gift, one Bourne and New Adventures use to create a magical world you will never want to leave.”

—*Daily Telegraph*



THIS SHOW

Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake is an innovative telling of a timeless story. This modern ballet takes place in London, and is set to Russian composer Tchaikovsky's 1876 classical score. The story follows the Prince, a London royal who is living an isolated life. His official duties have left him feeling trapped, and his mother, the Queen, is ever present but emotionally distant. His isolation causes him great pain, and he longs for connection to others. After being tossed out of a London nightclub, he catches a glimpse of a swan flying by. This intrigues him, and he goes to a nearby lake hoping to encounter it again. The Swan appears and expresses the freedom, strength, and hope that the Prince yearns for. This experience awakens the Prince to his desire for a new life.

Sir Matthew Bourne, who created, directed, and choreographed this *Swan Lake*, is known for reimagining classic stories with a modern twist with his British dance company, New Adventures. Bourne's reimagining of the classic is best known for replacing the traditional female corps-de-ballet of swans with a menacing male ensemble. These changes, and others, took the dance world by storm when the show made its original premiere in 1995. Today, New Adventures have brought *Swan Lake* back for an audience of new admirers.

- **When the world is not supporting you, where do you go to find love and inspiration?**
- **Do you seek like-minded people? Or do you look inside of yourself?**



“When I’m asked to sum up what *Swan Lake* is all about, I say that it’s about a very simple thing. It’s about somebody who needs love: who needs, in the most basic and simple way, to be held.”

—Matthew Bourne



THE CHARACTERS

THE PRINCE

The Prince is the protagonist of *Swan Lake*. He is a member of the royal family who is living an isolated life in a busy palace. The Prince is extremely unhappy; he is burdened by his duties, unable to connect with his emotionally distant mother, the Queen, and constantly watched over by her right-hand man, the Private Secretary. The Prince's chance encounter with the Swan brings new energy and possibility into his life.

THE SWAN/STRANGER

The same dancer plays both the Swan and the Stranger.

In Act Two, the Swan unexpectedly and magically appears to the Prince during a particularly low moment in his life. The Swan brings a sense of strength, beauty, and hope to the Prince, and he is intoxicated by it.

In Act Three, the Stranger makes an unexpected visit to the Royal Ball. The Prince is convinced that the Stranger is the Swan, but now appearing in human form. The Stranger denies any knowledge of having met the Prince, and proceeds to seduce all the women at the ball, including the Prince's mother. This torments the Prince and fills him with outrage.

In Act Four, the Swan returns. This time he acts as the Prince's protector.

THE QUEEN

The Queen is a complex character with a commanding presence. In public, she is authoritative, sexy, and powerful. She is extremely committed to her duties as a royal family member. She en-

joys the attention she receives, especially from the many young men that she encounters. In private, the Queen keeps her distance from those who love her the most. She is unable to show warmth toward her son, the Prince, and constantly rejects his attempts to emotionally connect with her.

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

The Private Secretary is employed by the royal family, and his role is to manage their day-to-day duties. He is an oppressive presence in the Prince's life. He constantly applies pressure on the Prince to live up to his obligations and makes sure that the Prince does not stray from the expectations of his position. The Private Secretary is never onstage at the same time as the Swans, which provides relief from his heavy and overbearing presence.

THE UNSUITABLE GIRLFRIEND

The Unsuitable Girlfriend is a romantic interest of the Prince. She lacks elegance and social etiquette but has boundless energy and enthusiasm, which set her apart from the other characters. Those closest to the Prince view her as an inappropriate match for him. She eventually demonstrates the depth of her character by refusing a bribe from the Private Secretary and by advocating for the Prince during an altercation.

THE SWANS

The flock of Swans is made up of the principal Swan, four big swans, six medium swans, and four cygnets. The big swans are powerful and wise, and they exert the most influence. The medium swans defend the flock and are aggressive and volatile. The cygnets, the smallest, are mischievous and full of bravado. They are the "teenagers" of the group.

SIR MATTHEW BOURNE

Sir Matthew Bourne was born in Hackney, London in 1960. He is from “a very, very ordinary East End working-class family.” His father worked for the water

board, and his mother was a secretary. They were fans of musical-comedy, and the whole family watched movie musicals together. Eventually, young Matthew started staging musicals on his own at school. “I did a fifteen-minute version of ‘Lady and the Tramp...and a ten-minute version of ‘Hello, Dolly!’ I just stole whatever I could remember,” he recalled.

