



BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

TCH AI KOV SKY

COMPLETE BALLETS

Swan Lake
The Sleeping Beauty
The Nutcracker

Royal Philharmonic
Orchestra

ESSENZA · QUINAESENCIA · QUINTESSÊNCIA · QUINTESSENCE · QUINTESSENZ · QUINTESSENZA · QUINAESEN

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky 1840–1893
Complete Ballets

SWAN LAKE OP.20

Act 1		Act 3	
1	Introduction (Moderato assai) 3'07	27	Scène: Danse de fançailles (Allegro giusto) 2'47
2	Scène (Allegro giusto) 3'02	28	Scène: La sortie des invités et la valse 4'53
3	Valse (Tempo di valse) 7'17	29	Scène (Allegro – Allegro giusto) 1'46
4	Scène: Entrance of Pages (Allegro moderato) 4'08	Pas de six:	
Pas de trois:		30	Intrada (Moderato assai) 1'56
5	Intrada (Allegro moderato) 2'51	31	Variation 1 (Allegro) 1'06
6	Andante sostenuto 3'52	32	Variation 2 (Andante con moto) 3'19
7	Allegro semplice – Presto 1'13	33	Variation 3 (Moderato) 0'46
8	Prince (Moderato) 1'20	34	Variation 4 (Allegro) 1'04
9	Allegro 1'07	35	Variation 5 (Moderato – Allegro semplice) and Coda (Allegro molto vivace) 3'35
10	Coda (Allegro vivace) 1'49	36	Dance hongroise (Czárdás) 3'46
Pas de deux:		37	Danse russe 4'40
11	Intrada (Tempo di valse) 1'44	38	Danse espagnole 2'28
12	Andante 5'37	39	Danse napolitaine 2'33
13	Tempo di valse 1'45	40	Mazurka 4'04
14	Intrada (Tempo di valse) 2'00	41	Scène (Allegro – Valse – Allegro vivo) 3'52
15	Pas d'action (Andantino quasi moderato – Allegro) 2'53		
16	Scène: Dusk falls 0'55		
17	Danse des coupes (Polonaise) 5'42		
18	Finale: Swan theme (Andante) 2'47		
Act 2		Act 4	
19	Scène: Swan theme (Moderato) 6'31	42	Entr'acte (Moderato) 2'33
20	Scène (Allegro moderato – Moderato – Allegro vivo) 3'50	43	Scène (Allegro non troppo) 2'48
21	Danses des cygnes 1'57	44	Danses des petits cygnes (Moderato) 5'22
22	Danses des petits cygnes 1'27	45	Scène (Allegro agitato) 3'18
23	Pas d'action: Second Dance of the Queen (Andante) 8'04	46	Scène finale (Andante) 6'55
24	Tempo di valse 1'40		
25	Coda (Allegro vivace) 1'41		
26	Scène finale: Swan theme (Moderato) 3'07		

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY OP.66

Prologue		Act 2	
47	Introduction 2'43	67	Entr'acte et scène 2'43
48	March 4'24	68	Colin-maillard 1'02
49	Scène dansante 4'25	69	Scène 4'16
Pas de Six:		70	Pas d'action 5'13
50	Entrée 0'37	71	Variation d'Aurore 1'37
51	Adagio 4'01	72	Panorama 2'07
52	Variation 1 (Candide) 1'08	73	Entr'acte 6'42
53	Variation 2 (Coulante, Fleur de Farine) 0'35	74	Entr'acte symphonique (Le Sommeil) et scène 6'13
54	Variation 3 (Miettes qui tombent) 1'12	75	Finale 0'47
55	Variation 4 (Canari qui chante) 0'31	Act 3	
56	Variation 5 (Violente) 1'16	76	Marche 2'03
57	Variation 6 (La Fée des Lilas) 1'06	77	Pas de caractère (Le Chat botté et La Chatte blanche) 2'30
58	Coda 1'39	78	Pas de quatre 2'11
59	Finale 8'37	Pas de deux:	
Act 1		79	Entrée 1'06
60	Scène 3'06	80	Adagio 4'43
61	Valse 5'00	81	Variation 1 1'03
62	Entrée d'Aurore 1'59	82	Variation 2 1'44
Pas d'action:		83	Coda 1'19
63	Rose Adage 6'32	84	Polacca 3'55
64	Variation d'Aurore 3'26		
65	Coda 2'31		
66	Finale 6'51		

