

The NAXOS logo is a blue square with the word "NAXOS" in white, serif, all-caps font. Above the text are three horizontal lines of varying lengths, and below it are three vertical lines of varying heights, creating a stylized architectural or musical motif.

NAXOS

TCHAIKOVSKY

*Swan
Lake*

(Highlights)

Russian State Symphony Orchestra
Dmitry Yablonsky



Piotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)
Swan Lake, Op. 20: Ballet in Four Acts (Highlights)

1 Introduction	2:25	Act III	
Act I		In the Castle of Prince Siegfried	
The terrace in front of the palace of Prince Siegfried		A Ball at the Castle	
2 Scène	3:09	17 Allegro giusto	2:39
3 Valse: Entrance of the guests	6:39	18 Moderato assai – Allegro vivo: Dance of the corps de ballet and dwarves	2:51
Pas de trois: A young man and two girls from the Prince's entourage		19 Scène: Allegro – Tempo di valse: Arrival of the guests and waltz	3:22
4 I. Intrada	2:27	20 Mazurka: Tempo di mazurka	3:32
5 III. Allegro semplice – Presto	1:05	21 Scène: Allegro: Siegfried's mother expresses joy at her son's choice of Odile. Siegfried and Odile dance. Rothbart and Odile leave the ball.	3:30
6 IV. Moderato	1:22	Act IV	
7 V. Allegro	1:03	By the Lake	
8 VI. Coda: Allegro vivace	1:37	22 Moderato: Dance of the cygnets	3:50
9 Dance of the goblets: Tempo di polacca	3:51	23 Scène: Allegro agitato: Odette is offended by Siegfried's behaviour	3:09
10 No. 9 Finale: Andante: Flight of the swans	1:43	24 Finale: Andante – Allegro agitato – Moderato e maestoso – Moderato: Prince Siegfried begs Odette's forgiveness, breaks Rothbart's spell and is united with Odette	6:34
Act II		Total	72:43
By a Lake			
Dance of the swans			
11 I. Tempo di valse	2:16		
12 II. Moderato assai	1:39		
13 IV. Allegro moderato	1:34		
14 V. Andante – Allegro: Pas d'action: Odette and the Prince	7:30		
15 VII. Coda: Allegro vivace	2:13		
16 Scène: Moderato: Odette and the swans return to the lake	2:17		

Tchaikovsky's compositions for the theatre include three full-length ballets, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Nutcracker*. The first of these was commissioned by the Imperial Theatre Directorate in Moscow in 1875 and was first performed at the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow on 4th March 1877, with choreography by the Austrian Wenzel Reisinger. The libretto, by Vladimir Begichev and Vasily Geltzer, was based on a version of an old German fairy-tale, *Der geraubte Schleier* (The Stolen Veil), as retold by Johann Karl August Musäus. Tchaikovsky had composed ballet music for this story some years earlier, to entertain the children of his sister Sasha, married to Lev Davidov, and settled at Kamenka in the Ukraine. Uncle Pyotr devised the whole entertainment, demonstrating to his three nieces and the other performers the steps and pirouettes required of them, while the swans themselves seem to have been represented by figures of wood. Some of the music for this modest work was used in the commissioned score, with elements from his first opera, *The Voyevoda*, the source of the *Entr'acte* for Act IV and for the final union of Siegfried and Odette. Tchaikovsky's second opera, *Undine*, provided the music with violin and cello solo in the *Dance of the swans* at the end of Act II.

Synopsis

The ballet opens, after an Introduction **1**, with a scene set in the magnificent castle park. On the terrace of the palace, Prince Siegfried and his friends sit drinking **2**. The young prince is celebrating his birthday and coming of age, and villagers gather to congratulate him **3**, entertaining him, on the instructions of his tutor Wolfgang, with their dances. The Prince orders refreshments for them, with flowers and ribbons for the women. Pages run in, announcing the approach of the Prince's mother, and endeavour to conceal the celebration, while Wolfgang assumes an air of greater sobriety. Siegfried's mother, entering with her attendants, expresses some displeasure at the ill-concealed festivities, telling him that the next day he must choose a bride, a matter to be settled at the ball to be held, to which all eligible young girls have been invited. She allows the young people to continue their

