

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

EDUCATION

TEACHER'S RESOURCE KIT
PRIMARY SCHOOLS



SWAN LAKE

Contents

- 04/** Synopsis
- 09/** Cast of Characters
- 10/** The Creatives
- 11/** The Design
- 12/** The Music
- 13/** Curricular activities

SWAN LAKE



SWAN LAKE

The Australian Ballet's current version

Choreography: Stephen Baynes

Original choreography: Marius Petipa

Music: Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Designed by: Hugh Colman

Lighting designed by: Rachel Burke

Projections designed and directed by: Domenico Bartolo (21-19)

SWAN LAKE

SYNOPSIS



Prince Siegfried is a young man who lives with his mother. It is the night before his 21st birthday, and he misses his father who died when he was a young boy.

SWAN LAKE

ACT I: THE NEXT DAY



The Prince's friends try to cheer him up and distract him from his worries. His mother, the Queen, arrives with The Chancellor. The Chancellor has ruled the kingdom since the King died.



Visiting foreign princesses are presented to the Prince, but he is not interested! Prince Siegfried dances and drinks with his friends.



At the end of the party, he goes back to the lake on his own.

SWAN LAKE

ACT II: THE LAKE



Siegfried sees a white swan, who transforms into the beautiful Princess Odette before his eyes!



Odette and her swan friends are prisoners of the evil magician von Rothbart. They are kept as swans all day, only allowed to be human for a few hours every night.



Only a vow of true love can break the spell. Siegfried promises Odette he will love her forever. Odette loves Siegfried too, though she is still frightened of von Rothbart's evil powers.



SWAN LAKE

ACT III: THE NEXT DAY



A great ball is taking place at the palace, and Prince Siegfried is meant to choose a girl to be his future wife and Princess. No one knows that he is in love with Odette.



Von Rothbart interrupts the party; he has brought his daughter Odile with him.



She looks like Odette, and Prince Siegfried is tricked! Prince Siegfried is very upset and runs away from the palace.

SWAN LAKE

ACT IV



The women at the lake will now stay swans forever. They gather round Odette to protect their friend.



The Prince begs Odette to forgive him and she does, however the Prince drowns himself from despair and shame.



Odette's soul is released, and she is free of von Rothbart forever.





CAST OF CHARACTERS

Prince Siegfried, heir to the throne
The Queen
The child Siegfried
A babushka, Siegfried's childhood nurse
Her husband
Ladies in waiting to the Queen
The Lord Chancellor
Baron von Rothbart, an evil magician who presides over the lake by the palace
Benno, an officer and close friend to Prince Siegfried
The Duchess
The Countess
Foreign princesses, prospective brides for Prince Siegfried
Princess Odette, a captive of von Rothbart
Lead Swans

Cygnets
Odile, daughter to von Rothbart
von Rothbart's entourage – Spanish dancers, Russian Princess, Cossacks
Officers and ladies of the court, Ambassadors, Swan maidens, Guards, Serving women

The Creatives

STEPHEN BAYNES *Choreographer*

Stephen Baynes joined The Australian Ballet as a dancer in 1976. He left to join the Stuttgart Ballet in 1981 and returned to the company in 1985. His extraordinary talent as a choreographer was first unveiled in 1986 with *Strauss Songs*, a work created for a company choreographic workshop. In 1988, Stephen won The Australian Ballet's 25th anniversary choreographic competition with *Ballade*.

In 1995 Stephen was appointed The Australian Ballet's resident choreographer. Since then he has created 20 works for the company. In 2005 *Unspoken Dialogues* received the Helpmann Award for Best Choreography and both *Molto Vivace* and *Constant Variants* received the Betty Pounder Award for Best Choreography at the Green Room Awards.

Stephen has had works commissioned by New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, the Queensland Ballet, West Australian Ballet, and the Hong Kong Ballet.

PIOTR ILLYICH TCHAIKOVSKY *Composer*

One of the outstanding composers of the late 19th century and the best known of all Russian composers, Tchaikovsky had a genius for creating melodies, a mastery of musical structure, and a highly developed sense of musical drama that enabled him to reach directly into the hearts of his listeners.

Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votinsk, in the Ural Mountains of European Russia in 1840, but when he was ten his family moved to St. Petersburg where he went through traditional schooling, studying law. At 19 he became a clerk in the Ministry of Justice.

At this point in his life, Tchaikovsky realised that he wanted to be a musician. For a while he studied music theory and composition at a music school founded by Anton Rubinstein, although still continuing with his job. Then to the surprise of everyone he resigned to concentrate on music. In 1865 he graduated from the music school and won a position as teacher at the Moscow Conservatory, though his aims remained more compositional than pedagogical.