He always had an interest in theatre, but came to formal dance training relatively late in life, at the age of 22. He studied at The Laban Centre in London, and received a degree in dance theatre and choreography in 1985.

Upon graduation, Bourne and several friends from the Laban Center began a repertory company that specialized in “arty farce.” He describes the naming of the troupe in a 2007 *New Yorker* interview entitled, “A Swan’s Way”:

Even the name of the company was camp. The group was on a China Airways plane, and one of the dancers read the words printed on the plastic bag containing the earphones. “Adventures in Motion Pictures!” she said delightedly.

“That’s what we should call ourselves.” And they did. “We became known as the funny company,” Bourne says. “People loved us for that, and it was nice, being loved.”

Bourne remained the Artistic Director of Adventures in Motion Pictures until 2002. It was during this era that the initial production of his *Swan Lake* came into being. In the *New Yorker* interview, Bourne describes an epiphany that he had a year before creating the show:

He likes to sit in the middle of the audience to see his ballets, and in 1994 he did so at a performance of “Highland Fling.” That show ends badly for James, and so be it, you might say: he was a lout. “But as I sat there, at the end,” Bourne remembers, “the people around me were totally silent, leaning forward in their seats. You could hear a pin drop. I realized that that was a big part of why people came to the theatre—to have this gut-wrenching emotion. And I saw that I could give it to them. I could move people, and I wanted to.” From then on, for a subject to engage him, it had to have “a darker side, a heart to it, something that meant something to me.” The following year, he made *Swan Lake*.

Bourne devised, choreographed, and directed this innovative production of *Swan Lake*. He made radical changes by getting rid of tutus and casting male dancers in the roles of the Swans. In observing swans, he noticed that they were strong, masculine, and ungainly out of the water. He thought he could play with that in his choreography for *Swan Lake*. Bourne has always pushed boundaries with his work, and he has found that audiences have been extremely receptive to his approach.

SIR MATTHEW BOURNE

Bourne also wishes to demystify dance, and to tell a story that everyone can identify with. Many have referred to this production as “the gay *Swan Lake*,” but this was not Bourne’s original intention. He thought having male swans, and still having a Prince, made for interesting psychological dynamics. He was able to explore alter egos, missing fathers, and a Prince who cannot find love.

Adventures in Motions Pictures became an extremely popular and influential London dance company. However, its growth was accompanied by unforeseen challenges, and Bourne wanted to get back to a “family” approach to working. In 2002 he began New Adventures, which has become one of the world’s premier dance companies. The company describes itself as “an iconic and ground-breaking British dance-theatre company, famous for telling stories with a unique theatrical twist. For over 30 years Matthew Bourne and New Adventures have delighted, inspired and nurtured people of all ages and backgrounds: audiences, artists and the next generation. We create world class productions and engaging projects, reaching thousands worldwide every year.”

Matthew Bourne is an Associate Artist with Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles—where many of his shows have appeared at the Ahmanson over the past 20+ years—and with Sadler’s Wells in London, where New Adventures is also a resident dance company. He has been creating and directing dance for more than 30 years and is one of the most renowned choreographers living today. He has created choreography for several major revivals of classic musicals (*Oliver!* *Mary Poppins* and *My Fair Lady* in the West End) and

worked in film and television. Screen adaptations of his stage work include *Swan Lake* (Emmy nomination), *The Car Man* and *Nutcracker!* Bourne has received numerous awards for his work, including two Tonys and eight Olivier Awards.

To learn more about Sir Matthew Bourne’s stellar career, visit the New Adventures website.

“I realized that that was a big part of why people came to the theatre—to have this gut-wrenching emotion. And I saw that I could give it to them. I could move people, and I wanted to.”

—Matthew Bourne in *The New Yorker*

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in 1840 to a middle-class family in Vyatka, Russia. He was expected to be a lawyer but gave up a promising job in the civil service to begin serious study of music at the age of 21. Initially, he studied with Nikolai Zarembo, the head of the Russian Musical Society, until the St. Petersburg Conservatory opened in 1862. He moved to Moscow in 1866 where he led a quiet life, composing and teaching.

