

# black swan white swan

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## CREDITS:

Choreography:  
**Mário Radačovský**

Music: **Piotr Ilyich  
Tchaikovsky**

Costume design:  
**Patricia Barker**

Set design:  
**Marek Hollý**

Audio visual design:  
**Michael Auer**



# Black Swan **White Swan**

## Curriculum links

### In this unit you and your students will:

- Learn about the elements that come together to create a theatrical ballet experience.
- Identify the processes involved in making a theatre production.

### CURRICULUM LINKS IN THIS UNIT

#### Values

Students will be encouraged to value:

- **Innovation**, inquiry and curiosity, by thinking critically, creatively and reflectively.
- **Diversity**, as found in our different cultures and heritages.
- **Community and participation** for the common good.

### KEY COMPETENCIES

- **Using language, symbols and text** – Students will recognise how choices of language and symbols in live theatre affect people's understanding and the ways in which they respond.
- **Relating to others** – Students will develop the ability to listen actively and share ideas regarding theatrical ballet performances.
- **Participating and contributing** – Students will be actively involved in their cultural community, understanding the importance of creative environments.
- **Thinking** – Students will reflect on their own thinking and learning after the personal experience of attending a live theatre show.

### WORKSHOP LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR LEVELS 3 & 4

#### Level 3 students will learn how to:

##### Develop practical knowledge

- Use the dance elements to develop and share their personal movement vocabulary.

##### Develop ideas

- Select and combine dance elements in response to a variety of stimuli.

##### Communicate and interpret

- Prepare and share dance movement individually and in pairs or groups.
- Use the elements of dance to describe dance movements and respond to dances from a variety of cultures.

#### Level 4 students will learn how to:

##### Develop practical knowledge

- Apply the dance elements to extend personal movement skills and vocabularies and to explore the vocabularies of others.

##### Develop ideas

- Combine and contrast the dance elements to express images, ideas, and feelings in dance, using a variety of choreographic processes.

##### Communicate and interpret

- Prepare and present dance, demonstrating an awareness of the performance context.
- Describe and record how the purpose of selected dances is expressed through movement.

# Black Swan White Swan

In 2012, Patricia Barker commissioned Slovak choreographer Mário Radačovský to create a new version of *Swan Lake* for Grand Rapids Ballet in Michigan. The stripped down, elemental version of the story which Radačovský created, with the agony and ecstasy of Tchaikovsky's original score at its heart, was an instant success with audiences, and has gone on to have acclaimed performances in both the USA and Europe.

As an exciting addition to its repertoire of full-length story ballets, and following in the company's long tradition of presenting fresh takes on classic works, the Royal New Zealand Ballet is delighted to bring *Black Swan White Swan* to New Zealand audiences in 2019. With its focus on Siegfried's struggle with ideal love, pure evil, temptation, and most of all, himself, this is a *Swan Lake* for the 21st century.

*Black Swan White Swan* is not a retelling of the story of Princess Odette, the White Swan; or of Von Rothbart's daughter, Odile, the Black Swan. It is the story of Siegfried and his journey of discovery, both in the real world as well as in the realm of his imagination, aided and abetted by Von Rothbart.

The most important duets, in fact, are those between Siegfried and Von Rothbart, as his Mephistophelean manipulator, and by Von Rothbart, as Siegfried looking inside himself, at his alter ego, mirroring his actions, sharing his coats, engaging in frequent combat.

Radačovský's tale is one for the 21st century, with a dance vocabulary to match. It's classical dance, yes, but not at all classical ballet with women on pointe - dancers are in dance shoes or barefoot.

## RE-IMAGINING SWAN LAKE

*My journey to create Black Swan, White Swan began 21 years ago when I was in the hospital, in The Netherlands, battling cancer. The window in my room overlooked a lake where swans used to gather. I instantly thought about the freedom and perfection they represented.. but also how aggressive and dangerous they can be. I thought that, if I make it, I will make a ballet about swans.*

*I originally wanted to do a version of Swan Lake with just duets – the white swan pas de deux and the black – but Patricia convinced me that I should make a full length ballet. It is now by far my most successful ballet, performed in the US, in the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Austria, Germany, Hungary and China. We have already performed it 48 times in the Czech Republic.*

*Nothing in life is black and white. There are so many colours in between, and not just in what we see, but what we feel. How can we trust what we see? Is it reality or a dream.. what's real and what's not? I hope you will see past the colours and visual elements to discover what they feel and not simply see. I hope you will go home talking about it and bring to light your own feelings and emotions, perhaps provoked by what you saw onstage.*

**MÁRIO RADAČOVSKÝ**

**MAY 2019**



[Read more about Mário Radačovský here](#)

## THE CHARACTERS

- Siegfried
- White Swan
- Von Rothbart
- Black Swan
- Swans
- Party Guests

## THE STORY

### Act 1

On his birthday, Siegfried receives devastating news. In his anguish, he sees a mysterious stranger: Von Rothbart.

