



Audience Guide

Choreography: Susan Jaffe after the original version by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov

Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Benedum Center for the Performing Arts | Pittsburgh, PA

Photo: Duane Rieder
Artist: Marisa Grywalski

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The Setting

The ballet takes place in and near the European castle of Prince Siegfried, long ago. Acts 2 and 4 are set at a beautiful, misty lake nearby.

The Main Characters

Odette: Young woman who’s been cursed to be a swan by day and a human at night. She is now Queen of the Swans.

Siegfried: A prince whose mother is pressuring him to get married as he will be King someday; he’s torn between his royal duties and an image of a different life.

Von Rothbart: An evil sorcerer/wizard who cursed Odette.

Odile: Von Rothbart’s daughter, whom he’s transformed to look just like Odette.

Swans: Odette's court, who also are maidens cursed to be swans.

Synopsis

Act I

In the late afternoon. A meadow near the castle.

Prince Siegfried is celebrating his twenty-first birthday. His friends, Benno and Wolfgang the tutor, have invited guests from the surrounding estates to join in the celebration. The party is interrupted by the arrival of the Queen who presents her son with a crossbow and reminds him that he is coming of age, and the next night at the ball he must choose a bride from four eligible princesses. The Queen departs and the festivities continue until everyone leaves to go back to the castle for further celebrations. The prince is distraught by his mother's news and stays behind to lament his new fate. He finds the crossbow on the table and decides that the only thing he can do is to go to the forest — a place that will give him a chance to contemplate his life.

Act II

Some hours later, after sunset. By the lakeside.

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 form. 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 and the swans will remain in their predicament forever. 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 four princesses from different countries, whom the Queen has chosen as eligible maidens for her son's hand. Prince

Siegfried dances with each beautiful young princess, and is urged by his mother to make a decision, but he is haunted by the memory of Odette and refuses to choose a bride. Suddenly, a fanfare announces the arrival of Baron Von Rothbart — who is the sorcerer in disguise — with his daughter Odile. Von Rothbart has transformed Odile into the image of Odette. Siegfried is thrilled to see the young maiden. He is dazzled by her beauty and vibrance and, thinking she is Odette, is deceived into declaring his love and fidelity to Odile. As Prince Siegfried swears his love, a vision of the real Odette appears and Von Rothbart and Odile triumphantly reveal their wicked ruse. Siegfried realizes he is the victim of an evil plot and departs the great hall in search of Odette.

Act IV

Later that night. By the lakeside.

The swan maidens are anxiously awaiting the return of Odette. She appears and tells of Von Rothbart's treachery. Before dawn, she intends to die — her fate is now sealed by Siegfried's betrayal, but her sacrifice will vanquish Von Rothbart and save the lives of the swans. A great storm rages. Siegfried, bursting into the glade, discovers the tearful Odette and begs her forgiveness. As dawn approaches, Von Rothbart appears again. Odette tells Siegfried that the time has come and she throws herself into the lake. Siegfried and the swans, knowing Odette's death will diminish Von Rothbart's power, work together to finally destroy him.

With Von Rothbart dead the spell is broken and the swans transform back into maidens. In a bittersweet moment, one of the maidens sees Odette's body washed up on shore and reveals her to Siegfried. He retrieves Odette from the bank as a changed man.

About *Swan Lake*

The first *Swan Lake* premiered in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre on March 4, 1877, with choreography by Julius Wenzel Reisinger and music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The composer was 36 years old and this was his first ballet (of only three in his career). Reviews were not glowing. Many critics thought the music beautiful, but too complex (and some thought it was too noisy!), the choreography was seen as uninspired, and the ballerina was considered not up to the task. The ballet was updated and continued to be performed somewhat regularly for six years, and then it disappeared from the repertoire.

Fast forward to 1894. Tchaikovsky had recently died at age 53, and the famed Mariinsky Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg produced a memorial program honoring his life and work (including Tchaikovsky's work on the ballets *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *The Nutcracker* (1892) with the Mariinsky's great choreographer Marius Petipa and his assistant, Lev Ivanov.) The memorial performance included Ivanov's newly choreographed version of Act 2 of *Swan Lake*. This luminous, lakeside scene included Siegfried and Odette's emotional meeting and a corps of Swan maidens performing in flock-like synchronicity. The performance enchanted and moved the audience, which included Czar Nicholas II, so much that work on a new version of the full ballet began immediately. Petipa choreographed Acts 1 and 3 (the court and party scenes); Ivanov's new Act 2 was kept; Act 4 was assigned to him also - another lakeside scene filled with Odette's swan friends. Mariinsky conductor Riccardo Drigo arranged the score; Tchaikovsky's brother Modest helped with the libretto. The new *Swan Lake* made its debut in January 1895, destined to become one of the most performed and beloved ballets across the globe.