In 1877, Tchaikovsky's work began to be subsidized by a wealthy widow named Nadezhda von Meck. This allowed him to resign from the Moscow Conservatory and compose full-time. Von Meck supported him for 14 years. However, there was one condition to the arrangement: the two were never to meet. Tchaikovsky composed a total of 169 pieces over his lifetime, which included symphonies, operas, ballets, concertos, cantatas, and songs. Three of his ballets, *Swan Lake* (1876), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), and *The Nutcracker* (1892), remain in the top 10 most performed ballets today.

Tchaikovsky's personal life contained much difficulty. He was a homosexual living in the extremely repressive society of Czarist Russia. In 1877, he married a young female music student and abandoned her nine weeks later. He attempted suicide by drowning, but was saved by his brother, Modeste. He later suffered a nervous breakdown. In 1893, at the height of his career, his romantic involvement with a man was on the verge of being made public. Even though the cause of his death is officially declared as cholera, some believe that he committed suicide. He may have been trying to avoid potential public humiliation

brought on by high-profile exposure of his sexual orientation.

In an interview with *The Guardian*, Matthew Bourne explains how Tchaikovsky's life influenced his storytelling in this new version of *Swan Lake*:

Tchaikovsky was a troubled man who, partly because of his homosexuality, couldn't be the person he wanted to be. That made me think of royalty: they are forbidden by duty to be themselves. At the time, the early 1990s, royal scandals were making the papers day after day. The original story involves a queen trying to marry her son off against his will, so I used that as a starting point to explore the psychology of a prince trapped by royal protocol.

(Continued on page 8)

COMPREHENSION

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play. This information can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BALLET

Ballet began in Italy during the Renaissance era of the 15th century. It was originally meant for noblemen and women. Dance masters taught the nobility, and they performed at lavish events such as weddings, where music and dance created an “elaborate spectacle.”

Catherine de Medici, an Italian noblewoman and wife of King Henry II of France, brought ballet to the French court in the 16th century. One hundred years later, King Louis XIV, who loved dance, made the form even more popular. He brought ballet from being an amateur past time

to a pursuit that required professional training.

In 1681, ballet moved from being performed only in the courts to the stage. The French opera *Le Triomphe de l'amour* utilized ballet, creating an opera-ballet tradition.

In the mid-1700s, ballet began to stand on its own as an art form. French ballet master Jean Georges Noverre wanted ballet to show dramatic movement with characters who related to one another in a story. His *ballet d'action* led to the narrative ballets of the 19th century.



ORIGINS OF SWAN LAKE

By the late 19th century, ballet had become extremely popular in Russia. Its choreographers and composers elevated the art form to new heights. This is the era that gave birth to *Swan Lake*. It first premiered on March 4, 1877 in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre, choreographed by Julius Wenzel Reisinger with a score by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. It was not well-received, as surprising as that may sound.

New Adventures, the company that produces and performs *Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake*, offers a description of the story's origin:

The original sources of the story of Swan Lake have long been disputed. The general outline for the plot of the ballet is thought to have been taken from a tale by the German author Johann Karl August Musäus, "Der geraubte Schleier" (The Stolen Veil). The Russian folktale "The White Duck" also bears some resemblance to the story of the ballet and may have been another possible source however, there is no clear consensus.

Another theory is that the original choreographer, a bohemian Czechoslovakian called Julius Reisinger, created the story. Some suggest it was Vladimir Petrovich Begichev, director of the Moscow Imperial Theatre, who was responsible for the creation of the story of *Swan Lake*. It was Begichev who commissioned Tchaikovsky to write the score, for the sum of 800 rubles in May 1875. Based on a basic outline of the requirement of reach section of the dance, provided to him by Reisinger, Tchaikovsky

completed the work within a year. The Moscow world premiere was performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in March 1877.

Years later, the Imperial Russian Ballet produced a revised *Swan Lake*. By this time, Tchaikovsky had passed away, and Riccardo Driggo was commissioned to revise the score. The show was choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. It opened at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg on January 27, 1895. Part of the ballet's great success was due to the fact that the same ballerina played both Odette and Odile (the White and Black Swans).

New Adventures describes the 1895 production in this way:

There have been countless reinterpretations and redesigns, including many performances of *Swan Lake* featuring alternative endings, ranging from tragic to romantic, and whilst every production has made some departure from the original, whether it overt or discreet, the 1895 edition is still seen as 'the' traditional *Swan Lake*, and is the version upon which most stagings have been based.

