



# Swan Lake

— WITH THE ORCHESTRA —

February 13-16, 2014

Benedum Center for Performing Arts

PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

Audience Production Guide

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# Swan Lake

— WITH THE ORCHESTRA —

Original Choreography by **Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov**

Staged by **Terrence S. Orr**

Costume Design by Peter Farmer ▪ Scenic Design by Julia Trevelyan Oman

Music by **Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky**

**February 13-16, 2014**

**The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts**

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## About *Swan Lake*

*Swan Lake* premiered in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre on March 4, 1877, with choreography by Julius Wenzel Reisinger and a score by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Surprising to us today, the ballet failed in its first run. Reviews criticized the choreography as mediocre, and the prima ballerina (Pelagaya Karpakova) and the conductor as inadequate. Some also felt the score was too complex for ballet, while others were unhappy about the juxtaposition of the gorgeous, intricate music with the rather unexceptional performance of the dancers.



Pierina Legnani [image source](#)

The *Swan Lake* that is known and loved by the world today is the product of the ballet's revision for the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. After Tchaikovsky's death in 1893, the Maryinsky (now the Kirov Theatre) commissioned Marius Petipa, ballet master of the Imperial Ballet, to create a new version of *Swan Lake*. Petipa had worked with Tchaikovsky on *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker* and knew the composer's work well. Petipa delegated some of the choreography (Acts 2 and 4—the "swan" scenes) to his assistant, Lev Ivanov. The new production of *Swan Lake* made its re-entry into the ballet world on January 27, 1895. This time, it was a resounding success.

A major factor in the ballet's triumph was Italian ballerina Pierina Legnani, whose interpretation of the dual role of Odette/Odile—the White and Black Swans—is legendary. Her performance marked the first time a ballerina had

performed both roles. Her performance marked the first time a ballerina had

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### Origins of the *Swan Lake* Story

The story of the ballet has its roots in the ancient tale of the "swan maiden," a theme that appears in slightly different forms in the literature and folk traditions of many countries and cultures. An early Hindu legend, ancient Greek mythology and the Arabian tales of *One Thousand and One Nights* all include stories of a woman who turns into a swan or vice-versa.

The libretto for the ballet probably grew from German and Russian swan maiden folk tales. It is not known for certain who the author is: it may have been written by Reisinger; by Vladimir Petrovich Begichev, director of the Imperial Theatres; or Vassily Geltser, a prominent soloist dancer who was well-read and cultured. Tchaikovsky also may have contributed. Begichev accompanied Tchaikovsky and a group of artists and supporters who toured Western Europe in 1868 with the production of Tchaikovsky's first opera, *The Voyevoda*. Three years later when Tchaikovsky visited his sister for a summer, he wrote, directed and choreographed a miniature ballet, "The Lake of the Swans" for his nieces and nephews.



## Storyline and Endings

Most of today's productions of the ballet follow the same basic outline:

*A young village girl named Odette has been cursed by the evil wizard Von Rothbart, so that by day she is the Queen of the Swans and by night she returns to her true human form. Prince Siegfried, who wanders into the magical forest where Odette lives, is taken by her beauty and eventually falls in love with her. But the only way to break her curse is if he swears that he has fallen in love with her and shows a true sign of his love for her. When Odette is asked by the Prince to attend a Ball with him, Von Rothbart's daughter Odile is transformed to look like Odette and fool Siegfried into believing that Odile is Odette. Odile makes him fall in love with her instead, stopping Siegfried from breaking Odette's curse. Siegfried swears his love for Odile at the ball, thinking she is Odette. Realizing with horror what he has done, Siegfried runs into the forest to find Odette. The two reunite and Siegfried confesses his love for Odette, and she forgives him.*



Design for Act II by F. Gaanen, 1877; [Picture source](#)

The storyline of the 1877 ballet was more dark, violent and tragic than the versions we know today. It included some elements that largely aren't in current productions:

- Odette's evil stepmother, in the guise of an owl, was her tormenter rather than Von Rothbart
- Odette's crown was magical and her only protection from the stepmother
- Siegfried tore the protective crown off of Odette, setting in motion a double suicide at the end
- The ending included a terrible flood, with undulating waves as a part of the scenic design

In today's productions, there are almost as many endings for the ballet as there are ballet companies! Here are a few:

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre	National Ballet of Canada (2010)	Various Russian and Chinese Versions	New York City Ballet (2009)
Siegfried declares his love for Odette and the lovers throw themselves into the lake. The act strikes Von Rothbart dead and his power broken. The lovers are united in life after death.	Odette forgives Siegfried for his betrayal and the promise of reconciliation shines momentarily before Rothbart summons forth a violent storm. Rothbart and Siegfried struggle. When the storm subsides, Odette is left alone to mourn the dead Siegfried.	The true love between Siegfried and Odette defeats von Rothbart, who dies after the prince breaks one of his wings. Odette is restored to human form to unite happily with the prince.	The Prince's declaration that he wishes to marry Odile constitutes a betrayal that condemns Odette to remain a swan forever. Odette is called away into swan form, and Siegfried is left alone in grief as the curtain falls.

