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**Swan Lake (Balanchine)**



Photo © Paul Kolnik

- Music** Swan Lake, Op. 20 (1875-6) by Peter Ilyitch Tschaikovsky  
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- Choreography** George Balanchine (after Ivanov) © The George Balanchine Trust
- Premiere** November 20, 1951, New York City Ballet, City Center of Music and Drama
- Original Cast** Maria Tallchief, André Eglevsky, Frank Hobi, Patricia Wilde, Edward Bigelow
- Average Length** 36 min.

Balanchine preferred *The Sleeping Beauty* to *Swan Lake*, the first of Tschaikovsky's three full-length ballets. When asked by Morton Baum of the City Center of Music and Drama, both Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein hesitated at staging *Swan Lake* for New York City Ballet; and finally did so only as "insurance" that they would be allowed to mount a more daring piece in the future. Originally designed by Cecil Beaton for the stage of the City Center of Music and Drama, and later reconceived by Rouben Ter-Arutunian for the larger stage of the New York Sate Theater in 1964, Balanchine's one-act version is based on Ivanov's choreography for Act II and uses music from both Acts II and IV (the lakeside acts) as well as a duet from Tschaikovsky's opera *Ondine*. In 1986, the production was entirely redesigned to dress the swan corps in black. The idea of black swans apparently started with Balanchine, who purchased 400 yards of black tarlatan before he died. The scenery, by Alain Vaes, is now an icy landscape instead of the traditional Gothic lakeside. Peter Ilyitch Tschaikovsky (1840-1893) studied at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, where Balanchine later studied piano in addition to his studies in dance.

"WHAT ATTRACTS ME VERY MUCH TO THE COMPANY IS THAT THERE ARE REALLY NO SET RULES."

— Peter Martins

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Tschaikovsky is one of the most popular and influential of all romantic composers. His work is expressive, melodic, grand in scale, with rich orchestrations. His output was prodigious and included chamber works, symphonies, concerti for various instruments, operas and works for the piano. His creations for the ballet, composed in close partnership with Marius Petipa, include Swan Lake, The Nutcracker and The Sleeping Beauty.

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