Siegfried's wife has arranged a surprise birthday party, but he is not in the mood to celebrate. He collapses, and Rothbart returns. Rothbart begins to manipulate Siegfried's emotions, including his feelings towards his wife, and he becomes confused, no longer able to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Siegfried tries to resist Rothbart and looks to his doctor for support. She becomes his White Swan and he becomes obsessed with her as the saviour who can bring him back to health and sanity. But Rothbart is not defeated...

### Act 2

Siegfried struggles to regain his identity, but Rothbart has the upper hand. To further confuse him, Rothbart brings out Siegfried's wife, transformed into the Black Swan, and no longer the woman that Siegfried knows and loves. The Black Swan toys with him and once again Siegfried has to fight to keep his grip on his reality. Rothbart sends her away and as Siegfried fights harder and harder he finally begins to weaken Rothbart's control, only to collapse once again. As Siegfried awakes, back at his birthday party, he has no idea what is real and what is not. But Rothbart is still there...

## 21ST CENTURY SWANS

Royal New Zealand Ballet Masters **Laura McQueen Schultz** and **Nicholas Schultz** created the roles of White Swan and Siegfried in Mária Radačovský's original production of *Black Swan, White Swan*, for Grand Rapids Ballet in 2012. Since then they have reprised the roles in Grand Rapids, also assisting with the staging of the production's first revival there, and helped to stage the production for the Ballet of the National Theatre in Brno, Slovakia.

'Staging *Black Swan, White Swan* is a big undertaking' says Nick. 'It is a full two act ballet and there are 24 people onstage in just one cast; we've rehearsed four principal casts into the work, as well as everyone learning the group sections. When you are dancing you only have to worry about your own parts and have the ability to focus and give all your attention to those roles. As staggers, we have to learn every single person's role and what each person has to do in every moment of the ballet.'

'We've learned about the pace of the work and how fast we can teach it to others – how long it takes for them to retain information from day to day. We are still young and can actually show the dancers the movement and partnering ourselves, so they can see the technique before trying it out. It's fun seeing the ballet taking shape, seeing couples succeed in the roles that we know so well, and also some of the great effects on stage – like the mirrors, and the amazing use of projections on the floor.'

'When the ballet was created on us we were able to bring our personal strengths into the work and help develop the characters as we saw them' says Laura. 'Now that we are staging the work, we try to pass on as many

of the feelings and emotion we had during creation to the dancers, so that they will understand where the piece came from. We love to dance together, and staging together is fantastic.'

'I always looked forward to dancing the White Swan pas de deux with Nick' says Laura. 'There is a great feeling of serenity and trust, which is very special. The 'meeting' pas de deux when Siegfried and the White Swan, who may or may not be all in his mind, first interact, is tricky, but very satisfying.'

'This is one of the most difficult pieces I have ever performed, both physically and emotionally' says Nick. 'It's very rare for a ballet to be driven by a male character. Siegfried is the first one on and the last one off in both acts; he never leaves the stage. He carries the ballet and conveys a really personal story: it's a journey. And as well as dancing with both the White Swan and the Black Swan, as in traditional versions of *Swan Lake*, he also dances major duets with Rothbart throughout the ballet – they are battling all the time. In fact, Siegfried probably spends more time dancing with Rothbart than he does with either of the Swans. You get to the end of the ballet with a real sense of accomplishment.'

'We both know and love traditional versions of *Swan Lake*' says Laura. 'But in the classical ballet the costumes are almost another character in themselves. In this version the costumes are minimal in order to show the body and the movement, and you can focus on building the character from within. It really

changes how you shape and present your body, when you're not wearing pointe shoes, but are barefoot or wearing ballroom dancing shoes. The swans in *Black Swan*, *White Swan* are real women and you have to move naturally, like walking heel first rather than toe first, as you would in a classical ballet. The women have their hair loose, and Mário has always been clear that they should manage this as they would in real life, brushing it away as it gets into their eyes, for example.'