## A Swan Lake Timeline

- 1877:** First performance of the ballet *Swan Lake* in Moscow for the Bolshoi Theatre (Tchaikovsky's score and Reisinger's choreography).
- 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 II of *Swan Lake* for a performance at an event memorializing Tchaikovsky, marking a resurgence in interest in re-choreographing the ballet.
- 1895:** The Petipa/Ivanov version of *Swan Lake* premieres at the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.
- 1895:** Pierina Legnani, Odette/Odile in the ballet, performs 32 fouettes in Act III. Petipa inserted the sequence especially for her (she had first performed the feat in *Cinderella*).
- 1911:** *Swan Lake* debuts in America (in condensed form) at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City with the program "All Star Imperial Russian Ballet."
- 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 II 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:** In its first season, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre performs Act III of *Swan Lake* with famed guest stars Violette Verdy and Edward Villella from New York City Ballet.
- 1971:** PBT's first full-length performance of the ballet with guest stars Natalia Makarova and Ted Kivitt from American Ballet Theatre.
- 1984:** Rudolf Nureyev creates a version of the ballet that extends Siegfried's role with significant solos.
- 1995:** Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*, with an all-male cast, premieres at Sadlers' Wells theater, London.
- 2014:** PBT stages the full-length production for the 14th time.

Ted Kivitt and Natalia Makarova in PBT's 1971 production. Photo by Michael Friedlander



# The Setting and Characters

<b>Choreography:</b>	Marius Petipa & Lev Ivanov
<b>Music:</b>	Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky
<b>Costume Design:</b>	Peter Farmer
<b>Lighting Design:</b>	Robert Hand, Jr.
<b>Set Design:</b>	Julia Trevelyan Oman, R.D.I
<b>World Premiere:</b>	January 27, 1895

## The Setting

The ballet takes place in two locations, Siegfried's Castle (the ballroom and courtyard) in Acts I and III and the lake/forest in Acts II and IV. Both are represented by large painted backdrops. For the lake, smaller side backdrops of painted trees frame the stage to give the illusion of a bigger forest. There are very few props needed in this ballet.

## The Characters

**Odette:** *Village girl who has been turned into a swan by the evil wizard Von Rothbart. Falls in love with Prince Siegfried.*

**Siegfried:** *Prince who has arrived at an age where he must choose a wife. While on a hunting trip into the woods meets and falls in love with the girl/swan named Odette.*

**Odile:** *The evil Von Rothbart's daughter who tries to trick Prince Siegfried into thinking she is Odette by transforming herself to look like her*

**Von Rothbart:** *Evil wizard who turns Odette into a swan*

**Benno:** *Siegfried's best friend*

**The Queen:** Siegfried's mother

**Cygnets and Swans:** *Magical swans that inhabit the forest and protect it and their queen*



## Additional Characters:

**The Tutor**

**The Jester**

**Court gentlemen and ladies**

**Friends of the prince**

**Guests at Siegfried's party/  
ball**

**The Vision (of Odette)**

**Master of Ceremonies**

**Czardas**

**Spanish (dancer)**

**Neapolitan (dancer)**

**Mazurka (dancer)**

**The Princesses**

The Jester (Makoto Ono) flies across the stage while Court Gentlemen and Ladies look on. The backdrop shown is the Courtyard Scene. Photo by Rich Sofranko, 2010

# The Synopsis

## ACT I

(In the late afternoon. A meadow near the castle.) Prince Siegfried is celebrating his twenty-first birthday. His friend Benno and tutor Wolfgang have invited guests from the surrounding estates to join in the celebration. The party is interrupted by the arrival of the Queen Mother, who presents her son with a crossbow and reminds him that it will be his duty at his coming of age to choose a bride from six eligible princesses. The Queen departs and the festivities continue until Benno sights a flight of swans. Inspired by his new crossbow, the Prince calls Benno to organize a hunting party and the young men leave in search of the swans.



## ACT II

(Some hours later, after sunset. By the lake.) As Prince Siegfried enters the forest, he suddenly sees a magnificent swan in flight. He carefully takes aim, but to his astonishment, the bird transforms into a most beautiful maiden. At first the maiden is frightened by Siegfried, but he assures her he will do no harm and asks her to explain the marvel he has just seen. She tells him she is the Princess Odette, of high birth who fell under the spell of an evil sorcerer, and now her fate is to be a swan; only in the hours of darkness may she assume her human guise. Indeed, this very lake is filled with her mother's tears. She tells him she is condemned for eternity, and only if a young man, true of heart, swears eternal love to her and marries her, will the spell be broken. But if he should betray her, she will remain a swan forever. Siegfried realizes his destiny has changed, and swears his love and faithfulness to Odette. At that moment, the sorcerer appears. The Prince in his passion reaches for his crossbow, but Odette pleads with him not to shoot, for she knows if the sorcerer is killed before the spell is broken, she too will die. Dawn approaches, the sorcerer disappears, and Odette is compelled by the spell to return to her guise as a swan.