Today, history has been made in the ballet world through innovative casting once again. *Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake* has traded the traditional female corps-de-ballet of swans for a menacing male ensemble, and the Swan, who is traditionally danced by a female, is played by a male dancer.

SWAN LAKE: PAST & PRESENT

Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake is a fusion of old and new. Tchaikovsky's score is performed in a modern setting. The classical choreography is infused with nods to flamenco and disco. The Swan, who is traditionally played by a female, has been cast with a male dancer, and the traditional female corps-de-ballet of swans is now performed by a male ensemble.

New Adventures has created a detailed comparison between traditional approaches to *Swan Lake* and Matthew Bourne's innovative production:

SWAN LAKE BY PETIPA & IVANOV	MATTHEW BOURNE'S SWAN LAKE
<p style="text-align: center;">THE PRINCE</p> <p>The Prince, known as Siegfried in this version, falls in love with Odette (the White Swan). Odette tells Siegfried that if a man pure of heart pledges his love to her, the evil sorcerer's spell will be broken and she and the other swans will return to human form. Siegfried promises to be true to her forever but betrays her by accident, unwittingly pledging marriage to Odette, the sorcerer's daughter, who tricks him into thinking she is Odette. Realizing this, Siegfried finds Odette and overcomes the evil sorcerer and his wicked daughter.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE PRINCE</p> <p>Known only as The Prince, he lives a closed and stifling life with his mother the Queen. While she is keen for him to take his royal responsibilities seriously, The Prince craves a life of freedom. Lured away following a vision of a flying swan, he flirts with the idea of a "normal" life, but his notoriety as a prince prevents him from doing so. As his mental health deteriorates, he once again is visited by a Swan who represents everything the Prince isn't—powerful, masculine, and free. When he confuses a Stranger at the royal ball with the Swan who has captured his heart and mind, his life begins to unravel further. Haunted by the notion that he will never lead the life he wishes for, The Prince, as well as those around him, begin to question his sanity. Under house arrest at the palace, The Prince is again visited by "his" Swan, who appears to be his protector amidst a flock of angry and vicious swans.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ODETTE</p> <p>Also, referred to as the White Swan, or the Swan Queen, Odette is a beautiful young princess who has had a spell cast on her by the evil sorcerer, Rothbart. During the day, she is condemned by the hex that has been put upon her to appear as a swan—only returning to human form at night. She is the subject of the Prince's affections, yet she is devastated when the Prince proposes to Odette, Rothbart's daughter. Once she is convinced of the Prince's story—that it was a case of mistaken identity brought about by the sorcerer's attempts to have him marry Odile instead of her—she forgives the Prince. Odette represents truth and goodness.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE SWAN</p> <p>The Swan is a physical representation of everything the Prince craves. Yet, unlike in the Petipa/Ivanov version, it is left to the audience's own interpretation as to whether The Swan is real or a figment of The Prince's tormented mind. The Swan is alluring, beautiful, and full of intrigue. The interest, tenderness, and affection that The Swan appears to offer to The Prince is in stark contrast to his reality at home within the palace, where he is constantly tormented by a lack of maternal love that he craves so from the Queen.</p>

SWAN LAKE BY PETIPA & IVANOV**MATTHEW BOURNE'S SWAN LAKE****ODILE**

Known as the Black or “Evil” Swan, Odile is Rothbart’s daughter. Her part is often played by the same performer as Odette to help with the telling of the story, for Rothbart’s sorcery enables his daughter to look exactly the same as Odette except for her black, rather than white, outfit. (A trick that is carried out to confuse the Prince and cause him to pledge his love to the wrong woman.) Though common, this is not the case in all versions of Swan Lake. Odile represents falsehood and evil.

THE STRANGER

Clad in black leather, an intoxicating stranger, who appears to be unknown to all the other guests, makes a grand entrance at the royal ball. With his good looks and his air of confidence he attracts the attention of all the women there, including—to the Prince’s torment—that of the Queen. The Prince is convinced that this man is in fact the Swan, in human form and now feels betrayed not only by his mother, but also by “his” Swan. The Stranger denies any knowledge of having ever known the Prince, and a fight breaks out, resulting in the accidental shooting of one of the women at the ball.