Together, the four reworked and refashioned the ballet into something that would suit audience tastes in 1895. The new production of *Swan Lake* made its re-entry into the ballet world on January 27 of that year - destined to become the most acclaimed classical ballet of all time.

Origins of the *Swan Lake* Story

The story of the ballet has its roots in tales of a shape-shifting swan / human being (often a "swan maiden"), a theme that appears in the literature and folk traditions of many countries and cultures. Swans have ignited human imagination for millennia with their beauty and power and with their ability to transcend the elements of earth, water and air. Early Hindu legend, ancient Greek mythology, the Arabian tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*, even Native American legend - all include stories of humans who turn into swans or vice-versa.

The first libretto for the ballet probably drew from the swan maiden folk tales that existed in Europe, as well as the Russian fairytale *The White Duck*, about a young queen who is turned into a white duck by an evil witch, so that the witch can marry the king. The libretto is credited to Vladimir Petrovich Begichev, director of the Imperial Theatre in Moscow (now the Bolshoi), but the story may have been the work of several. It seems likely that Tchaikovsky was one of them.

In 1871, when visiting his sister for the summer, Tchaikovsky wrote, directed and choreographed a little ballet called “The Lake of the Swans” for his nieces and nephews. He may have been influenced by existing swan maiden folk tales. Tchaikovsky was also a member of a literary salon that included Begichev’s wife, and it was Begichev who offered him a commission to write the ballet for the Imperial Theater in Moscow. How much of the story each wrote and who else may have contributed is not known. But we do know that Tchaikovsky’s music for that children’s ballet can be heard in the score for *Swan Lake* today.

Swan Lake Historical and PBT 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.

1890 and ‘92: Tchaikovsky composes his two other ballets, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*.

1893: Tchaikovsky dies.

1894: Under the direction of Marius Petipa, Lev Ivanov choreographs a new Act 2 of *Swan Lake* for a performance at an event honoring Tchaikovsky.

1895: The full Petipa/Ivanov version of *Swan Lake* premieres at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

1895: Pierina Legnani, Odette/Odile in the ballet, performs 32 fouettes in Act 3. Petipa inserted the sequence especially for her (she had first performed the feat in *Cinderella* a few years earlier).

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 2 of *Swan Lake*.

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 3 of *Swan Lake* with famed guest stars Violette Verdy and Edward Villella from New York City Ballet.

1971: PBT’s first full-length performances of the ballet, again with Verdy and Villella, and also with Natalia Makarova and Ted Kivitt from American Ballet Theatre.

1995: Matthew Bourne’s *Swan Lake*, with an all-male cast, premieres at Sadlers’ Wells theater, London.

2016: Alexei Ratmansky reconstructs the ballet based on Nicholas Sergeyev's notations made a few years after the premiere.

2022: Artistic Director Susan Jaffe stages the 16th full-length production of the ballet for PBT.

Swan Lake in this Global Moment

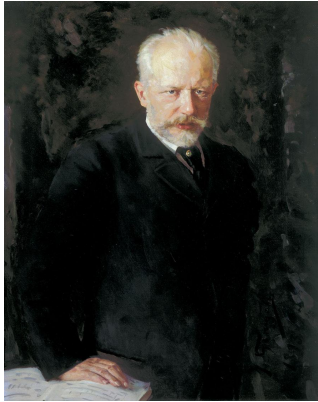


Graffiti in Moscow at Vladimir Putin's fourth inauguration in 2018. In a statement creator Yav Zone art collective said, "All we have to say is that it would be better if they showed *Swan Lake* now."