## ACT III

(The next night. The Great Palace Hall.) Guests assemble for the birthday ball, including six princesses from different countries whom the Queen Mother has chosen as eligible maidens for her son's hand. Prince Siegfried dances with each beautiful young princess. He is urged by his mother to make a decision, but is haunted by the memory of Odette and refuses to choose a bride. Suddenly, a fanfare announces the arrival of Baron Von Rothbart with his daughter Odile. Siegfried is thrilled to see the young maiden, who is the image of his beloved Odette. He is

dazzled by her beauty and vibrance, and deceived into declaring his love and fidelity to Odile. As Prince Siegfried swears his love, a fleeting vision of the real Odette appears. Von Rothbart, with Odile, triumphantly reveals their wicked ruse. Siegfried realizes he is victim of an evil plot and exits the great hall in search of Odette.

#### ACT IV

(Later that night. By the lakeside.) The swan-maidens are anxiously waiting the return of Odette. She appears and tells of Von Rothbart's treachery. Before dawn, she intends to die. A great storm rages. Siegfried, bursting into the glade, discovers the tearful Odette and begs her forgiveness. As dawn approaches, Von Rothbart appears again in his disguise as a sorcerer. Odette tells Siegfried she must kill herself, or forever be a swan. Siegfried, knowing his heart belongs only to Odette, declares he will die with her, thus breaking the power of Rothbart. The lovers throw themselves into the lake. Rothbart is mortally struck and his power is ended.

*Apotheosis: The lovers are united in life after death.*



Erin Halloran and Nurlan Abougaliev, 2010. Abougaliev as Rothbart (different performance). Photos by Rich Sofranko, 2010

## The Composer: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Kamsko-Votinsk, Russia on May 7, 1840. He was a precocious child who could read French and German at the age of six and at age seven was writing verses in French. He began taking piano lessons when he was seven years old. He showed an ultra-sensitivity to music and had a delicate musical ear.

In 1850 his well-to-do middle-class family moved to St. Petersburg where he attended school. He was mildly interested in music and at age 14 began attempting composition. By the time he graduated from the School of Jurisprudence in 1859 and had started work as a clerk first-class, his family had lost most of their money due to bad investments. Tchaikovsky ended up making a great deal of money during his life, but gave away much of it and freely spent the rest.

At age twenty-one he began to study music seriously. He worked with Nicolai Zarembo until the St. Petersburg Conservatory opened in



Tchaikovsky at 25, photo by Zakharin.  
[Photo source](#)

1862. He was one of the best students at the conservatory and in 1866 he moved to Moscow to be a harmony teacher for the Moscow Conservatory. He led a quiet life there, teaching and composing. In 1877, a wealthy widow started to subsidize Tchaikovsky, a relationship that was to last fourteen years. However, there was one strange condition to the widow's financial support—they were never to meet. With this financial independence, he was able to resign from the Conservatory in 1878.

When Tchaikovsky first began composing for ballet, ballet music was considered unimaginative: the music world was astonished that such a great composer would "stoop so low." But he showed an unprecedented mastery of the art, creating vivid orchestrations, effective themes and melodies that flawlessly matched physical movements.\* He went on to compose three full-length ballets that would become enduring masterworks of the genre: *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*.

\**The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 152-3

## The Music

*Swan Lake* was Tchaikovsky's first ballet. Years earlier he had begun working on a score for the ballet *Cinderella* but he seems to have abandoned the idea. In letters to his friends and family Tchaikovsky explained that his motivation for undertaking *Swan Lake* was partly because he needed the money (he received 800 rubles for this work) and partly because he wanted to try composing for ballets. It's not known whether Tchaikovsky and Reisinger collaborated to any great extent: Tchaikovsky completed the score in about a year and Reisinger created the choreography based on the finished product.

*Swan Lake* would eventually change the public perception of music for ballet but, at the time, Tchaikovsky didn't realize he had written a masterpiece. He was under the impression that Léo Delibes' score for the ballet *Sylvia* was vastly superior to his own work, writing "...what charm, what wealth of melody! It brought me to shame, for had I known of this music, I would have never written *Swan Lake*."

What we now recognize as Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* score probably sounds very different from his original 1877 arrangement. Riccardo Drigo (an Italian composer and Maryinsky Theatre conductor, who had conducted the premiere of Tchaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*) and Modeste Tchaikovsky (the composer's brother) reworked it for the Petipa/Ivanov version in 1895. Drigo lightened the orchestration, cut certain passages and added others, giving the ballet an easier and less discordant feel. This version has been used by most succeeding *Swan Lake* productions.

-adapted from [theballetbag.com](http://theballetbag.com) and [classicalcat.net](http://classicalcat.net).

### Instrumentation for *Swan Lake*

Violin 1	7	Clarinet	2
Violin 2	6	Bassoon	2
Viola	4	French Horn	4
Cello	4	Trumpet	3
Bass	3	Trombone	3
Flute/Piccolo	3	Tuba	1
Oboe/English Horn	2	Timpani	1
		Percussion	2
		Harp	1

# Swan Lake Listening Guide

## Glossary of Musical Terms

**Allegro**—quick, lively tempo

**Arpeggio**—a series of notes spelling a chord

**Brass instruments**—metal wind instruments, including: trumpet, trombone, euphonium, and tuba

**Chord**—a set of three or more notes played together

**Crescendo**—to grow louder

**Double reeds**—instruments whose sound is produced by two joined reeds vibrating, including oboes, English horns, and bassoons