'For Siegfried, wearing a three-piece suit with shirt and tie really emphasises the man's humanity' says Nick. 'You feel like a real person, rather than a fairytale prince – that can be a great feeling too, but it's very different.'

'Mário cares about the honesty of the storytelling. It's really important that the dancers are true to themselves onstage, not putting on an artificial persona of how they think their character should be. So the characters and the story will feel slightly different with each cast performing the roles.'

'The audience can really follow Siegfried's journey through the ballet' says Nick. 'Like the classical *Swan Lake*, there are the big pas de deux to look forward to, with both the White Swan and the Black Swan, but his biggest relationship is with Rothbart. And that's ambiguous: Rothbart is Siegfried's alter ego, his flip side, or the sickness within and the audience can decide for themselves if he's actually a real person, or just a part of Siegfried's own personality that he's battling with, right to the end of the ballet. There's no right or wrong way to interpret the story.'

**RNZB DANCERS:  
PAUL MATHEWS  
AND KATHERINE  
MINOR**



## **COSTUME AND SET DESIGN – PATRICIA BARKER**

Reflecting the title of the ballet, black and white predominate in the costumes and sets for *Black Swan White Swan*. Siegfried's inner struggles are reflected in his costume – he is clad in grey, the colour of uncertainty. The red trimming on Von Rothbart's coat, the only flash of colour on the stage, indicates love, passion, blood and the life source.

The floor of the stage is white and the back curtain is black. The eye is drawn to mirrors which reflect infinity and another dimension can be seen through the window which looks out onto a lake.

The deceptive simplicity of the costumes and stage setting belie the complexity of the emotions being conveyed. They are minimalist and with simple lines, the only decoration being black on white appliqué on the women's party dresses and delicate hand-made fabric feathers on the swans' costumes.

The male dancers wear off-the-peg suits. This can prove challenging as they are not garments designed to allow for balletic movements. In the case of Von Rothbart a solution was found by making his suit of stretch satin, allowing the dancer the freedom of movement he needs.

The swan's feathers are created from layers of carefully cut fabric.

The female dancers wear flat shoes as opposed to the pointe shoes one would usually expect to see in a traditional production of *Swan Lake*.



**MEN'S COSTUMES**



**BLACK SWAN**



**VON ROTHBART**



**DONNA JEFFERIS, RNZB HEAD  
OF COSTUME SEWS THE  
BLACK SWAN'S FEATHERS**



**WOMEN'S COSTUMES**

# About Swan Lake

## SWAN LAKE – BALLET'S MOST ENDURING CLASSIC

For a ballet that is today so widely known, acclaimed and loved as a great work of art, the origins of *Swan Lake* remain obscure.

In 1875 Tchaikovsky, who loved and admired the music of Adam (*Giselle*) and Délibes (*Coppélia*, *Sylvia*) but who had never composed a ballet, was commissioned to write a new ballet entitled *Swan Lake* by the Imperial Theatres in Moscow.

The story, although it has been linked to Russian and German folk tales, is not based on a single source, and it is not clear how the scenario evolved. Unlike Tchaikovsky's later ballets, *The Nutcracker* (1890) and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1892), where he worked with the master choreographers Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa, he did not collaborate closely with the choreographer, Julius Reisinger. Contemporary accounts suggest that they did not get on, with Reisinger demanding substantial changes to the already completed score.

*Swan Lake* was premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre on 4 March 1877. It was not a resounding success: Reisinger's choreography was lambasted, the production and orchestra were by all accounts poor, and the Odette was a late replacement for the first choice ballerina.

While most of the music critics agreed that Tchaikovsky's score was the highlight, there was concern that a symphonic composer had stooped to compose a ballet. They could not accept his rich orchestrations as mere accompaniment to a stage spectacle. Conversely, the theatre critics thought the music was not 'dansante'.

*Swan Lake* remained sporadically in the repertoire of the Bolshoi Theatre into the 1880s. Excerpts from the score were published – notably a four-handed piano arrangement of three dances by Debussy – and in 1888, Act II, with new choreography, was presented at the National Theatre of Prague, as part of two concerts devoted to Tchaikovsky's music. The composer recorded in his personal diary that the performance was 'a moment of absolute happiness'; he was never to see it performed again.