- [Moscow Times](#)

PBT is performing *Swan Lake* in May 2022 as Russia carries out a brutal war on Ukraine. The ballet - a profoundly important work in the history of the art form - also has an immediacy today as a cultural touchpoint in the conflict and in Russian political and ideological history. Just two months before our performance, as Russian independent news channel TV Rain (Dozhd) was forced off the air for its anti-war stance, the station streamed *Swan Lake* as a final protest, a reminder of earlier performances and broadcasts at other moments of political/social turmoil and change. A few examples: during World War II the ballet was performed for Russian troops in hospitals and on the battlefield to boost morale; in 1982 when Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev died *Swan Lake* was broadcast by state television, on repeat, as a successor was chosen; when a coup against Mikhail Gorbachev was attempted in 1991 *Swan Lake* again flooded the airwaves; a graffiti mural depicting the "Four Little Swans" (a famous dance from the ballet) appeared in Moscow on President Putin's fourth inauguration. First created nearly 150 years ago, *Swan Lake* continues to compel us to consider its place in ballet, in Russian culture and ideology, and in the role of artistic performance in cultural exchange and global conflict.

The Music



Learn more about composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky at [biography.com](https://www.biography.com).

Swan Lake was Tchaikovsky's first ballet (Years earlier he had begun working on a score for the ballet *Cinderella* but 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 also because he liked ballet (his favorite was *Giselle*) and wanted to see what he could do in the art form. Ballet music at the time was considered somewhat inferior to other styles of music, and by 1877 Tchaikovsky was already a famous composer. Some wondered why he would bother to lower his standards in that way.

The world wasn't ready for what Tchaikovsky delivered. In 1877 *Swan Lake's* score was considered too complex, too orchestral. Not suitable for ballet. "Undanceable." Tchaikovsky felt the lackluster reception for the ballet was a judgment of his music. Later, he revealed how highly critical he was of the score, saying that Léo Delibes' score for the ballet *Sylvia* was vastly superior to *Swan Lake*. He wrote to a friend, "...what charm, what wealth of melody! It brought me to shame, for had I known of this (Delibe's) music, I would have never written *Swan Lake*." He didn't know then that his work would forever change how we think about ballet music. He didn't realize he had written a masterpiece.

Tchaikovsky's original 1877 score was reworked for the 1895 production by Riccardo Drigo (an Italian composer and Mariinsky Theatre resident conductor, who had conducted the premiere of Tchaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*). He and Petipa deleted, added and moved music around, including the famous Black Swan Pas de Deux: originally a dance for villagers in Act I, when it was moved to Act 3 as a virtuoso dance for Odile and Siegfried, it became a ballet showpiece. Drigo also lightened the orchestration and gave the ballet an "easier and less discordant" sound.* This time, the remarkable beauty of Tchaikovsky's music was heard and felt by everyone.

Here's an [8-minute video](#) introduction to *Swan Lake's* music by the Royal Ballet. Learn about Tchaikovsky's use of contrasts, the structure and key of the score, and how the music leads us on a journey through the course of the ballet - how the music itself tells us the story of *Swan Lake*.

Image credit: wikipedia.com; *Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels*. NY: Random House, 2010.

The Choreography

The choreography for *Swan Lake* was a collaboration between [Petipa](#) and [Ivanov](#) (linked are brief bios). Petipa contributed Acts I and 3 - the birthday party, the ball, the court gatherings. These formal dances have choreography that's bright, precise, athletic and dazzling. Ivanov choreographed Acts 2 and 4, the lakeside scenes, full of challenging sequences with rigorous technique, but softened, and overlaid with a longing built into the movement. This contrast is part of what makes the ballet so compelling.

Since 1895 choreographers and artistic directors across the world have put their own spin on *Swan Lake's* story and choreography, with no company's production the same as another's. But most include moments and characterizations so familiar that they have become defining hallmarks of the art form itself. Below are a few choreographic elements to look for in the ballet.

The Dual Role of Odette + Odile



The ballerina's dual role of Odette/Odile, or White Swan/Black Swan is one of the most coveted roles in the repertoire, demanding technical mastery and emotional range to morph from vulnerable and pure Odette to audacious and deceptive Odile.

Thematically, these opposites symbolize a battle between good and evil.

Choreographically they also offer a stark contrast: Odette is fluid and ethereal with the delicate carriage and rippling swan arms that are a signature of the ballet, while Odile's steely technique glitters with brashness and danger. The ability to perform this role, demanding of both technical prowess and dramatic artistry, requires a ballerina who's at the top of her game.

Artists: Alexandra Kochis and Alejandro Diaz. Photos: Rich Sofranko.