**Dynamic**—volume

**Fermata**—an orchestral note or rest held out of time

**f (forte)**—loud

**ff (fortissimo)**—very loud

**Grazioso**—graceful

**Legato**—in a smooth, even style

**Melody**—a musical line or statement comprising a series of notes

**Offbeat**—normally unaccented beat

**p (piano)**—soft

**pp (pianissimo)**—very soft

**Pizzicato**—played with plucked strings

**Staccato**—short articulation

**Strings**—wooden instruments with strings, played by bowing or plucking, including: violins, violas, celli, and double bass

**Syncopation**—a shift of accent caused by stressing a normally weak beat

**Tempo**—pace of the music

**Theme**—a brief melody which forms the basis of a passage

**Time signature**—an indication of rhythm and beat. 2/4 is felt in two beats that are each divided into even numbers of smaller beats; 6/8 is felt in two beats that are each divided into three smaller beats

**Tremolo**—a wavering effect produced by quickly alternating between two notes

**Tutti**—all playing together

**Vivace**—lively and vivacious

**Woodwinds**—wind instruments, most of them made of wood, including: clarinet, oboe, flute, bassoon, French horn, bass clarinet, and English horn

### Swan Theme

To begin this famous number, quiet string **tremolos** and harp **arpeggios** announce the lyrical oboe solo (Excerpt 1). The Prince sees the swan Odette and falls in love with her; through her morose **theme** he sees her curse. The harp and strings create a sense of romance for the scene, as well as mystery about the lake and tragedy about Odette's situation. The music **crescendos** from **pianissimo** to **forte**, and the **brass** take up Odette's theme with drama and intensity as the strings' tremolos continue. Tchaikovsky incorporates graceful **syncopation**, with the **woodwinds** playing quick **legato** triplets under **strings' melody**, then the strings forming slow, sweeping triplets (Excerpt 2). The melody returns in a **tutti fff**, then the music winds down with quiet tremolos as the prince is left alone, enchanted by Odette.

Excerpt 1



Excerpt 2



## Dance of the Little Swans

Marked *piano*, the goose-like music opens with a comical **staccato** bass line provided by bassoons. Represented by **double reed** instruments, the swans dance gingerly in perfect synchronization to a bouncing harmonized melody in the oboes. The woodwinds join the oboes, followed by the strings, remaining consistently light and **staccato** until a final slurred section in the woodwinds.



## Mazurka

This palace dance opens with *tutti ff* chords and a **fermata** rest, followed by a run up to the opening of the mazurka. The mazurka—a Polish folk dance—is felt in one large beat subdivided into three, with an accented second beat (Excerpt 1). Following the theme with use of tambourine and intermittent fluttering woodwind figures, the music suddenly changes to a **grazioso** clarinet duet over **pizzicato** strings (Excerpt 2). The **tempo** picks up for an energetic string line leading back to the original theme, then intensifies in tempo and **dynamic** to a series of *ff* chords.

Excerpt 1



Excerpt 2



## Coda of the Black Swan Pas De Deux (Act III)

The Black Swan's coda is composed of energized, Russian-sounding music marked **allegro molto vivace** in a quick 2/4 **time signature**. With cymbal crashes on every **offbeat**, the orchestra plays a *ff* melody (Excerpt 1), which is then imitated by the woodwinds accompanied by *pizzicato* strings. With a series of energized *tutti ff* chords (Excerpt 2), the Black Swan twirls in 32 consecutive fouettés (see page 14). After a sudden pause the music begins again, starting quietly with the woodwinds and building up to a repeat of the beginning of the coda. The orchestra repeats detached *ff* notes until concluding with finality on a **fermata** chord.

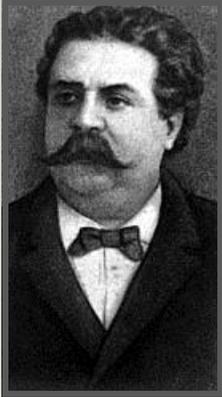
Excerpt 1



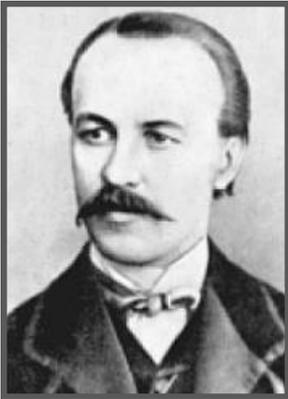
Excerpt 2



# The Choreographers



**Julius Reisinger** (1828-1892), *Swan Lake*'s first choreographer, was born in Prague. He began his professional life as a dancer in the corps de ballet and achieved the rank of leading soloist. By 1850 he was appearing in starring roles in *Giselle* and other Romantic-era ballets and soon secured an 8-year contract to dance in Germany and Austria. He had stints as ballet master/choreographer at theaters in Prague and Leipzig during the 1860s. He then became choreographer of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. He authored more than twenty works and is linked with two memorable events: the first stage production of *Swan Lake* and the first ballet performance for the opening of the Prague National Theatre in 1884. [Picture Source](#)



**Lev Ivanov** was born in Russia in 1834. He is said to have been placed in an orphanage by his mother when he was 11 months old, but in his memoirs he mentions being brought up by a merchant's family until age eight, sent to a boarding school for two years, and then enrolled in the Imperial School of Ballet in St. Petersburg.