At the time of his death in 1893, Tchaikovsky had been acclaimed as a great composer, in all genres. His *Nutcracker* and *Sleeping Beauty* were successful, but a full staging of *Swan Lake* had proved elusive. However, Marius Petipa received permission from the Director of the Imperial Theatres to revive the work, and with new choreography by Ivanov, Act II of *Swan Lake* was included in a concert given in memory of Tchaikovsky in February 1894. It was an artistic success if not a financial one (due to high ticket prices, the hall was half empty) and the impetus was there for a full production.

Petipa had three additional collaborators in his creation of what amounted to a new ballet. The scenario was simplified by Tchaikovsky's brother, Modest. Substantial revisions were made to Tchaikovsky's score by the ballet composer Riccardo Drigo, with re-orchestrations and changes in order, including the national dances in Act III. Lev Ivanov, Petipa's second in command at the Imperial Ballet, created the now-iconic choreography for the 'white' acts – Acts II and IV.

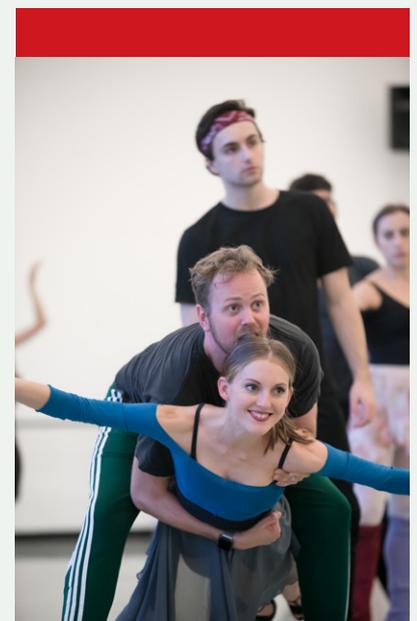
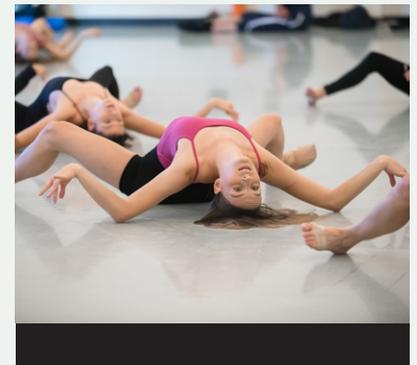
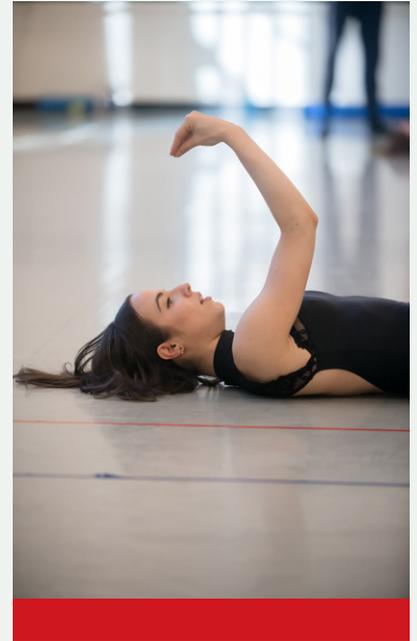


The St Peterburg production of *Swan Lake* had its premiere at the Imperial Theatre on 27 January 1895. Again, it made a mixed impression, although the prima ballerina Pierina Legnani, an audience favourite, was hailed for her portrayal of Odette/Odile. It is Legnani's party trick of performing 32 fouettés that has come to define the bravura wickedness of Odile and is among the most eagerly-anticipated passages in all classical ballet.

*Swan Lake* remained in the repertoire of the Imperial Ballet (later the Kirov and now the Mariinsky) and today is performed, with the Petipa/Ivanov choreography and with many others, by ballet companies the world over. Directors have taken liberties with the scenario, from the 'happy' endings of Soviet versions to the contemporary stagings of John Neumeier, Graeme Murphy, Matthew Bourne, Mats Ek, Mário Radačovský, Alexander Ekman and more. The essential elements: white/black; good/evil remain, and for many, *Swan Lake* is the quintessential ballet, the perfect synthesis of music and dance.