The Swans Scenes

The choreography for the swans in Acts 2 and 4 creates some of ballet's most iconic images. We see beautiful swan characterization in Odette, with her fluttering arm movements, trembling foot beats, and arabesques that arch backward, mimicking a swan spreading her wings. In the middle of Act 2, when she returns to Siegfried after their first encounter, you see her circling him, wings beating, and finally gliding to a landing, folding her wings in on herself.



Like Odette, the swans' movements, especially the port de bras (movement of the arms), have a feathery, wing-like quality. An arm raised above the head, with a crook in the elbow and slightly flexed hand, suggests the gracefully curved neck of a swan, a beautifully poignant pose. As a group they are sculptural, weaving patterns on stage as if in flight, even at times in the v-formation of migrating birds. They project both vulnerability, as in Act 2 when they fold their wings in a plea to be spared from Siegfried's crossbow, and strength, as in Act 4 when their beating wings represent their fury and power. As Jennifer Homans (*Apollo's Angels*) points out, the swans' choreography follows Odette's journey, serving as her shadow and reflection - they are an outward manifestation of her inner world.

Artists:PBT corps de ballet. Photo: Rich Sofranko.

The Tradition of the "White Act"

The corps de ballet swans in *Swan Lake* are part of a tradition in classical ballet called the "white act" (*ballet en blanc*). Dancers are dressed all in white, and with their completely unified choreography - dancing as one body (the definition of corps de ballet) - they create some of the most dramatic imagery in ballet. Think of the Shades in *La Bayadere*, the Wilis in *Giselle*, the Snowflakes in *The Nutcracker*. They often represent ghostly or other-worldly creatures. This [short video from the Royal Ballet](#) is a terrific look at the technical and artistic challenges that *Swan Lake* presents for the corps de ballet.

Dance of the Four Little Swans

One of the highlights of Act 2 is the Dance of the Little Swans (Cygnetts), also called a pas de quatre (dance for four). The four dancers clasp hands and in complete unison move together with fast, staccato precision - which is exhausting and incredibly difficult! For the dance Ivanov took inspiration from watching little swans huddle and swim around together for protection. At the end of the dance the swans try to fly, but they can't quite make it, and they drop to the stage floor. Watch a Pacific Northwest Ballet rehearsal of the dance [here](#).



Artists: Gabrielle Thurlow, Jessica McCann, Diana Yohe ,JoAnna Schmidt. Photo: Rich Sofranko.

The Lakeside Mime - a Translation

When Siegfried and Odette first meet in Act 2, Odette explains her backstory partly through mime, a language of gestures used in ballet for hundreds of years. Don't miss this conversation!

Siegfried: *Who are you?* (arms sweep open outward in front of him, questioning look on face)

Odette: *I am Queen of the Swans.* (hand on chest - me; upright hand touches either side of her head - a crown; swan arm/flying movements - swan)

Siegfried bows in respect.

Odette: *Over there is a lake, made from my mother's tears.* (points toward the lake in the forest; bends toward the floor with arms moving back and forth horizontally - waves/surface of the lake; hand on chest - my; arms cradle each other in front of chest as if holding a baby - mother; fingers trace down her face - tears).

Odette: *Over there, one who is strong and evil turned me into a swan.* (points toward a rock where Rothbart lives; raises a finger - a person/individual; raises hands in fists - strength, evilness; swan arms/flying movements - swan)

Odette: *If someone will swear their love and marry me, I will be a swan no more.* (raises a finger - one person; hand on chest - me; hands cross over heart on left side of chest - love; two fingers raised - swear; points toward left hand - marriage; swan arms/flying motion - swan; forearms cross back and forth, head shakes - no)

Siegfried: *I swear to love you.* (hands over left side of chest/heart - love; raises two fingers - swear)

The Black Swan Pas de Deux



The grand pas de deux (dance for two) for Siegfried and Odile in Act 3 is a defining moment in *Swan Lake*. It is classical ballet at its most commanding. The Black Swan is known for her 32 fouetté turns, a breathtaking feat that is as technically demanding as any in dance. But all of her choreography is magnificent: her movements are endowed with the power to deceive, seduce and destroy. The Prince's own bravura choreography in this dance signals exactly where his head and heart are in this moment. His thrilling jumps and turns show that he is

intoxicated by Odile, head over heels, unable to resist her. Throughout the dance the choreography creates brilliant, clear and fiery characterizations.

Artists: Alexandra Kochis, Alejandro Diaz. Photo: Rich Sofranko.