In 1852 he became a member of the corps de ballet of the Maryinsky Theatre. Ballet master Jules Perrot (one of the choreographers of the ballet *Giselle*) gave him minor roles and appointed him to the position of dance teacher. When Marius Petipa succeeded Perrot, Ivanov became premier danseur and mime. He was known for his roles in the ballets *Esmeralda* and *La Bayadère*, among others.

[Picture Source](#)

Ivanov staged many ballets—both new ones and revivals—for the Imperial Theatre, including *The Nutcracker* (1892) and Acts II and IV of *Swan Lake* (1895), with Petipa. He was considered unlike any of the previous ballet masters in that he had a deep love and aptitude for music. (Though he had no formal musical training he was known to be able to play an entire ballet score after only one hearing.) He had an exceptional ability to “feel” the music and bring its emotional intensity to his choreography. His scenes in *Swan Lake* are lyrical and introspective in style (closer to the Romantic style of ballet), compared to Petipa's virtuosic and flamboyant court scenes, which helped to define ballet's Classical era.



**Marius Petipa**, the “father of classical ballet,” was born in Marseilles, France in 1818. He began dance training at the age of 7 with his father Jean Petipa, a French dancer and teacher. Marius was educated at the Grand College in Brussels and also attended the conservatoire, where he studied music. In 1831 he made his debut in his father's production of Gardel's *La Dansomanie*.

Jean Petipa became the Maitre de Ballet at the theatre in Bordeaux, and it was here that Marius completed his education. At sixteen he became premier danseur at the theatre in Nantes, where he also produced several short ballets. He toured North America with his father and in 1840 he made his debut at the Comedie Francaise, partnering the famous Carlotta Grisi in a benefit performance. He spent a few years dancing in Spain and Paris: in 1847 left for Russia. He had signed just a one-year contract but was to remain there for the rest of his life.

[Picture source](#)

Considered an excellent dancer and partner, his acting, stage manners, and pantomime were held up as examples for many generations. In 1854 he became an instructor in the Imperial Theatre

school, while continuing to dance and restage ballets from the French repertoire. Sources differ on the first original work he staged for the Imperial Theatre, but all concur that his first great success was *The Daughter of the Pharaoh*. This work resulted in his 1862 appointment as Choreographer-in-Chief—a position he held for nearly fifty years—and in 1869 he was given the added title of Premier Ballet Master of the Imperial Theatre. The value of his accomplishments is inestimable: he produced more than sixty full-evening ballets, including *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker*, *La Bayadere*, and *Don Quixote*, among others, as well as innumerable shorter works. He is considered to have laid the foundation for Russian ballet and for ballet itself in the 20th century. Petipa died in 1910.

## The Choreography

The choreography for *Swan Lake* was a collaboration between Petipa and Ivanov, with Petipa contributing Acts I and III and Ivanov Acts II and IV. Petipa's scenes define classical style, with character and court dances that dazzle with ornament and technical difficulty. Odile's 32 fouettes in Act III (inserted by Petipa for the ballerina Pierina Legnani) is one of highest feats of technical virtuosity a ballerina can achieve.

Acts II and IV—Ivanov's "white" or swan scenes—are distinctly different. Lyrical and introspective, they lack the showy embellishments of Petipa's scenes. The vocabulary is simple and clear: movements and poses suggest swan wings, necks, and bodies and offer images of flying, swimming, and preening. Act II, in scenes in which the swans move together as one entity, is often considered the greatest possible achievement for a corps de ballet. The combination of the two choreographers' styles, and the tension between them, is a perfect blend of brilliant choreographic composition: dazzling virtuosity and expressive intensity.



Petipa/Ivanov's *Swan Lake* has served as the basis for most productions since 1895. How much of the ballet remains true to the original choreography is unclear, however, as revisions are made continually by nearly every company that stages it. But, as George Balanchine once commented, "*Swan Lake* is always changing. That is as it should be."

*Photo by Rich Sofranko, 2010*

*Compiled from: Homans, Macaulay, PNB Notes (see Resources and References page.*

### Did You Know? *The Dying Swan*

*The Dying Swan* ballet, made famous by ballerina Anna Pavlova, is not part of *Swan Lake*. Choreographed by Michel Fokine, it was set to music by Camille Saint-Saëns and first performed by Pavlova in 1911. Fokine took part of his inspiration for the dance from Ivanov's style in *Swan Lake*—fluid, lyrical, introspective—and "opened the way to a freer, more intense and immediate style of dance." This new style signaled a change in ballet that would be felt (and seen) throughout the 20th century.

