

Guidelines for Teachers

Curriculum Connections:

- Dance
- Writing
- Media Literacy

Learning Goals:

- Experiencing, responding to, and analyzing classical ballet through reflective and critical writing
- Recognizing different characteristics of classical ballet movement and choreography in Act I Scene II of Erik Bruhn's *Swan Lake*
- Understanding how dancers tell stories in classical ballet

Big Ideas:

- *Swan Lake* is an example of a ballet from the Classical period
- Classical ballet choreography achieves a satisfying visual effect through balance, structure and harmony
- Classical ballet choreography often showcases virtuosic technique separately from storytelling

Big Questions:

- What kind of visual effect does the choreographer achieve through geometric formations?
- How do Classical ballet choreographers tell stories?
- How are Classical ballets collaborative productions?
- How does choreography evolve over time?
- Why do ballet companies still perform *Swan Lake*?

Getting Started:

- Assign the whole guide to your students as an extended project or pick and choose sections to assign at different times.

Watch *Swan Lake*, Act 1 Scene II: www.nbs-enb.ca/loveballet

Student Viewing Guide

Swan Lake, Act 1 Scene II

Choreography: Erik Bruhn

Music: Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Pianist: Marina Surgan

Synopsis:

Erik Bruhn's *Swan Lake* is one of the most beloved versions of this magical classical ballet. It demands both technical skill and artistry of all its dancers. In Act I, Scene II of Erik Bruhn's *Swan Lake*, Prince Siegfried has just been informed by his mother that he must soon take a bride. Nervous about marrying without being in love, he sets out to wander the woods near his village. While there, he meets Odette, a beautiful white Swan Queen. They speak, and she tells him that the evil black Swan Queen has cast a spell on her and her handmaidens, forcing them to be swans by day and humans by night. The only way to break the spell is for a good man to pledge his love to Odette. Siegfried, realizing he is in love with Odette, begins to declare his love for her when the black Swan Queen appears, and prevents him from breaking the spell.

About Erik Bruhn:

Born in Copenhagen, Denmark, Bruhn entered the Royal Danish Ballet School and graduated in 1947. That same year, he made his professional debut in London, England with the Metropolitan Ballet. Bruhn soon rose to become the greatest classical dancer of his generation and established a dazzling international career. In 1964, Bruhn worked with The National Ballet of Canada, staging works including *La Sylphide*, *Swan Lake* and *Les Sylphides*. During these years Bruhn was also a visiting teacher for both the National Ballet and for students at Canada's National Ballet School. From 1967 to 1971, Bruhn was Artistic Director of the Royal Swedish Ballet. He became Artistic Director of The National Ballet of Canada in 1983, and held the position until he died in 1986.

Before watching *Swan Lake*:

Some movement characteristics of classical ballet to look for while you watch:

- Geometric shapes
- Symmetry
- Highly technical choreography
- Harmonious dancing
- Balanced movement phrases
- Precise movement
- Repetition
- Spectacular displays of technique

Dancer's roles in classical ballet productions:

- Principal dancers:
 - Play the lead roles
 - Showcase spectacular technique and partnering throughout
- Character dancers:
 - Play supporting characters
 - Use mime and gesture to move the story forward

- Soloists:
 - Perform solo and small group sequences
 - Showcase technique often separate from the plot
- Corps the ballet:
 - Support storytelling by setting the scene
 - Dancing in unison with precision
 - Act as a backdrop for the principal dancers and soloists
 - In many Classical ballets, there is a “ballet blanc” act traditionally performed by female dancers wearing white and playing some kind of mythical or ethereal being

Who are Marius Petipa, Lev Ivanov and Piotr Ilyitch Tchaikovsky?

- Do an internet search to find out about who both of these people are, and what their impact has been on the world of classical ballet.
- Write a paragraph or point form notes, highlighting their contributions to *Swan Lake*, and their contributions to the evolution of ballet.

Watch *Swan Lake*:

Because this is a recorded performance, you can watch it once through to fully experience it, and then again to take notes.

Take Notes:

Use this graphic organizer to take notes before, during and after watching the performance.

Before		
Title:		
Performance Date:		
Choreographer:	Composer:	Dancers:
Story/Theme (in your own words):		

During
<p>Fill in this checklist as you watch. Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dancers moving in unison <input type="checkbox"/> A geometric body shape <input type="checkbox"/> A geometric formation <input type="checkbox"/> Dancers moving quickly <input type="checkbox"/> Dancers moving slowly <input type="checkbox"/> Dancers changing formations <input type="checkbox"/> Dancers moving along a pathway <input type="checkbox"/> Smooth movement <input type="checkbox"/> Sharp movement <input type="checkbox"/> Circular shapes <input type="checkbox"/> Angular shapes <input type="checkbox"/> Movement that repeats

After		
	Draw	Write
A memorable moment:		
A dancer who stood out to me:		
When I was watching I felt:		
Describe the music:		

Comprehension Questions:

After watching *Swan Lake*, use your notes to answer the following questions.

1. How much storytelling happens in this act? Describe one example of storytelling through movement.
2. How did the choreography make you feel? Use three different emotion words in your answer.
3. Choose **three** adjectives to describe the mood of the piece.
4. How do the dancers use shape and energy to appear swan-like?
5. Describe the dance partnership between Siegfried and Odette. How do they relate to each other through movement?
What are their roles in the partnership?
6. What kinds of geometric shapes do you see in the piece? Describe two examples.

Creative Activity:

After watching *Swan Lake*, complete **one** of the following activities.

Activity 1:

How might *Swan Lake* be seen and referenced in pop culture today? Consider movies, tv, music, fashion, advertising, social media etc. Create a pinterest board or a series of google slides where you feature your findings.

OR

Activity 2:

Create a flip-book inspired by Act 1 Scene 2 of *Swan Lake*.

Journal:

After watching *Swan Lake*, write responses to the following questions.

1. Did watching the choreography bring up any memories for you? Why do you think that memory came up?
2. How do the dancers communicate without using words? Give three examples.
3. If you could tell the story of *Swan Lake* from a different perspective, who's perspective would you choose?