The first performance of *Swan Lake* was not a success. The public was accustomed to very much less substantial music, while various omissions and additions were made to the score. The choreography was unsatisfactory, the designers lacked imagination, the dancing was undistinguished and the conductor out of his depth. In the following years various further changes crept into the ballet. The work acquired a more satisfactory choreographic form in a staging in St Petersburg in 1895, with choreography by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, and has since then been mounted with varying choreographic interpretations, often based on the Petipa-Ivanov version, which made certain clear changes in the ballet as Tchaikovsky and his librettists had originally devised it. In particular a happy ending was substituted for the original tragic conclusion, in which Siegfried and Odette had been destroyed by Rothbart. Revisions to the libretto in 1895 were entrusted to the composer's brother Modest, to whom we owe such incidents as the appearance of Odette at the window in the third act, and the elimination of Odette's kind grandfather and wicked step-mother, the latter subsumed into the character of Rothbart, whose actions are now more intelligible.

celebration. For Siegfried this represents the end of his freedom as a carefree bachelor, as he tells his friends. Siegfried's guests are entertained by a young man and two girls in a *Pas de trois* **4** to **8**. As the Prince's mother retires, a couple dance a waltz and Wolfgang, the drunken court chamberlain, excites the mirth of the company by his clumsiness. It is growing dark and a guest proposes a final dance with clinking glasses, **9** a polka. At this point a flight of swans appears over the royal park, an event marked in the orchestra by the oboe melody that had opened the ballet and in the harp arpeggios that accompany it **10**. Siegfried's friend Benno suggests a swan-hunt, since he knows where the swans pass the night in the forest. The Prince and his companions set out for the hunt, leaving Wolfgang too drunk to follow.

The second act opens with the swan theme, the scene

a moonlit lakeside in the forest, with a ruined chapel to one side. Here the swans swim on the lake, led by a swan wearing a crown. Benno and the hunters come in, calling on Siegfried to follow. The Prince, however, lingers alone, sees the swan and is about to shoot, but at this moment the ruins are revealed in a magic light. The swans disappear, and Odette, the Swan Princess, is seen in human form, asking the reason for Siegfried's persecution. She tells of the spell put on her and her companions by the wicked magician Rothbart. Only between midnight and dawn is she free to resume human shape and the bewitchment can only be ended by marriage with a mortal who must love no other. He invites her to the ball to be given at the palace the following day, when he must choose a bride. Although this is impossible, Odette begs Siegfried to be faithful to her, since he is her only chance of salvation. An owl appears, the disguise of the sorcerer, overhearing their conversation, before flying away. There is a flight of swans and Odette asks the sorcerer to spare Siegfried, who now draws and then casts aside his cross-bow. Siegfried's fellow-hunters hurry in, as the enchanted companions of Odette appear, and the Prince orders his friends not to harm the swans. Siegfried is re-assured by Odette. The swans dance in gratitude [11](#) to [15](#), and Siegfried and Odette dance together, then all dance. As day dawns, Odette and her companions return to the lake [16](#), again under Rothbart's spell, as the sinister owl flies above them.

The third act is set in the palace, where a ball is being given at which Prince Siegfried must choose the one who is to be his wife [17](#). Wolfgang gives orders to the servants, as the guests arrive, followed by the Prince and then the Princess, with their pages, attendants, and dwarves. The master of ceremonies gives a sign for the dances to begin, a dance for the whole company, followed by a dance of dwarves [18](#). A horn-call heralds the arrival of more guests, met by the master of ceremonies. Their names are announced to the Prince. An old nobleman enters with his wife and his daughter. They pay their respects to their hosts and the girl starts to dance with one of the young

knights [19](#). A further horn-call announces the arrival of more guests. An older man is ushered to a seat, while his daughter dances with one of the young knights, as more guests are shown in. The six candidates for the hand of the Prince are brought forward, and his mother asks him to make his choice. They are followed by an unknown couple, Rothbart and his daughter Odile, the latter in appearance identical with Odette, although dressed in black, not in white. Siegfried is struck by the resemblance and discusses it with his friend Benno. The candidates for the hand of Siegfried dance a series of variations. Siegfried, believing that it is Odette that has come to the palace, dances with Odile in a demanding set of variations. After this the guests pay their respects in a series of national dances, a Russian dance, a Hungarian *czárdás*, a Spanish dance, a Neapolitan dance, and a mazurka [20](#), the *divertissement* expected by contemporary audiences. To his mother's approval, Siegfried declares that he will marry the daughter of the mysterious guest, and the Princess asks Wolfgang about her son's choice of bride. He invites Odile to dance with him and kisses her hand. The Princess and Rothbart come forward and she declares Odile her son's choice. Rothbart solemnly takes his daughter's hand and places it in that of the Prince. At this moment Odette is seen at the window, and as Siegfried pledges his troth to Odile, a clap of thunder is heard. Rothbart and Odile disappear in triumph, while Siegfried falls senseless to the ground [21](#).