Though Tchaikovsky wrote only three ballets, almost all his music is imbued with theatricality and the qualities of dance, especially in its rhythmic energy, vivid melody and emotional clarity. His symphonies, concertos, tone poems, orchestral suites, chamber music, and even songs have all made fine ballet scores.

In 1875 the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, commissioned Tchaikovsky to compose the music to *Swan Lake*. This was Tchaikovsky's first professional ballet score, though there is no doubt that he suggested the story, as he had some six years earlier composed and played on the piano the score for a one act ballet-pantomime, *The Lake of Swans*, especially for his sister's children and their friends.

He began composing enthusiastically and wrote the first two acts in three weeks. The orchestral score was finished on 22 April, although the ballet was not premiered until the February/March of the following year, 1877. But the premiere was not a success: the music was above the heads of the Moscow ballet audiences of the time. The original choreographer Joseph Reisinger cut some numbers and replaced them with pieces from other ballets by more "rum-ti-tum" composers.

After 1883 the ballet was not given in full in the composer's lifetime, although at the end of a concert conducted by him in Prague in 1888 (by which time he had been transformed from a little-known, underpaid junior professor to a world-famous musician) a special performance of Act II was presented for him.

Tchaikovsky died in 1893, aged 53, and to honour his memory Petipa, in collaboration with the composer-conductor Riccardo Drigo, set about reshaping the forgotten *Swan Lake*. This version, the basis of every version since, had its first performance at the Mariinsky Theatre in January 1895.

HUGH COLMAN *Designer*

Hugh Colman is an honours graduate of Melbourne University and trained as a designer with the Melbourne Theatre Company. He has been a resident designer for that company, as well as for the State Theatre Company of South Australia. The major part of his career since 1970 has been working as a freelance designer.

With close to a50 production credits, he has worked for most of the major theatre, dance and opera companies in Australia. These include The Australian Ballet, Opera Australia, Victoria State Opera, and State Opera of South Australia, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, State Theatre Company of South Australia and various commercial enterprises.

In 2006 Colman won the John Truscott Award for Excellence in Design. Previous Green Room Awards were for The Australian Ballet's productions of *The Sleeping Beauty* (1984) and *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*.

The Creatives

RACHEL BURKE
Lighting Designer

Lighting Designer Rachel has worked as a freelance lighting designer for Australia's leading arts companies, including The Australian Ballet, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, Company B Belvoir Street and Playbox, for over two decades.

She is the recipient of six Green Room Awards for Outstanding Lighting Design and was nominated for a Helpmann Award and a Sydney Theatre Award in 2005 for Malthouse Theatre's *Black Medea*.

Previous lighting designs for The Australian Ballet include *Dark Lullaby*, *intersext*, *El Tango*, *Imaginary Masque*, *Unspoken Dialogues*, *Molto Vivace*, *Ballet Imperial*, *Scuola di ballo* and Stephen Baynes' *Swan Lake*.

Rachel was Senior Associate at Electrolight Pty Ltd from 2007–2012 and her exterior architectural lighting design for the Arts Centre Hamer Hall Victoria won the IES National and State Award of Excellence 2005. Major projects with Electrolight include the façade lighting for AAMI Park; Lonsdale Street Dandenong Revitalisation RCD; the Legislative Council Chamber, Parliament House Victoria; and the commissioned permanent foyer art works for Hamer Hall, with Robert Owen.

She presented a paper on Light and Health in Madrid for the PLDC Conference October 2011 and for the Melbourne IES in April 2012

DOMENICO BARTOLO
Projection Designer and Director

Domenico Bartolo is an international designer/director and the co-founder of 21-19, a design and communications agency based in Melbourne.

In his 16 years as a designer/director, Dom has dedicated himself to the art of moving image. His work is highly rewarded and respected. He consistently wins major awards every year, including the coveted Best of Show at the BDA Promax Awards for his opening title sequence for the SBS drama series *Going Home*. His branding work for the international airline Qantas was awarded the highest honour: the Pinnacle Award at the Australian Graphic Design Association Awards.

More recently, his short films have found audiences in European contemporary art galleries; his short film *The Reality Project* was selected to feature at the 10th anniversary of the prestigious onedotzero Moving Image Festival at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London. His animated film *In Motion* was shown at the British Film Institute in London.

Endeavouring to explore visual communication, Domenico is dedicated to promoting creativity within the Australian design community. He is a founding member of the popular design web site The Australian INfront.

Relentlessly optimistic, he is driven by an overwhelming passion for design and creative excellence.