The Grand Pas Explained

A grand pas de deux is a hallmark of classical story ballets. It has a specific structure: a grand entrance to introduce the couple; a slower adagio to display precision work; exciting solos (called variations) for each; and an ending (coda) that is full of ballet fireworks. A "pas" is inserted into a story ballet to show off the talent and technique of the principal dancers. Often there isn't much contextual relevance to the story itself (an example is the Sugar Plum Pas de Deux in *The Nutcracker*).

Petipa changed the game with the pas de deux in Act 3 (it wasn't originally called the "Black Swan Pas de Deux"). This dance isn't just for show, it's critical to advancing the story of the ballet. It's packed full of information: in just 15 minutes the ballet's themes of deception, evil, and moral failing are laid bare. It's in this pivotal dance that the Prince is seduced into betraying Odette—and the ballet's final tragedy begins to unfold.

What's a fouetté?

A fouetté *is a* turn the dancer does by standing on one leg and whipping the other around. The whipping leg pulls in so that her foot touches the supporting knee as she rises up on pointe at the same time. If this sounds complicated and hard, it is! (You can see Odile's fouettés starting at 10:38 in the video above.) The ability to do 32 of these turns in a row is a virtuosic accomplishment for the ballerina, showing off her strength, stamina, and technique. Petipa created the sequence for Italian ballerina Pierina Legnani who starred in Petipa's *Cinderella* in 1893. Petipa knew a scene-stealer when he saw one, and so he inserted the turns into *Swan Lake* as well, also for Legnani, who portrayed Odette/Odile in 1895. When she did them in *Swan Lake* on opening night, the audience went wild and demanded she do them again - and incredibly she came back out on stage and managed to do another 28.

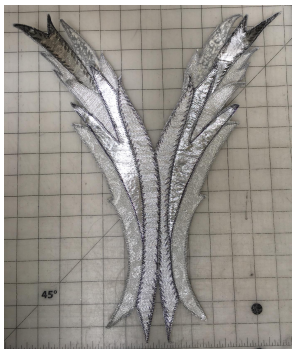
Watch: [American Ballet Theater's Black Swan Pas de Deux](#) with Gillian Murphy and Angel Corella.

Costumes

Most of the costumes in PBT's 2022 *Swan Lake* were designed by Peter Farmer for previous PBT productions of the ballet - though there also are several brand new costumes too, designed this year by former PBT Costumier Janet Groom Campbell. There are more than 100 costumes in the production and 470 costume accessories (headpieces, boots, etc.). Costume Shop Director Kristin McLain estimates that the Shop remade about half of the show; staff (including three new temporary stitchers hired just for *Swan Lake*) has been working on the ballet since December, which sometimes had to take a back seat to new builds for the March 2022 *Here + Now* production.

The Swan Tutus

The basic tutus for the corps de ballet have been used for several *Swan Lake* productions but their decor has changed over the years. There are 20 white and 4 black tutus: each has 12 layers of stiff, pleated tulle (also called Balanchine net) in the skirt, graduated in length to make the skirt stand straight out at the hip. The skirts are also fitted with hoops to help hold a horizontal shape. The bodices are made from stretch silk and are pieced together with 10 panels. Many tutus have a bodice with a separate yoke from waist to hips for a customizable fit, but these don't - the bodice is long and extends to the dancers' hips for a lithe and fluid look. The swans also wear feathered headpieces.



For 2022 the Costume Shop is reusing an applique motif that had not been utilized in recent productions. The applique, made from silvery shades of shimmering fabric, is a curving feather motif attached to the front of the bodice. These appliques have to be removed each time a tutu is washed, and then sewn back on again afterward!

The Costume Shop created new tutus for Odette for this production (four tutus in all, one for each dancer in the role).

Odette's costume is slightly different from the other swans - her bodice motif is more white than silver, helping to distinguish her from her friends, and she wears a crown-like, jeweled tiara along with her feathered headpiece.

The Black Swan Costume

Odile's sparkling black tutu is one of the most dramatic in PBT's wardrobe. It's made from silk dupioni, with jeweled netting and glittering metallic gold trim. Costume Director Kristin McLain noted that the black silk seems to draw in the light from all over the stage - the tutu itself creating a dramatic focal point. Her headpiece has a shape similar to the swans' feather headpieces but there are no feathers - it's all Swarovski crystal, with a dazzling, amber-colored jewel dipping onto her forehead. This costume's richness, glitz and glamor immediately grab the audience's (and Siegfried's) attention.