THE EVIL SORCERER

Rothbart is an evil sorcerer who wishes to trick the handsome young prince into marrying his daughter, Odile, instead of Odette the woman he has fallen in love with. Rothbart uses sorcery, trickery, and cunning to try to lure the prince to his daughter, while also ensuring that other potential suitors (including Odette) are kept out of the Prince’s way by turning the young women into swans by day, returning to human form at night. Rothbart is rarely seen in human form, except once in the third act when he appears with his daughter Odile. During the second and fourth acts he appears in the guise of an owl. When Siegfried and Odette throw themselves in the lake, since they would rather be dead than not be with one another, Rothbart’s powers are overcome, and he is destroyed.

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

Known only as The Private Secretary, this character does not possess the same kind of magical powers as Rothbart but uses cunning tactics to try and affect the Prince’s behavior and to bring about his downfall. The Private Secretary is fiercely loyal to the Queen and while his meddling in the Prince’s life is far from appealing, there is a sense that he feels it is his duty to protect her reputation. He is at times a very dislikeable character and is only seen in human form, unlike Rothbart.

SCORE

Tchaikovsky died on the November 6, 1893, just as plans to revive Swan Lake were underway. Riccardo Drigo undertook the revision of the score, and there are major differences between the two. Not all, but most, versions of Swan Lake since this time have used Drigo’s revision.

SCORE

Uses the original 1877 score that Tchaikovsky wrote for the original Moscow staging. While it has several musical re-orderings, it has fewer of them than most versions of Swan Lake. In particular, Act Four uses only the music that Tchaikovsky wrote for it.

ERA & LOCATION

With its roots in European and Russian folklore, there is no exact location given, yet the names of many of the characters have distinctly German origins. Its magical, mythical, treatment means it is probably not set in a particular era either; rather it is synonymous with the styling of other fairy tales of the 19th century.

ERA & LOCATION

Set in London, various scenes draw inspiration, particularly in relation to Lez Brotherston’s costume designs, from the 1950s—especially the Royal Family; the 1960s—the seedy club known as the Swank Bar in Act One Scene 6, as well as from modern day.

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF *SWAN LAKE*

- 1877:** First performance of the ballet *Swan Lake* in Moscow for the Bolshoi Theatre.
- 1879–83:** Multiple productions of *Swan Lake* in Moscow, some with new choreography.
- 1883:** *Swan Lake* is dropped from the Bolshoi Theatre’s repertoire.
- 1893:** Tchaikovsky dies.
- 1894:** Under the direction of Marius Petipa, Lev Ivanov choreographs a new Act Two of *Swan Lake* for a performance at an event memorializing Tchaikovsky, marking new interest in reviving the ballet.
- 1895:** The Petipa/Ivanov version of *Swan Lake* premieres at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.
- 1911:** *Swan Lake* debuts in America at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City.
- 1934:** First full-length production in Great Britain by Vic-Wells Ballet in London.
- 1940:** San Francisco Ballet tours the first full-length American production of the ballet. American Ballet Theatre first performs Act Two of *Swan Lake*.
- 1940s:** During World War II *Swan Lake* is performed for Russian troops in hospitals, factories, and on the battlefield as a morale booster.
- 1951:** George Balanchine premieres a one-act version of the ballet with his own choreography for New York City Ballet.
- 1970:** Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre performs Act II of *Swan Lake* with famed guest stars Violette Verdy and Edward Villella from New York City Ballet.
- 1984:** Rudolf Nureyev creates a version of the ballet that extends Siegfried’s role with significant solos.
- 1995:** *Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake* premieres at Sadler’s Wells Theatre, London.

CONNECTIONS

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, students' lives, and the world we live in. Each section contains quotations and questions that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

FAMILY

FAMILY

The Prince and the Queen only have each other as family. Their relationship is difficult, with the Prince longing for connection with his mother. The Queen is unable to offer him warmth and nurturing, although at moments, she communicates that she would like to be able to make herself that vulnerable.

- **What happens to a child when they cannot receive love from a parent or guardian?**
- **Why would a parent or guardian be unable to give love?**
- **Is it possible for a child to find the love they need elsewhere?**



POWER**POWER**

Because of their royal positions, the Queen and the Prince have power in society, but it affects them differently. The Queen is able to utilize her power to lord over her son and her people. The Prince seems utterly powerless to the forces around him, and spends much of his time attempting to empower himself.