[Picture source.](#)

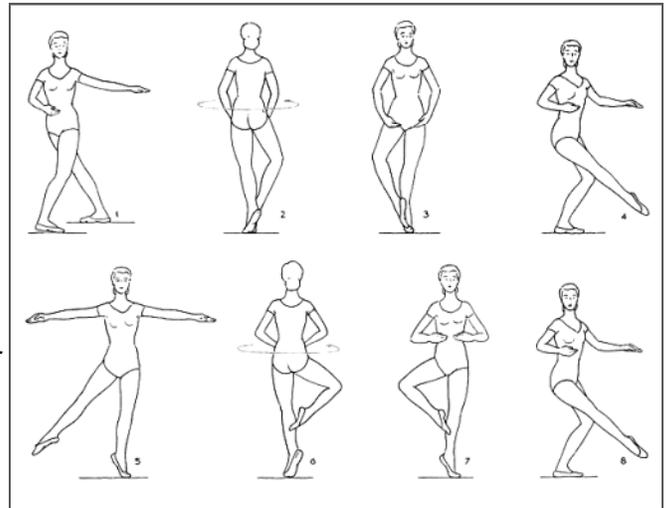


## Signature Step—Fouetté



A *fouetté* is a turn in which one leg makes a whipped circle. The dancer stands momentarily on flat foot with the supporting knee bent as the other "working" leg is whipped around to the side, creating the impetus to spin one turn. The working leg is then pulled in to touch the supporting knee as the dancer rises up on pointe on the supporting foot.

The ability to consecutively perform 32 of these turns (*fouettés en tournant*) is considered a bravura\* step by the ballerina, emphasizing her strength, stamina, and technique. Pierina Legnani was the first to perform 32 *fouettés* in the ballet *Cinderella* in 1893; she repeated the feat in *Swan Lake* in 1895 and in subsequent ballets as well.



\*a virtuosic step intended to show off the skill of the dancer

Top: Erin Halloran executing one of 32 fouettés in *Swan Lake*, 2010. Photo by Rich Sofranko. Right: Fouette diagram [image source](#)

## Costumes

In *Swan Lake* you can tell the swans from the "human" characters by their costumes. Prince Siegfried, his mother the Queen, his friend Benno, and the court visitors wear robes, gowns and dresses that are more or less normal attire for the era. The swans are set apart. They wear classical tutus—with the flat, pancake-like skirt that we most associate with classical ballet. Their costumes—along with their movements—help to create their other-worldly, magical aura.

### Fabric Facts

- ◇ Silk is the fabric of choice in ballet because it flows beautifully with the dancer's movements. It can also be dyed easily, so any color imaginable is possible.
- ◇ The peasant women in Act I wear romantic tutus, which are knee-length and have 4 layers of tulle and a silk organza overskirt. The tulle is in varying shades to give the tutu more depth. Headpieces are made of silk flowers wired into a crescent shape with ribbons. A romantic tutu takes about 3 days to make.

Costumes from Act I: Robert Vickery and Caitlin Peabody (in a romantic tutu), 2010. Photo by Rich Sofranko.





◇ Act III is “costume heavy,” with lush fabrics and trims used on the court and ethnic costumes. The princesses’ dresses have gold brocade bodices and skirts made of ombre-dyed silk chiffon. The czardas costumes are made of velvet, brocade, and a ruby-colored antique satin purchased in London.



◇ Von Rothbart’s costume is green brocade with petals made out of four different fabrics. Originally his cape was to the floor, but in dress rehearsal the Odette ballerina kept stepping on it . The cape had to be shortened just before the performance.

From Left: Anastasia Wovchko as the Queen; Elysa Hotchkiss and Robert Moore in the Spanish dance; Nurlan Abougaliyev as Von Rothbart, 2010. Photos by Rich Sofranko.

### Swan Lake’s Classical Tutus



Julia Erickson as Odette, 2010. Photo by Rich Sofranko

- ◇ Worn by the Swans, Odette and Odile
- ◇ Skirts extend straight out at the hip line so that the dancer’s legs and movements can be easily seen by the audience
- ◇ Made of 12 layers of a stiff, pleated net (Balanchine net)
- ◇ Fitted with hoops to hold horizontal shape
- ◇ Each bodice is 10 pieces of white silk (black for Odile)
- ◇ Feathers are applied to white flannel and attached to the bodice along with some sequins (feather trim removed for washing)
- ◇ Odile’s tutu is made of silk dupionne with gold metallic appliqués, which give a feathery effect. The glitz and glamour of her costume immediately grabs the audience’s (and Siegfried’s) attention (see page 10 for a photo)

### By The Numbers

- 3** Number of Odette and Odile tutus needed to fit the different ballerinas dancing those roles in PBT’s production
- 7** Days it takes to make **one** classical tutu
- 94** Costumes in the production
- 470** Accessories (headpieces, boots, etc.)
- 1994** When most of the costumes in this production were built. We reuse our costumes when we mount a production again (with some repairs and reconstruction each time!)