THE NUTCRACKER OP.71

85 Overture 3'21

Act 1

First tableau

86 Scene 1: The Christmas Tree 4'03

87 Scene 2: March 2'21

88 Scene 3: Children's Galop & Arrival of the Guests 2'28

89 Scene 4: Dance Scene & Arrival of Drosselmeyer 5'58

90 Scene 5: Scene & Grandfather's Dance 6'50

91 Scene 6: The Magic Spell Begins 6'47

92 Scene 7: The Battle Between the Nutcracker & the Mouse King 3'30

Second tableau

93 Scene 8: Scene in the Pine Forest (Journey through the Snow) 3'40

94 Scene 9: Waltz of the Snowflakes 6'18

Act 2

95 Scene 10: The Magic Castle 3'47

96 Scene 11: Clara & the Prince

– Scene 12: Divertissement 4'32

97 Chocolate: Spanish Dance 1'11

98 Coffee: Arabian Dance 3'23

99 Tea: Chinese Dance 1'06

100 Trepak 1'09

101 Dance of the Mirlitons 2'21

102 Mother Gigogne & the Clowns 2'50

103 Scene 13: Waltz of the Flowers – 6'42

104 Scene 14: Pas de Deux: Dance of the Prince & the

Sugar-Plum Fairy 4'29

105 Variation 1: Tarantella 0'44

106 Variation 2: Dance of the

Sugar-Plum Fairy 2'15

107 Coda 1'25

108 Scene 15: Finale: Final Waltz

& Apotheosis 5'32

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Clio Gould *solo violin* (Swan Lake & Sleeping Beauty)

Jessica Burroughs *solo cello* (Sleeping Beauty)

Nicolae Moldoveanu (Swan Lake) · Barry Wordsworth (Sleeping Beauty)

David Maninov (Nutcracker)

Tchaikovsky the ballet composer

According to his brother Modest, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, much drawn to ballet in his youth, was fond of imitating the dancers and could do so proficiently. As late as 1875, when Camille Saint-Saëns was making his Moscow debut as composer, pianist and conductor, the two men were reportedly to be found larking about on the stage of the conservatoire performing a little 'Galatea and Pygmalion' ballet together with Nikolay Rubinstein at the piano. However, the mature composer would have been surprised to find himself held up as a key figure in the history of classical dance. (Closer to our own time, Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev likewise preferred to think of himself as a purveyor of opera, notwithstanding Serge Diaghilev's outspoken views and his own successes with full-length ballets in the Tchaikovsky tradition.)

It is hardly surprising that early spectators of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1875–76), accustomed to the subservient scores of Cesare Pugni (1802–1870) and Ludwig Minkus (1826–1917), should have felt puzzled by its symphonic proportions and depth of feeling. Only two orchestral rehearsals and a poor production scarcely helped. Even *The Sleeping Beauty* (1888–89), one of Tchaikovsky's great masterpieces, staged with the resources of the Imperial Ballet in St Petersburg, enjoyed only a *succès d'estime* during his lifetime. His last work in the form, the two-act *Nutcracker* (1891–92), secured its popular reputation through the pre-release of a suite showcasing its glittering themes.

Tchaikovsky's balletic significance became much more obvious after his death, part of a process that saw the form perfected and renewed by such practitioners as the French-born choreographer Marius Petipa (1818–1910) and the Russian Mikhail Fokine (1880–1942). *The Sleeping Beauty* was commissioned by Ivan Vsevolozhsky (1835–1909), then Director of the Imperial Theatres, who had abolished the post of Staff Ballet Composer with a view to engaging musicians of greater distinction. The scenario and designs were prepared by Vsevolozhsky while Petipa mapped out the sequence of dances. Without subverting traditional imperatives of clarity, harmony, symmetry and order, the bold invention and perfect alignment of music and choreography had the capacity to affect audiences in a new way. Tchaikovsky's three mature ballets were chiefly responsible for this generic transformation, for all that he once described *Swan Lake* as 'poor stuff compared with [Delibes's] *Sylvia*'.

