

# Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*

Tuesday, December 3, 2019  
Ahmanson Theatre  
Downtown Los Angeles



## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- ◉ *Swan Lake* is one of the most beloved works in the classical ballet repertoire.
- ◉ This production is a twentieth-century reimagining of the ballet by British choreographer Matthew Bourne.

## SWAN LAKE

*Swan Lake* is one of the most popular ballets of all time. Composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in 1875–76, it was first performed by the Bolshoi Ballet in 1877. That first production was a critical failure, with most critics deeming the music too complicated and the choreography boring. But the audience loved it, and so the company continued to perform it, and *Swan Lake* has remained an audience favorite around the world for more than a century.

The traditional plot, in which a princess who has been turned into a swan can only be saved by the singular love of a man, was probably inspired by Russian and German folk tales, though there is not a clear direct source.

Most ballet companies base their choreography on an 1895 production by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov for the Imperial Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. It was for this production that the libretto was changed by

Tchaikovsky to the *Swan Lake* audiences know best: the fairy swan became a cursed woman, the villain changed from her stepmother to an evil sorcerer, and the tragic ending assumed its full tragic proportions.

San Francisco Ballet was the first American company to stage a complete production of *Swan Lake*, in 1940.

## PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was a Russian composer of symphonies, concertos, operas, ballets, chamber music, and religious choral music which contained elements of both Russian and western European musical traditions. He is considered a master of the late Romantic period, with an exceptional ability to express intense emotion through melody. Several of his works—including *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and the *1812 Overture*—are among the most popular pieces in the history of classical music.

## MATTHEW BOURNE

Matthew Bourne is a British choreographer. He has won eight Olivier Awards and is the only British director to have won Tony Awards for Best Direction of a Musical and Best Choreography (for *Swan Lake*, in 1999).

Bourne's all-male *Swan Lake* premiered at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London in 1995 and opened on Broadway in 1998. It has since been performed all over the world, and is the longest-running ballet on both London's West End and Broadway. The production is best known for replacing the traditionally all-female corps de ballet with an all-male ensemble.

Bourne is known for creating updated versions of classic works, including *Nutcracker!* (1992), *Cinderella* (1997), *My Fair Lady* (2001), and *Mary Poppins* (2004).

Bourne was awarded a knighthood in 2016.

## CENTER THEATRE GROUP

The nonprofit Center Theatre Group is one of the largest theatre companies in the United States, offering year-round programming at the Mark Taper Forum, the Ahmanson Theatre, and the Kirk Douglas Theatre. The company has been producing theatre for more than 50 years, and regularly programs award-winning revivals as well as world premieres.

## THE AHMANSON THEATRE

The Ahmanson Theatre opened in 1967 with a production of *Man of La Mancha*. The theatre has since hosted numerous world premieres, including six by Neil Simon.

The building is named for Caroline Leonetti Ahmanson, a philanthropist and the wife of Howard F. Ahmanson, Sr., who founded the insurance and savings and loan company H. F. Ahmanson and Co. The venue underwent a major renovation in 1994.



Matthew Bourne

## VOCABULARY CORNER:

**corps de ballet:** Literally translated as “body of the ballet,” this French term refers to the group of dancers who are permanent members of a ballet company and who are not soloists.

## SWAN LAKE IN FILM

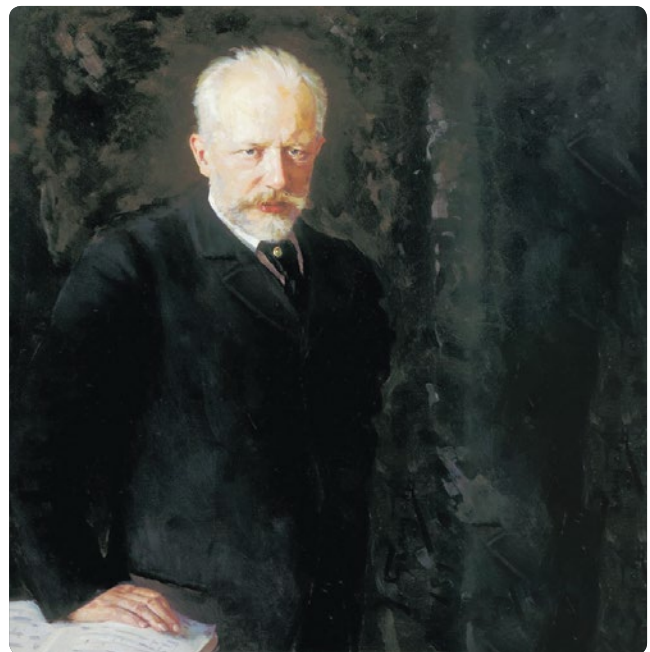
Music from *Swan Lake* is often used as a score for the silent film *Phantom of the Opera* (1925)

The *Swan Lake* theme was used in the credits for the classic films *Dracula* (1931) and *The Mummy* (1932)

Barbra Streisand performs a spoof of *Swan Lake* in *Funny Girl* (1968)

Darren Aronofsky's 2010 film *Black Swan*, starring Natalie Portman and Mila Kunis, contained sequences from *Swan Lake*.

South African choreographer Dada Masilo remade *Swan Lake* in 2010 with a production that brought together ballet and African dance.