Artist: Marisa Grywalski. Photo: Duane Rieder.

Before she was the Black Swan

Odile was always meant to be Odette's double, but she wasn't always the "Black Swan." Her costume was that of an enchantress or sorceress – bright, multi-colored, lavish. We don't know who the first ballerina was to appear in a black tutu, but the tradition was set forever by the captivating performance of Tamara Toumanova, a Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo dancer who donned a black tutu and the Black Swan persona at a 1941 New York performance. In most productions across the world Odile continues to wear a black tutu, perpetuating the Black Swan / White Swan dichotomy that defines the ballet today.

New Costumes for 2022

Act 1 Party Scene: PBT's Costume Shop created new Act 1 party guest costumes for the 2022 production. Designed by former PBT Costumier Janet Groom Campbell, the costumes are elegant, colorful and add fun and vibrancy to the scene. Each couple is a different color: Costume Assistant Kaylee Hansberry dyed dozens of fabric samples with multiple shades of each color; final selections were made by Ms. Campbell and Artistic Director Susan Jaffe. Color and trim elements link the partners in each couple; and specific necklines and sleeve designs were mixed and matched among the dresses to add both variety and cohesiveness. Two of the dresses have meaningful decor personalized for specific dancers: for [Caitlyn Mendicino](#), who in addition to her ballet career is also a [beekeeper](#), Ms. Campbell added tiny bee appliques to the center panel of the dress; on the front of [Victoria Watford's](#) costume, Ms. Campbell inserted a piece of fabric from Ms. Watford's mother's wedding gown, which her mother had donated to the Costume Shop.

Act 3 Pas de Quatre: For this production the Costume Shop also designed and built two new classical tutus for the Act 3 Pas de Quatre. In this sketch Ms. Campbell designates the colors (royal blue and magenta); notes the fabric selection (velvet bodice and lace skirt overlay and sleeves); and details that the seams in the bodice be piped with the contrasting fabric.

Act 4 Swan Maidens: In Artistic Director Susan Jaffe's reimagining of the ballet's ending, the swans return to human form in a magical moment on stage. The new costumes for this scene are simple and flowy, and the color of a new dawn.



Educational Programs for *Swan Lake*



Reconsidering Swan Lake: Culture and Context |
Wednesday, May 4 | 12 p.m.

Live on Zoom. [Natalie Rouland, Ph.D.](#),
Scholar-in-Residence, Washington Ballet, and [Nancy
Condee, Ph.D.](#), Director, Center for Russian, East
European, and Eurasian Studies, University of

Pittsburgh, discuss the cultural meaning of Swan Lake in Russian politics and
ideological history. This program is part of a two-part series, “Swan Lake’s Global
Moment” – more information below. Performance attendance is not required. [Register
here.](#)



Dance the Story | Thursday, May 5 | 5:30 p.m.

Live on Zoom. Introduce children to the ballet with this
movement-based story time! Registration required – please [click here](#)
to sign up! Performance attendance is not required. You’ll receive a
Zoom link the day of the program.



Virtual Preview | Thursday, May 5 | 7 p.m. – “The Fascinating
History of Swan Lake: the World’s Most Beloved Ballet”

Live on Zoom. Get a fantastic primer ahead of the performance with
dance historian and New York Times #1 bestselling author Elizabeth
Kaye.* Ms. Kaye is co-author of *American Ballet Theatre: A 25-Year
Retrospective* and has given pre-show lectures at dance companies
across the world. Performance attendance is not required. You’ll
receive a Zoom link the day of program. [Register here.](#)

*Photo: Rosalie O'Connor



Director’s Cut | Friday, May 6 | 6:30 p.m.

At the Benedum. Join us on opening night for a conversation
between dance historian Elizabeth Kaye and Artistic Director Susan
Jaffe about Jaffe’s new staging of this iconic ballet. Ms. Jaffe danced
the role of Odette / Odile many times in her storied career. Space is
limited! Registration requested – please [click here](#) to sign up!



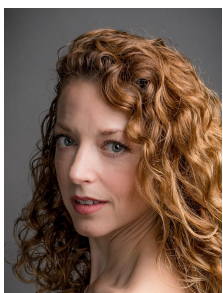
ViewPointe | Saturday, May 7 | 6:30 p.m.