The fourth act opens at the lake-side. The swan-maidens await their princess, wondering at her absence. There is a dance of cygnets, instructed by their elders [22](#). Odette runs in, telling her friends of her sorrow [23](#). They see Siegfried approaching and Odette tells him of her coming death, caused by his treachery. Rothbart calls up a storm to destroy the swan-maidens. Siegfried, disregarding his own life, struggles against the magician, breaks the spell and is united with Odette, now in human shape, seeking her forgiveness [24](#).

Keith Anderson

Dmitry Yablonsky

Dmitry Yablonsky was born in Moscow into a musical family. His mother is the distinguished pianist Oxana Yablonskaya, and his father, Albert Zaionz, has for thirty years been principal oboist in the Moscow Radio and Television Orchestra. Dmitry began playing the cello when he was five and was immediately accepted by the Central Music School for gifted children. When he was nine he made his orchestral debut as cellist and conductor with Haydn's *Cello Concerto in C major*. In Russia he studied with Stefan Kalianov, Rostropovich's assistant, and Isaak Buravsky, for many years solo cello of the Bolshoy Theatre Orchestra. Before immigrating to the United States he performed on many occasions in Moscow and many cities of the former Soviet Union. He was finally able, in 1977, to obtain a visa that allowed him and his mother to move to New York, where he became a pupil of Lorne Munroe at The Juilliard School of Music. In 1979, at the age of sixteen, he participated in the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, the youngest to do so that summer. In 1980 he met Aldo Parisot, distinguished cellist and professor at Yale University, where he spent four years, at the same time furthering his interest in conducting. After graduating from Yale, he spent two years in the artist diploma programme at The Juilliard School with Zara Nelsova. Dmitry Yablonsky made his debut as a conductor in Italy at the age of 26, when he stepped in to replace another conductor at the last minute. As a cellist he has played in major concert halls throughout the world, and in chamber music has collaborated with distinguished colleagues. For four years he has been Principal Guest Conductor of Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and has conducted many other orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, collaborating with leading soloists. Dmitry Yablonsky has made more than seventy recordings, many of them prize-winning, as conductor and cellist for Naxos, Erato-Warner, Chandos, Belair Music, Sonora, and Connoisseur Society. He has organized international festivals, including the Wandering Stars Festival, which takes place in different countries each year. He is Co-Artistic Director of Qabala Music Festival in Azerbaijan. In 2009 he became an academician of the Independent Academy of Aesthetics and Liberal Arts in Moscow, and also professor of cello at the Baku Academy of Music.

Russian State Symphony Orchestra

Formally known as the USSR State Symphony Orchestra, the Russian State Symphony Orchestra is one of the leading ensembles in Russia, a symbol of the country's musical culture. The first performance of the orchestra took place in the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory in October 1936, shortly followed by a concert tour. Throughout its history, the orchestra has collaborated with many of the world's greatest conductors and soloists. It has had five renowned music directors: Alexander Gauk (1936-41), Nathan Rakhlin (1941-45), Konstantin Ivanov (1946-65), Evgeni Svetlanov (1965-2000), and Vasily Sinaisky, the last of whom has served as the orchestra's music director and chief conductor since 2000. Russian music has always been an integral part of the orchestra's repertoire and the works of many of the great Russian composers were performed under their own direction. Foreign tours, since 1957, have brought the orchestra to the attention of audiences throughout the world, with appearances also at major festivals, including the Edinburgh Festival, the Athens Music Festival, the Florence May Festival, the Lugano Festival, and the Ascona Festival.



Dmitri Yablonsky

Photo: Lluís Costa

Tchaikovsky was ideally equipped to write the music for the ballet *Swan Lake*. His gift for vivid theatricality, for lively, memorable melodies, and for rich characterisation was allied to a mastery of dance rhythms. These qualities were augmented by his command of orchestral colour. And yet early performances were disappointingly received. It was only after some structural and choreographic revisions in 1895, two years after the composer's death, that the work was fully appreciated for the masterpiece that it is.

**Piotr Il'yich
TCHAIKOVSKY**
(1840–1893)

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Full track details and a synopsis will be found in the booklet

Russian State Symphony Orchestra • Dmitri Yablonsky

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