The Swan holds power over the Prince, seeming to offer him a certain strength, freedom, and connection that he craves. The Swan also holds power over the flock of swans. As the Stranger at the ball, he holds power over the women who are trying to seduce him.

- **What is it about a powerful person that draws others to them?**
- **Who is a powerful person in your life? Why do you see them this way? What do they do? How do they act? How do they carry themselves physically?**
- **Does power come from inside of a person or outside of him/her?**



DESIRE**DESIRE**

In *Swan Lake*, desire compels much of the action. The Prince desires to be with the Swan again after their first encounter at the lake. He is drawn to his strength, beauty, and freedom, and to the connection that was made between them. The women desire to be with the Stranger. His magnetism is irresistible, and they throw themselves at him at the ball. The Queen also desires the Stranger, and the attention of most of the men at the ball.

- **What is it about desire that compels us to act? Or that might frustrate us?**
- **Is desire mostly positive or negative? What happens when desire becomes out of control and overtakes someone's mind and life?**
- **Can being driven by desire ever have good results?**



JEALOUSY**JEALOUSY**

To be jealous is to be human, but often it is difficult to recognize it in ourselves. It may motivate our actions in ways we cannot see or control. The Prince is jealous of the attention the Stranger gives to the Queen and makes many attempts to get between the two. The Unsuitable Girlfriend is jealous of the attention the Prince gets at the ball, but she does not give up on trying to reconnect with him.

- **How has jealousy appeared in your life? (Either within you and from someone else.)**
How did you deal with it? What do you think is the best way to deal with it?
- **Can jealousy ever be a positive emotion and lead to a productive result? Explain your answer.**



HOPE

HOPE

The Prince lives in hope of living happily one day. He longs for, and requests, affection from his mother, the Queen. In spite of her refusals, he makes attempts over and over again. He then pursues connection with the Unsuitable Girlfriend, hoping to find companionship. However, members of the Prince's world work to keep them apart. He then encounters the Swan, and his hope of finding love and connection is renewed.

- **Where does hope come from? Is it something we develop, or is it already inside of us?**
- **What keeps us hopeful, even when challenges arise?**



DUTY**DUTY**

Being a part of the royal family means that life contains many obligations for the Queen and the Prince. They live much of their life in public and must keep up appearances. They are required to attend certain events, maintain a certain composure when engaging the public, and must dress perfectly for every occasion. The Secretary symbolizes the aspect of duty; his job is to make sure the Prince and the Queen fulfill their royal obligations.

- **Where must people be dutiful in their lives? (Examples: country, family, relationship, etc.)**
- **Is having a duty an honor, or is it a hindrance?**
- **Is being dutiful being respectful or being trapped?**
- **Are there any duties that are expected of you? Of those you love?**



GOOD VS EVIL**GOOD VS. EVIL**

In *Swan Lake*, forces of good and evil are at work. Because the Queen is unable and unwilling to connect with her son, the Prince, there is a certain evilness to her place in his life. The Swan/Stranger has aspects of both good and evil. The Swan is loving with the Prince, while the Stranger, in his appearance at the ball, seems to be self-involved and drunk on the power that he is wielding with all who desire him. The Secretary expresses evil in that he represents keeping the Prince from finding joy in his life.

- **Why do so many of our stories have a conflict between good and evil?**
- **What defines good? What defines evil?**
- **Do you contain both inside of yourself? Explain.**



FREEDOM/LIBERATION**FREEDOM/LIBERATION**

The Prince in *Swan Lake* longs for liberation from his obligations as a royal family member. He also craves the freedom to love who he chooses. Gatekeepers in his life, such as his mother, the Queen, and the Private Secretary, prevent him from following his desires. His unexpected encounter with the Swan is exhilarating and infuses his life with new energy. The Prince becomes hopeful that he will be able to soar above the pain and isolation of his burdensome and suffocating existence.

- **What different kinds of obligations and expectations do people live with?**
- **Does a person need others to release them from feeling burdened? Or is it up to the individual to liberate themselves?**
- **What's the price of staying trapped by the expectations others have for us?**
- **What's the price a person pays for liberating themselves from the expectations of others?**



THE SWAN**THE SWAN**

Swan Lake has its roots in the story of the swan maiden, which appears in various forms over many cultures. The swan maiden magically transforms from human to animal, or vice versa.