At the Benedum. PBT Music Director and Principal Conductor Charles Barker previews Swan Lake with a look at ballet's most transcendent score. Registration requested – please [click here](#) to sign up!



Ballet Warm-up | Sunday, May 8 | 1 p.m.

At the Benedum. Join us to watch the last few minutes of company class and talk with Principal Dancer Alejandro Diaz about portraying Siegfried in Swan Lake. No registration necessary – just come to the theater a few minutes early and our ushers will guide you to the program.



Dancer Q&A | Sunday, May 8 | after the performance

At the Benedum. Talk with retiring Principal Dancer Alexandra Kochis about Swan Lake and her 16-year career at PBT. No registration necessary – come to the front of the orchestra section after the performance.



"Cultural Exchange and Global Conflict: Swan Lake and Beyond" | Wednesday, May 11 | 12 p.m.

Live on Zoom. Join [Mila Sanina](#), MS, Journalist and Former Executive Director, PublicSource and [Adriana Helbig](#), Ph.D., Chair, Music Department, University of Pittsburgh, for a panel discussion on the role of the

arts as cultural export in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, with a focus on the experience of marginalized groups and artists during global conflict. This program is part of a two-part series, "Swan Lake's Global Moment." Performance attendance is not required. [Register here.](#)

Audio-described Performance | Sunday, May 15 | 2 p.m.

Patrons experience the performance through verbal description of the action on stage, including choreography, story line, scenery and costumes. Audio description can be helpful for patrons with blindness or low vision, or anyone interested in listening to a live narration of the production. Registration not required. Please visit Guest Services.



Swan Lake's Global Moment

Co-hosted by Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and World Affairs Council

Pittsburgh, the programs in this series examine Swan Lake as a cultural touchpoint in the context of Russia's current war on Ukraine, as well as the role of artistic performance in cultural exchange and global conflict.

PBT Connects programs presented in partnership with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.



Accessibility

We believe dance is for everyone! Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre is committed to including everyone from our greater Pittsburgh community and beyond in the beauty, discipline, and creativity of dance. We strive to make our company, school and art form accessible to talented and committed students and families.

Theater Accessibility Services

May 18, 2 p.m. Audio-described performance. Audio description is available for all patrons to hear and experience dance through verbal description that paints a picture in the mind. For more information about our audio description program, including dates and pre-performance sensory seminars, please visit our [audio description page](#).

Wheelchair accessibility: The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts features elevators, accessible restrooms and companion seating (available only on the main floor of the theater). Guide dogs are permitted; please inquire when purchasing tickets. Please inform your ticketing representative when purchasing to take advantage of wheelchair and companion seating.

Braille and Large Print Programs: With assistance from the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children Outreach/Braille Project, PBT makes printed Braille programs available at the Benedum Center for patrons who are visually impaired. Large-print programs also will be available. Please see front-of-house staff at the Benedum Center for a program.

Assistive Listening Devices: Assistive listening devices are available at the Benedum Center for Performing Arts for patrons who desire amplification. Neck loops are available. Please see an usher at the Benedum Center when you arrive to obtain an Assistive Listening Device, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Closed Captioning will be available for select performances with music with lyrics; offered on request with 3 weeks advance notice. Please contact education@pittsburghballet.org for more information.

Sign language interpretation may be available for performances that use music with lyrics and educational programs only upon request. We kindly request at least two weeks advance notice before the performance or program dates to ensure that we are able to secure interpreters.

Sensory-Friendly Performances: PBT is proud to present a sensory-friendly performance once per year. [Learn more here.](#)

For more information about all of the accessibility services at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, please visit the theater's [accessibility page](#).

Studio Accessibility

Dance for Parkinson's: This program, based on the Dance for PD® program, invites people with Parkinson's, their families, caregivers, and friends, to become participants in the dance process! [Learn more here.](#)

Adaptive Dance: Themed around classic story ballets, our adaptive dance classes are designed for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders or other sensory sensitivities. We emphasize creative movement principles and simplified ballet technique within a welcoming and structured studio environment. [Learn more here.](#)

Children's Scholarship Program: This program aims to expose more children to dance at an early age by funding need-based scholarships for talented and committed students from ages 5-13. [Learn more here.](#)

PBT in the Community: PBT's education team brings ballet into neighborhoods, schools and community centers in an effort to engage and inspire more people with the mind-body benefits of ballet and movement. [Learn more here.](#)