## REHEARSAL FOR **BLACK SWAN WHITE SWAN**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN A'COURT



# Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1840 – 1893

**Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** was born in Votinsk in 1840, one of the seven children of a middle class family with a tradition of military and government service. Although the young Piotr showed musical talent from an early age, being a musician was not considered a suitable career and it was decided that he should study law.

At the age of ten, he was sent to board at the Imperial Institute of Jurisprudence in St Petersburg, more than a thousand miles from home. While studying law became his focus, Tchaikovsky continued to study music and to learn the piano.

After three years working in a junior role at the Ministry of Justice he finally got his chance to study music formally when he joined the inaugural class of the St Petersburg Conservatory, under the directorship of Anton Rubinstein, in 1862.

On graduating in 1865, Tchaikovsky was appointed as Professor of Music Theory at the new Moscow Conservatory. By the late 1860s public performances of his works became more frequent and were generally well-received.

Tchaikovsky was greatly supported by the patronage of the wealthy Nadezhda von Meck, whose generosity over 13 years enabled him to devote his life to being a composer. Although he and his patron never met, Tchaikovsky and Von Meck exchanged more than 1,000 letters and they became intimate friends.

His works enjoyed favour at the Russian Imperial court, and he was awarded the Order of St Vladimir, as well as a hereditary title. In 1885, he was granted a lifetime annual pension of 3,000 roubles.

The second act of *Swan Lake* was performed at a concert given in memory of Tchaikovsky in February 1894. While perhaps not as popular as Tchaikovsky's other ballets *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake* is regularly performed around the world in a variety of productions including the innovative Black Swan White Swan currently being performed by RNZB



# Variations on **Swan Lake**

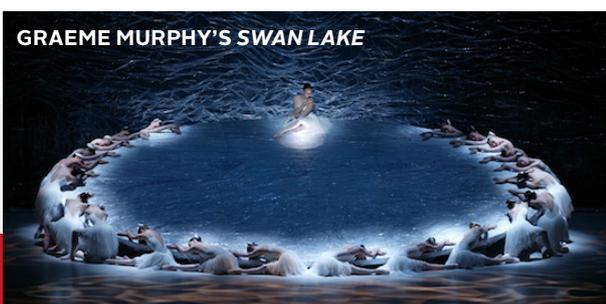
## **AN ASSORTMENT OF SWANS**

As one of the world's best known ballets, *Swan Lake* has been produced in many different versions. Following are just a few of them.

- **1976** John Neumeier's *Illusions Like Swan Lake* for Hamburg Ballet has the real life story of Swan King Ludwig II of Bavaria woven into the plot. The ballet finishes with Ludwig's death by drowning while confined to an asylum, set to the conclusion of Act 3 (the ballroom). This work anticipated both Bourne's and Murphy's own interpretations and is still routinely performed today.
- **1984** As director of the Paris Opera Ballet Rudolf Nureyev created a new version of the ballet extending the male role (Siegfried has significant solos and is no longer just a partnering accessory) and introduces the concept of Odette/Odile as figments of the prince's imagination. He also adapts the famous "Black Swan" *pas de deux* into a *pas de trois*, giving Rothbart a dancing part.
- **1995** Matthew Bourne's very successful production for London represents a more radical departure from traditional *Swan Lakes* by featuring male dancers as the swans, amongst whom the figure of a young crown prince. His distant mother and desire for freedom are represented by a beautiful Swan that will eventually betray the prince.
- **2002** In Graeme Murphy's production for the Australian Ballet the figures of Rothbart and Odile are represented by a single character – the Baroness Rothbart – who snatches Siegfried away from Odette. The latter is committed to a sanatorium, thus the white act (Act II) is Odette's hallucination and the swans a projection of her troubled mind.
- **2010 – 2011** Darren Aronofsky directed the movie, *The Black Swan* with Natalie Portman in the role of Nina Sayers, a ballerina facing the challenge of debuting as the Swan Queen. Interest in *Swan Lake* was renewed as a new public discovered the ballet within the movie.
- **2012** Mário Radačovský created *Black Swan White Swan* for Grand Rapids Ballet in Michigan. *Black Swan White Swan* is not a retelling of the story of Princess Odette, the White Swan; or of Von Rothbart's daughter, Odile, the Black Swan. It is the story of Siegfried and his journey of discovery, both in the real world as well as in the realm of his imagination, aided and abetted by Von Rothbart.