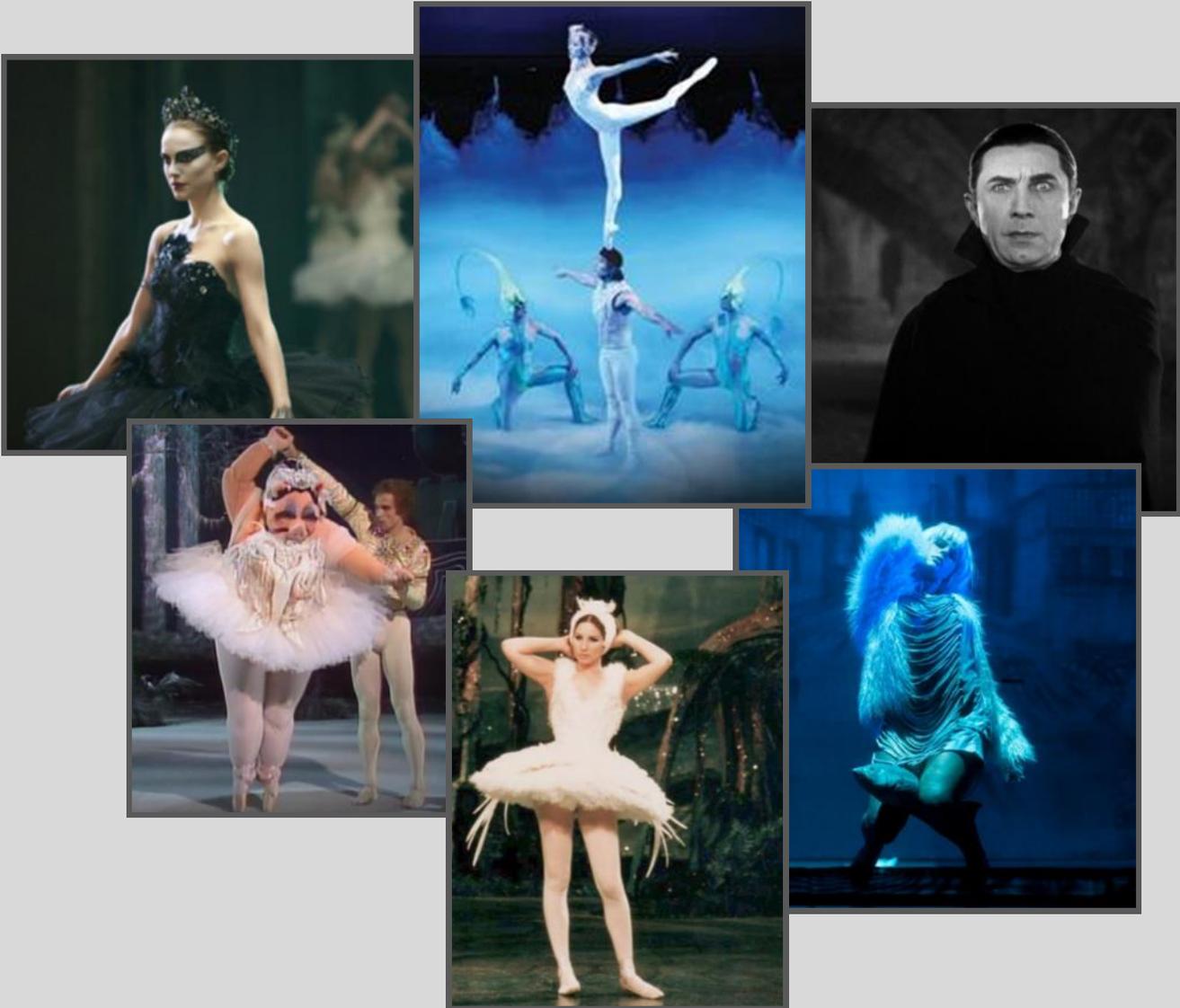
[Watch](#) Costumier Janet Marie Groom discuss how she builds classical tutus from our 2010 production!

### Did You Know? Black Swan

The character of Odile was not originally a “Black Swan.” Her costume was that of an enchantress—multi-colored, glittering, and no feathers! We don’t know who the first ballerina was to appear in a black tutu, but the tradition was set by the captivating performance of Tamara Toumanova, a Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo dancer who donned the tutu and the Black Swan persona at a 1941 New York performance.

# Swan Lake in Arts and Culture

One of the most important works in ballet history, *Swan Lake* has become part of modern popular culture as well. A few examples of the broad, cross-cultural reach of the ballet include:



*Clockwise from Top Left:*

- Natalie Portman in the film *Black Swan* (2010): a ballerina vies to win the dual role of the Swan Queen, and loses her sanity in the process. [Picture source.](#)
- Chinese State Circus performs an excerpt from *Swan Lake* with acrobatic choreography (note the ballerina on pointe on Siegfried's head). [Picture source.](#)
- *Dracula*, the 1931 film starring Bela Legosi, uses a modified version of the "Swan Theme" from Act II of the ballet during the opening credits. The same piece was later used for the credits of *The Mummy* and is often used as a backing track for the silent film, *Phantom of the Opera*. [Picture Source.](#)
- *Swan Lake Reloaded* is a street dance/hip hop version of the story, which premiered in Stockholm in 2012. By Swedish dancer/choreographer Fredrik Rydman. [Picture source.](#)
- Barbara Streisand as Fanny Brice, in a spoof of *Swan Lake* in the film *Funny Girl* (1968). [Picture source.](#)
- Rudolf Nuryev dances with a Muppet ballerina in "Swine Lake" on the *Muppet Show* in 1977. [Picture source.](#)

## For Further Thought

Alistair Macauley of *The New York Times* in his article [“So Whose Swan Lake Is It?”](#) (10 May 2012) discusses the legacy of Marius Petipa in ballet—for better or for worse—and the impact that 100+ years of revisions have taken on what we qualify as a “Petipa work.” He notes that scholars in recent years have begun investigating 19th century dance notation of Petipa’s ballets to see if they can recapture some of the original choreography. Look at the left and center pictures cited in McCauley’s article from the adagio section of Grand Pas de Deux between Odile and Siegfried in Act III. Compare these with the picture on the right to see how most productions of *Swan Lake* today end the adagio section.