Public acclaim notwithstanding, many academic commentators have found Tchaikovsky an uncomfortable figure whose symphonic music could be stigmatised as

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‘balletic’ as if that epithet in some way invalidated it. With the effortless extension of a single melodic line held to be in some way suspect – although Tchaikovsky’s tunes can run the gamut from elegance and charm to uninhibited eroticism and passion – it proved easy to overlook the incredible craftsmanship of the ballets, their mastery of form, harmony, momentum and orchestration. Tchaikovsky is rarely given credit for the discipline and professionalism of his creative life. Whatever the propensity within to violent agitation, he delivered on time and was quite prepared to submit to the exacting and precise demands of his collaborators. The expressive certainty of his invention has allowed more recent choreographers to experiment with stance and movement, often radically, confident that a firm musical narrative is permanently encoded in the notes.

In the summer of 1871 Tchaikovsky had arranged a family entertainment based on the tale of *Swan Lake*, but the impulse to take up the subject as a full-length ballet came from Vladimir Begichev (1828–1891), the theatre director whose stepson was a pupil of the composer. Julius Wenzel Reisinger choreographed the first production unveiled at Moscow’s Bolshoi Theatre on [20 February] / 4 March 1877. Tchaikovsky, who had hoped that his initial attempt at ballet music would be enthusiastically received, died in 1893 believing it to be a failure. It was not until 1895 that Petipa and Lev Ivanov (1834–1901) created the masterpiece which for many ballet enthusiasts has made their names synonymous with *Swan Lake*. With Modest’s approval, the score was partly reworked by Riccardo Drigo (1846–1930).

The story in brief: Prince Siegfried is expected to choose a bride from among the guests at the forthcoming ball. He and his companions embark on a hunt for a flock of swans which they soon discover to be beautiful maidens bewitched by the evil magician, Rothbart, and who revert to human form between midnight and dawn. The Prince falls in love with Odette, the Swan Queen, and invites her to the ball intending to make her his wife. At the ball many seek the Prince’s hand, performing a series of national dances (bringing a *divertissement* element into the drama structurally), but the Prince is faithful to Odette. The magician has appeared, accompanying his daughter Odile, transformed into a twin of Odette. A single ballerina usually takes both parts, making it among the most challenging, as well as the most sought-after, roles in the entire classical repertoire. Siegfried declares that he will marry her, discovering too late that Rothbart has tricked him. He rushes to the forest and proves (variously, according to the whims of the production team) his fidelity to Odette as

the waters rise to engulf the lovers. The swans may be freed from the spell but the music, having achieving a B major climax signifying the triumph of the swan theme over malign Fate, ends equivocally with an ambiguous open B. In some presentations, the spirits of the lovers are seen soaring heavenwards together, a subtler resolution than the happy ending grafted on in 1895. Ansermet’s long-esteemed recording is based on the Drigo edition.

Traditionally the setting is literal and representational. Siegfried celebrates his birthday in the palace garden, he discovers Odette at a forest-ringed lake, and columns, drapes and chandeliers adorn the ballroom. However, more radical interpretations are possible in which Siegfried, like Tchaikovsky himself perhaps, is stifled in his aristocratic cocoon and seeks solace in the real, wilder world. Erick Bruhn’s *Swan Lake* for the National Ballet of Canada (1966) recasts the evil sorcerer as a female figure, implying that our hero is the victim of an Oedipus complex. *Illusions – Like Swan Lake*, which John Neumeier choreographed for the Hamburg Ballet in 1976, weaves the narrative into the history of King Ludwig of Bavaria, who had his own obsession with swans. For Adventures in Motion Pictures in 1995, Matthew Bourne created a revisionist *Swan Lake* in which the decorative and vulnerable *corps de ballet* is replaced by aggressive, potentially violent males, their feral freedom irresistible to a prince chafing against constraints.

The Sleeping Beauty was adapted from Charles Perrault’s well-known fairy story, *La Belle au bois dormant* (1697). Tchaikovsky took special pains over the orchestration, achieving an unprecedented precision of effect, assisted by his recent experiences as a conductor. The story goes that at the gala rehearsal before the Mariinsky premiere which took place on [3 January] / 15 January 1890, the grandeur and novelty of the conception left Tsar Alexander III bemused. He summoned up only a lukewarm ‘Very nice!’ when the composer was called to the royal box. ‘His majesty treated me with distant hauteur,’ noted the composer in his diary.