**Find out more here**



# Ballet timeline

LE BALLET DE LA NUIT



**1653** Louis XIV dances the Sun God in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*. His teacher, Pierre Beauchamps, formalises the terms we use as vocabulary in ballet today.

**1661** Louis XIV (Sun King) founds the Académie Royale de la Musique, later named the Paris Opera Ballet.

**1726–1727** Marie Camargo and her rival, Marie Salle, make debuts in London. Camargo shortens her skirt to show her feet, paving the way for the modern tutu.

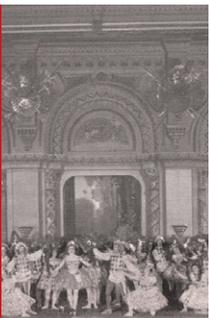
**1789** Jean Dauberval produces *La Fille Mal Gardée*, making it the oldest ballet still extant in modern-day repertoire.

**1828** Marie Taglioni makes her debut at the Paris Opera, dancing on pointe for the first time.

**1877** *Swan Lake*, is premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, Russia, on 4 March.

**1890s** Marius Petipa (1818–1910) choreographs the great classics of ballet including *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), *Swan Lake* (1895) and *Raymonda* (1898).

RAYMONDA (1898)



LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE



KERRY-ANNE GILBERD WITH HER ODILE COSTUME FROM 1985, 2013



SWAN LAKE 1985



PATRICIA BARKER

**1900s** Ballet companies visited New Zealand through the first half of the twentieth century including Adeline Genée, Anna Pavlova, Covent Garden and Russian Ballet.

**1953** Poul Gnatt (1923–1995) founds the New Zealand Ballet (now RNZB).

**1953** Excerpts from *Swan Lake*, Act II are performed by New Zealand Ballet, staged by Poul Gnatt.

**1984** The New Zealand Ballet Company becomes the Royal New Zealand Ballet.

**1985** RNZB stages a full length *Swan Lake* for the first time. Staged by Harry Haythorne; designed by Kristian Fredrikson.

**1998** The St James Theatre becomes the home of the RNZB.

**2013** The Royal New Zealand Ballet celebrates its 60th anniversary.

**2017** Appointment of Patricia Barker – the RNZB's 12th Artistic Director.

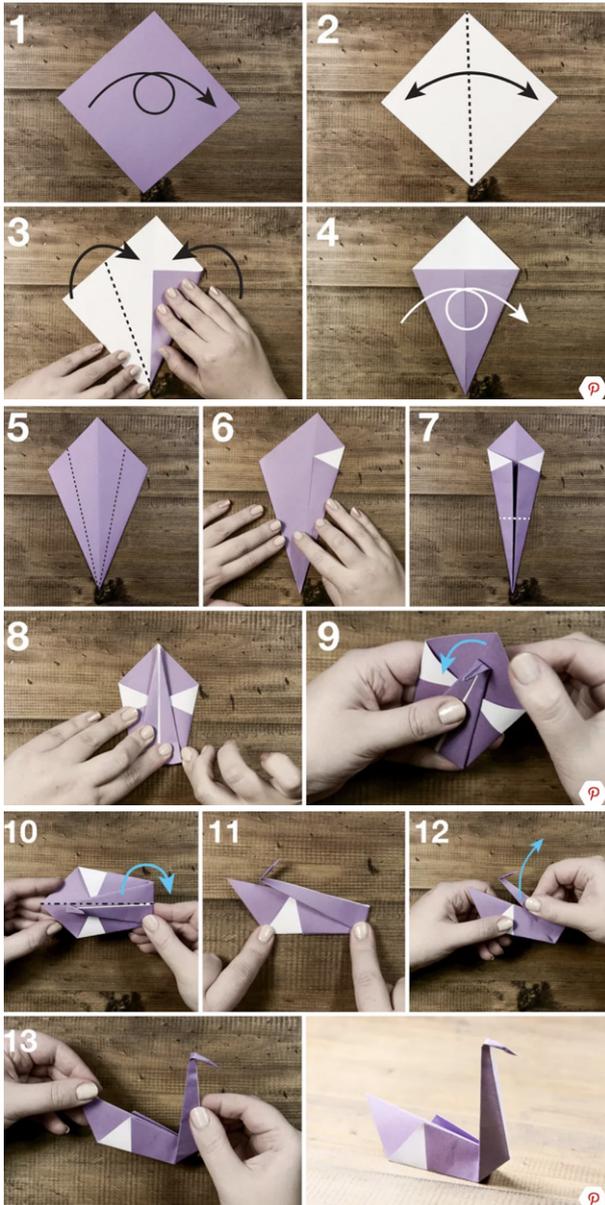
# Craft activities

## ORIGAMI SWAN

Create an origami swan.