- What differences do you see?
- What do these pictures tell us about the relationship between the characters based on their focus, their proximity to one another, and the extension of the legs?
- Which ending pose makes for more dramatic storytelling?
- Why should or shouldn’t current ballet productions go back to Petipa’s originally intended pose (on the left)?
- How does the change in the virtuosity of the dancers since Petipa’s time change even a replication of the “original” pose, as shown by the center picture?



Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann in 1937.  
[Picture Source](#)



Carla Körbes and Seth Orza of Pacific Northwest Ballet. [Picture Source](#)



Oksana Skoryk and Igor Kolb from Mariinsky Ballet.  
[Picture Source](#)

After seeing PBT’s version of *Swan Lake*, you might consider the following:

- How does the ballet’s authenticity matter to you in how you experienced the ballet?
- Were there any parts that you wondered how they might have actually looked like in Petipa’s original version?

## How the Critics Responded

*But there is more to "Swan Lake" than simply black and white, as evidenced by Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's latest production that played the Benedum Center last weekend. With artistic director Terrence Orr once again fielding four leading casts (I was able to view three of them), it was easy to observe the changing nuance and, yes, color among the varying interpretations.*

*Conductor Charles Barker, all power and finesse, provided the musical platform with which to launch them. Despite a scaled-back string section, he was able to galvanize the orchestra, particularly on Friday night, where the tempos seemed to provide wings for the dancers, even slightly accelerating within the course of a variation to latch onto a soloist's escalating excitement.*

*As for the dancing itself, the third act most consistently dominated over the others. It was a genuine surprise because the nationality dances usually were a snooze over the years, merely a dutiful prelude for the technical storm in the Black Swan Pas de Deux. But for the first time, they had their own spirit and authority, with the rich Mazurka a real standout.*

~Jane Vranish, [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#), April 2010

*The ballet's artistic director Terrence S. Orr staged and directed the production, including a Jester in Act I, which benefited from Makoto Ono's winning personality and technical panache. In truth, the first act of "Swan Lake" moves rather slowly and was especially slow in this production because of the demands of the choreography. Barker and the orchestra were magicians to achieve musical life at such slow tempi.*

*Saturday night's performance was also a demonstration of the continued growth of the ballet orchestra. Solos by the concertmaster, principal cello, every principal woodwind and brass and the timpani contributions were all delicious or powerful depending on the music. Such consistency is rare, and was well matched by the full sections of instruments. Barker secured both beautiful phrasing and ensemble rhythmic integration that constantly lifted the entire performance.*

~Mark Kanny, [Pittsburgh Tribune Review](#), April 2010

## Resources and References

Beaumont, Cyril. *The Ballet Called Swan Lake*. New York: Dance Horizons, 1952

Homans, Jennifer. *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*. New York: Random House, 2010

*The Phaidon Book of Ballet*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1981

### On the Internet:

[www.theballetbag.com](http://www.theballetbag.com) (search *Swan Lake*)

[www.classicalcat.net](http://www.classicalcat.net) (search Tchaikovsky and *Swan Lake*)

[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) (Great Performances: *Swan Lake*)

*Swan Lake* Notes. [www.pnb.org](http://www.pnb.org) (Pacific Northwest Ballet: search repertory/*Swan Lake*)

The [Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh system](#) has multiple recording of *Swan Lake* in their ballet CD section to listen to the music, including [highlights](#) or the [complete work](#).

# The Benedum Center



The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts is the crown jewel of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and the Cultural District in downtown Pittsburgh. It was renovated in 1987 and is on the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The 2800 seat theatre used to be the Stanley Theater, still visible on the lighted marquees outside. It has the third largest stage in the United States measuring 144 feet wide by 78 feet deep. The Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Opera, and Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera all use the Benedum for their performances.

[Learn](#) more about the Benedum Center. [Investigate](#) the Stanley Theatre's role in music history here in Pittsburgh.

## Accessibility

PBT is committed to being an inclusive arts organization that serves everyone in the greater Pittsburgh community through its productions and programs.

In conjunction with the Benedum Center for Performing Arts, the following accessibility services are provided to patrons:

- Wheelchair accessibility
- Braille and large print programs
- Assistive listening devices
- Audio recordings of select program notes
- Closed captioning for 3 X 3 (March 15, 2014)
- Sign Language Interpretation provided by special request only. Please contact the Education Department (see contact information below) at least 2 weeks in advance. Thank you!
- Audio-described performances (Sunday, February 16, 2014 for *Swan Lake*).

For more information about all of these programs please visit the [accessibility page](#) on PBT's website. Should you have a special request that is not listed above or have any questions about our accessibility services, please do not hesitate to contact Alyssa Herzog Melby, Director of Education and Community Engagement, at 412-454-9105 or [amelby@pittsburghballet.org](mailto:amelby@pittsburghballet.org).

For more information about the accessibility services at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, please visit their [accessibility page](#).