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Natalie Portman in *Black Swan*, 2010



Sean Dorsey Dance: *BOYS IN TROUBLE*



Dorrance Dance: *SOUNDspace*

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ Matthew Bourne replaced *Swan Lake*'s traditional female corps de ballet with an all-male ensemble. How did this alter the show?
- ◉ Have you seen other productions of *Swan Lake*? If so, what other differences did you notice in Bourne's version?
- ◉ Why do you think tragic love stories have such enduring power?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- ◉ Upcoming Visions and Voices dance events
  - 2/8/20** Sean Dorsey Dance: *BOYS IN TROUBLE*
  - 2/13/20** Dancing the Archives: Emerging Choreographers and Living History
  - 2/26/20** Paul Taylor Celebration with USC Kaufman and USC Thornton
  - 3/4/20** Dorrance Dance: *SOUNDspace*
- ◉ Performances at the USC Kaufman School of Dance [kaufman.usc.edu](http://kaufman.usc.edu)
- ◉ Gloria Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center [musiccenter.org/tickets/events-by-the-music-center/gloria-kaufman-dance](http://musiccenter.org/tickets/events-by-the-music-center/gloria-kaufman-dance)

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**ANTHONY ANDERSON** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about *Swan Lake*, Matthew Bourne, and Peter Tchaikovsky. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. journals and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu).

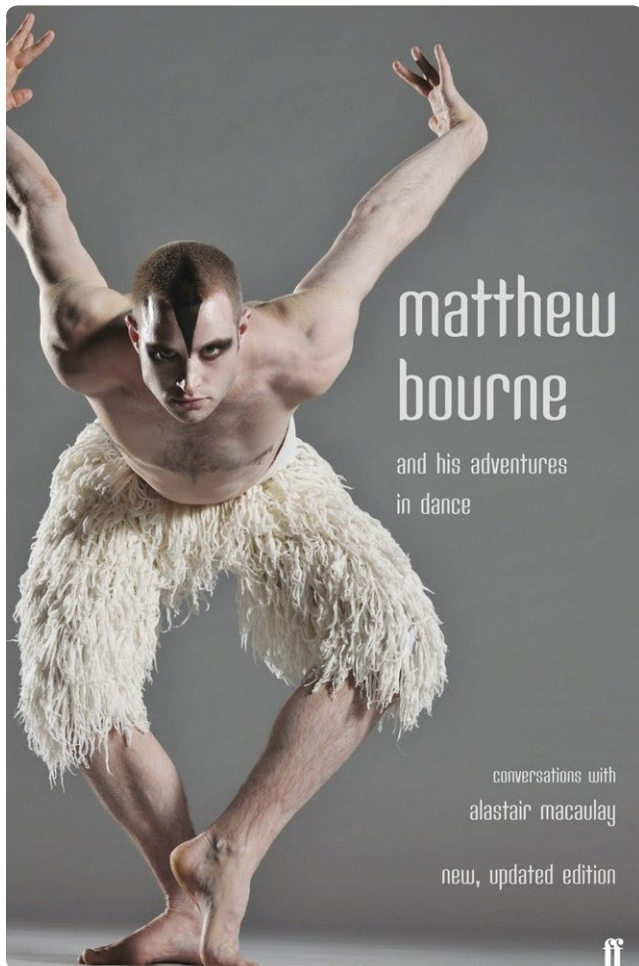
### RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- ◉ Bourne, Matthew and Alastair Macaulay. *Matthew Bourne and His Adventures in Dance: Conversations with Alastair Macaulay*. Rev. ed. London: Faber and Faber, 2011.  
**DOHENY LIBRARY: GV1785.B635 A3 2011**
- ◉ Durante, Viviana. *Ballet: The Definitive Illustrated Story*. First American edition. New York, NY: DK Publishing, 2018.  
**DOHENY LIBRARY: OVERSIZE GV1787 .B26 2018**
- ◉ Kearney, Leslie. *Tchaikovsky and His World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.  
**MUSIC LIBRARY: ML410.C4 T36 1998**

- Wiley, Roland John. *Tchaikovsky's Ballets: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.  
**LEAVEY LIBRARY: ML410.C4 W53 1985**
- Woods, Gregory. *Homintern: How Gay Culture Liberated the Modern World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016.  
**DOHENY LIBRARY: HQ75.15 .W66 2016**

#### AUDIO VISUAL

- Bourne, Matthew, Peter Mumford, Katharine Doré, Tchaikovsky, Peter Ilich, David Lloyd-Jones, Adam Cooper, Scott Ambler, and Fiona Chadwick. *Swan Lake*. New York, NY: NVC Arts, 1996.  
**MUSIC LIBRARY: VIDEOS MUSDVD 51**
- Maniura, Peter, Suzy Klein, Matthew Whiteman, Charles Hazlewood, Ed Stoppard, William Mannering, Gyuri Sarossy, Alice Glover, Martin Parr, and Sam Marks. *Tchaikovsky: The Tragic Life of a Musical Genius*. Burbank, CA: Distributed by Warner Home Video, 2008.  
**LEAVEY LIBRARY: CIRDSK-DVD LVDVD 11344**



#### SELECTED AFFILIATED USC ELECTRONIC DATABASES

- IIPA** (International Index to the Performing Arts): IPA draws its current content from more than 100 international performing arts periodicals from 9 countries, and also indexes feature performing arts articles and obituaries appearing in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. IIPA covers nearly all aspects of the world of the performing arts, from the most scholarly studies to the latest crazes. Most IIPA records in the current coverage (1998 forward) contain an abstract.
- JSTOR**: A growing full text collection of core social science, humanities, and science journals.
- Oxford Music Online**: Begin your music research here! This is the access point for Grove Music Online, the Encyclopedia of Popular Music, the Oxford Dictionary of Music, and the Oxford Companion to Music.