The image of the swan contains symbolism that runs across many different eras and cultures. Austrian scientist and philosopher Hans Biedermann writes about it in *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Symbolism*:

A bird of great symbolic significance for the ancient world, its limber neck and white plumage made it a symbol of noble purity. This is why Zeus chose to approach the unsuspecting Leda in this guise. It is interesting that Homer praises the singing swan... This swan is associated with Apollo... The swan was present at the god's birth, carried him across the sky, and derived from him its gift of prophecy. At times the swan is referred to as the enemy or opponent of the eagle or snake, each of which the swan frequently defeats. The proverbial "Swan Song" (the significant final words or performance of a great person) goes back to the prophetic talent of the swan, already mentioned by Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.); it supposedly foresees its impending death and emits extraordinary cries bemoaning its own passing. In fact, the singing swan of Northern Europe can produce a powerful trumpet-like note in the upper register and a weaker one in the lower, even shortly before it is paralyzed by severe cold. If several of these swans cry at once, they do give the impression of song. According to Germanic superstition, virgins could be transformed into prophetic swan maidens; similar myths are found in a variety

of cultural contexts. In Christian thought the cygnus musicus came to symbolize the savior, crying out from the cross in extremis. The association of the bird with song (and hence lyrical beauty) led Ben Jonson to call Shakespeare "the sweet swan of Avon."

The swan often symbolizes feminine grace; Aphrodite and Artemis are often portrayed as accompanied by swans. It is in part because of the association of swans with physical grace that Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* is for many the quintessential classical ballet.

In the imagery of alchemy the swan symbolizes the element mercury in its volatility.

The swan is important in heraldry as well, frequently appearing in coats of arms. A chivalric Order of the Swan was founded in 1440, then renewed in 1843 by the German king Friedrich Wilhelm II as a charitable secular order, but never came into operation.

A strange, negative symbolic interpretation of the swan surfaces in medieval bestiaries. In contrast to its snow-white plumage, it is written, the bird has "utterly black flesh": "Thus it is a symbol of the hypocrite, whose black sinful flesh is clothed by white garments. When the bird's white plumage is stripped away, its black flesh is roasted in the fire. So, too, will the hypocrite once dead, be stripped of worldly splendor and descend into the fires of hell." Bockler, on the other hand, writes that swans do battle even with eagles if attacked. They are the royalty among waterfowl; the meaning that they carry is of the whiteness of peace. (1688)

FUN FACTS

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- Matthew Bourne was inspired by Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, *The Birds*, when creating the choreography, "particularly the scene in which one bird lands on a climbing frame and, when the heroine turns, has suddenly turned into a menacing flock." This movie moment was used in a bedroom scene in the palace.

- Bourne has said of the show: "It's been interpreted as a homosexual story, but that wasn't the explicit intention. The prince's relationship with the swan is more about a repressed young man's need to be loved, rather than about any sexual desire."

- The 1995 premiere of *Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake* was controversial. Bourne has described little girls in the theatre crying that their parents had taken them to the wrong *Swan Lake*. A few people walked out of the theatre when the prince danced with the male swan. Fortunately, the ballet's supporters outnumbered the critics, making it possible for audiences around the world to enjoy Bourne's acclaimed production.

- Matthew Bourne's version of *Swan Lake* is "much more firmly rooted in reality with a clear intention throughout the piece for the story not to be explained by magic."

- Bourne and his original Swan/ Stranger, dancer Adam Cooper, observed that swans are not always graceful. Cooper says of them: "Whenever you think of swans, you think of these elegant, beautiful creatures, soft...but actually, in reality, they are really quite ferocious, wild animals... They are not the most elegant creatures. Especially when

they are taking off and landing. They quite gangly and ungainly. So trying to find a way to represent that in an aesthetically pleasing way wasn't always easy."

- When conducting, Tchaikovsky would hold his chin with his left hand; he was said to have a fear of his head falling off as he kept time with the music.

- Tchaikovsky showed musical talent as a child, but his parents did not encourage him. They felt it had an unhealthy effect on their already nervous and excitable child. One night after a party, his mother found him awake, pointing to his forehead, and crying, "Oh this music, this music! Take it away! It's here and it won't let me sleep!"



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