The Design



Hugh Colman's designs for *Swan Lake* are set in the Victorian era. The scenario he worked from was intercultural marriage, seen in both the English and Russian royal families. The King dies, and with her son being too young to rule, the Queen is at a loss. With her husband gone, the Chancellor manipulates her.

Military references run through the ballet. Hugh Colman's designs also reference the children of royal families.

The costumes of the Queen in Act III are inspired by photos of Queen Victoria's clothes, with their sashes, borders and opulent decorations.

At the opening of the ballet we see the child Siegfried and his distraught mother at the funeral of his father, the King. The Kings' body is brought across the lake and the child Prince is terrified by the mysterious boatman who accompanies the funeral barge.

The set design includes the use of projected images which appear sparingly in the second and third acts. The purpose of the projections is to emphasise the omnipotence of Rothbart.



The swans in Stephen Bayne's Swan Lake are women, not birds. The costumes reflect this; they lack the feathers seen in other versions. The bodices have appliqué and the skirts are made of nylon net.

The Music



Orchestra Victoria is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Australian Ballet, and its performance partner.

Orchestra Victoria is also the performance partner of Opera Australia and Victorian Opera.

The Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra accompany The Australian Ballet during its Sydney seasons.

Did you know?

An orchestra consists of four sections of instruments.

- The **string** section consists of violins, violas, cellos and string basses
- The **woodwind** section consists of flutes, bassoons, oboes and clarinets
- The **brass** section has several trumpets, French horns, trombones and one tuba
- The **percussion** section has all sorts of instruments, **especially** those that you can **hit, rattle** or **shake**

A full-scale orchestra playing a symphony contains at least 90 musicians, while a smaller orchestra might range from 15 – 45 members. There are over 45 musicians in Orchestra Victoria, as well as a Concertmaster and a Deputy Concertmaster.

THE CONDUCTOR

A conductor directs all the musicians in the orchestra, using a stick called a baton. The conductor decides how loud or fast, soft or slow a piece of music should be played. The conductor for most of The Australian Ballet's performances is Nicolette Fraillon, the company's Music Director and Chief Conductor.

Curricular Activities

RESPONDING

Discuss the different personality traits of the characters in *Swan Lake*. How would you describe

- Princess Odette
- Odile, daughter to von Rothbart
- Prince Siegfried
- Baron von Rothbart

Describe the costumes worn in *Swan Lake*. Are they important to each character?

Discuss the way that dance is made up of lines and curves shown through the body. Arms, legs and torso can all make positions which are linear, angular, curved, rounded or a combination of these. Discuss the different dynamics (the type of energy with which a movement is performed) demonstrated by characters in *Swan Lake*.

In *Swan Lake*, the white swan Odette is really a princess under the spell of the magician von Rothbart. She is played by the same ballerina as Odile, the black swan daughter of evil von Rothbart, who tricks the prince into believing she is Odette.

Discuss the ways in which the dancer moves to express their contrasting character traits – good or evil.

six body positions. Three will focus on making lines and angles using tension, and three on making more relaxed positions to produce curves with the body. Encourage the students to think of interesting positions that they may have discovered earlier, and to think about how the look and feel of the elastic can now be shown through the body.

The students can then devise a short movement phrase by linking these still positions together.

CRITIQUING

Thinking about the Odette/Odile character's roles in the story, discuss in small groups what sort of body positions each would make. Would one of the characters use straight lines in their dancing more than curves? How would each character move? Students can come up with different words to describe the movements of each character. There may be some similarities as well as differences.

MAKING

Following a discussion on the *Swan Lake* characters, students will develop the discussion by using their ideas around reflecting and interpreting character traits through movement.

Notably, in most versions of *Swan Lake*, Odette, the white swan, and Odile, the black swan, daughter of evil von Rothbart who tricks the Prince into believing she is Odette, are performed by the same ballerina. The dancer must move in different ways (positions and dynamics) to express their contrasting character traits.

Working in small groups, each group will have a long piece of elastic joined at the ends to make a loop. The students can use the elastic to make various shapes; a line, squares, triangles, circles, curves and so on. Experiment by making different shapes with different combinations of people controlling the elastic.

Ask the student groups to invent three shapes that demonstrate lines, extension and tension. What does the elastic look and feel like when making these types of shapes?

Each group can explore the opposite of this – making three shapes to create soft lines and relaxed positions. Again consider the look and feel of the elastic in these shapes.

Divide the group into pairs and ask each to invent and memorise

THE EDUCATION HUB IS
BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE COLIN PEASLEY OAM
FUND FOR EDUCATION

Photography Cover Justin Ridler, Pages 3-13 Jeff Busby.

Government
Partners



Principal
Partner



The
Australian
Ballet