The ballet’s prologue, depicting the christening of the baby Princess Aurora, contains a variation for each of the six fairies come to bestow gifts upon the infant. In the midst of the excitement the wicked fairy, Carabosse, casts a spell over Aurora, promising that she will prick her finger and die. Intervening to save her, the Lilac Fairy (originally played by Petipa’s daughter, Marie) mitigates the curse from death to sleep. Many years later the royal family is celebrating Aurora’s birthday. The choreographic highpoint is the Adagio maestoso or ‘Rose’ Adagio which she dances

with her princely suitors, the steps revealing her growing confidence. Since her christening the King has attempted to ban all sharp objects from the kingdom but when a disguised Carabosse presents Aurora with a spindle, sometimes a bouquet of flowers or a beautiful tapestry with embedded needle, she pricks her finger and she and the court fall deeply asleep.

One hundred years later in a dark forest a Prince is hunting with his friends. The Lilac Fairy conjures up an irresistible apparition of Aurora and he instantly falls in love. Led to the castle to rescue her and put an end to the evil Carabosse, one kiss and the spell is broken. Princess Aurora and her entire family awaken from their slumber and the couple's wedding is celebrated in Act 3 with a *divertissement* involving a cornucopia of fairytale characters including Puss in Boots, Cinderella, the Bluebird, Little Red Riding Hood and Tom Thumb. In the grand pas de deux Aurora is presented musically and choreographically as a woman in full bloom, rejoicing in true love. Initially performed abroad in abbreviated form, Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes brought the first full-length *Sleeping Beauty* to the UK in 1921. The countless stagings since have tended to remain close to the Russian original rather than imparting layers of psychological meaning.

After Tchaikovsky's qualified success with *The Sleeping Beauty*, in February 1891 he was invited to compose the music for a new ballet. The scenario was based on Alexandre Dumas *père's* adaptation of a story by the German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Nussknacker und Mausekönig*. From the outset, *The Nutcracker* had its critics, none more trenchant than the composer himself. He wrote to his beloved nephew, Vladimir (Bob) Davydov, on 7 July: '... I finished the sketches of the ballet yesterday. You will remember that I boasted to you when you were here that I could finish the ballet in five days, but I have scarcely finished it in a fortnight. No, the old man is breaking up ... he loses bit by bit the capacity to do anything at all. The ballet is infinitely worse than *Sleeping Beauty* – so much is certain ... If I arrive at the conclusion that I can no longer furnish my musical table with anything but warmed-up fare, I will give up composing altogether.'

At its St Petersburg premiere on [6 December] / 18 December 1892 *The Nutcracker* formed half of a double bill with the darker operatic component, *Iolanta*, generally thought superior. Posterity has reversed this judgement. It is true that hardly any story survives in the ballet's voyage from the (mimed) semi-reality of an idealised family Christmas to the land of eternal sweetmeats (and nothing but virtuoso dancing). Yet

the score itself is brilliantly alive with no hint of time-serving tinsel. Tchaikovsky's exploitation of his unmatched gift for melody was never more audacious.

The miniature overture opening the work sets the fairy mood by employing only the orchestra's upper registers. The first act is divided into two scenes. It is Christmas Eve and little Clara is playing with her toys. At midnight they come to life. Led by the Nutcracker, her special present, they overwhelm some marauding mice, after which he is transformed into a Prince. Clara and her Prince travel through a snowy landscape where they are greeted by waltzing snowflakes. Ivanov's original choreography, in which the dancers evoked the movements of windswept snow, was much admired by the cognoscenti who climbed up to the cheaper seats in order to appreciate the patterns created.

In Act 2 the Sugar Plum Fairy and the people of the Land of Sweets proffer a lavish gala of character dances. There follows a magnificent pas de deux for the Prince and the Sugar Plum Fairy, the latter's own variation realising the composer's desire to showcase the celesta, a new instrument he had heard in Paris. Its unique timbre is here famously complemented by little downward swoops from the bass clarinet. Elsewhere Tchaikovsky incorporates several children's instruments including a rattle, pop-gun, toy trumpet and miniature drum. After the festivities Clara wakes up under the Christmas tree, the Nutcracker toy in her arms, although in some versions she rides off with her Nutcracker Prince as if the dream has happened in reality (q.v. Hoffmann's original story).

Radical modern interpretations include Mark Morris's *The Hard Nut* (1991), set in the Swinging Sixties but faithful to the original score, and Donald Byrd's *Harlem Nutcracker* (1996), danced to Duke Ellington's jazz adaptation and set in an African-American household where Clara, the little girl, has become clan matriarch. That Tchaikovsky's invention should present such riches to plunder, given the slight, somewhat incongruous scenario with which he had to work, says much about the nature of his genius.

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