Find full instructions here

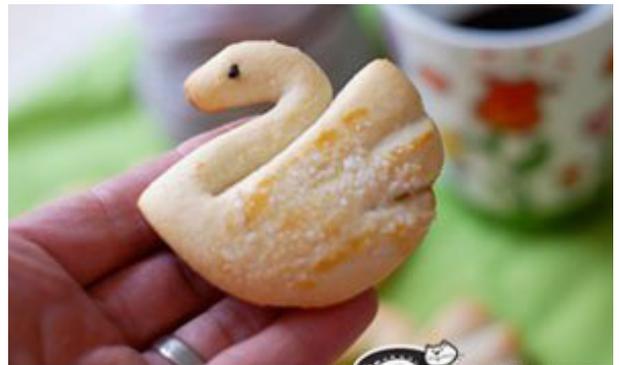


## SWAN COOKIES

Or try baking some swan shaped cookies.



Find full instructions here



# Dance activities

## CREATING CONTRAST USING THE ELEMENTS OF DANCE

In the ballet *Black Swan, White Swan* the lead dancers use **contrast** to show the differences in their characters and personalities. For example, the White Swan performs her movements with gentle and graceful dynamics, whereas the Black Swan uses more powerful and direct dynamics.

## MIRRORING DUETS

In this task, both dancers are aiming to perform the same movements, but with contrasting roles – one dancer is the leader and one is the follower. After the warm up, put the class into pairs. Label each person A and B and ask both dancers to stand facing each other.

- **Dancer A** starts as the **leader** and performs some simple movements. Ask them to start slowly and think about making big, clear shapes, using different levels
- **Dancer B** acts as the **follower** and has to copy the movements of dancer A, as if they were both looking into a mirror.
- As the task progresses, dancer A could start to perform quicker and more detailed movements, whilst still trying to make the movement clear enough to follow! Think about using some of the following words for inspiration.

**Sweep**      **Slice**  
**Glide**      **Jab**  
**Float**      **Flick**

- After a while, ask the pairs to swap roles so that dancer B becomes the leader and dancer A becomes the follower



## TASK DISCUSSION

- How did it feel to dance as the leader compared to being the follower?
- Was there anything difficult about either of the roles?
- Which roles did you prefer?

## CONTRASTING DUETS

In this task, both dancers use the same movement as a starting point, but use contrasting elements of dance to develop their movement into two very different solos.

- In pairs, again label the dancers A and B.
- To start with, ask both dancers to come up with a short **phrase of unison material**. This does not need to be very long or complicated. The dancers can use some of their ideas from the mirroring duets as inspiration. Ask the dancers to then practice this phrase until they can perform it together at the same time. This is their original phrase.
- The pair then develop this phrase using the Elements of Dance Opposition Chart below. Together, they must choose 3 of the opposing sets of words and apply them to their unison material. For example, if dancer A is performing the phrase **High, Steady** and **Soft**, dancer B must perform the phrase **Low, Irregular** and **Strong**.

### SPACE

<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Forwards</b>	<b>Backwards</b>
<b>Up</b>	<b>Down</b>
<b>Left</b>	<b>Right</b>

### TIME

<b>Fast</b>	<b>Slow</b>
<b>Long</b>	<b>Short</b>
<b>Steady</b>	<b>Irregular</b>

### ENERGY

<b>Soft</b>	<b>Strong</b>
<b>Light</b>	<b>Heavy</b>
<b>Smooth</b>	<b>Sharp</b>
<b>Free</b>	<b>Bound</b>

- The pair can work together to create their new solos, this is called their contrasting phrase.
- Each pair could then perform their original phrase, followed by their contrasting phrase. If there is more time to develop the phrases, the dancers could choose another opposing set of words from the chart, or maybe think of their own.



## TASK DISCUSSION

- What did you find more interesting to watch, the original unison phrase or the contrast phrase?
- How did performing the same movement in contrasting ways change the feel of the dance?
- Did some of the elements of dance feel more natural or easier to use than others?
- What other forms of opposition could you use to develop your work?