



Audience Guide

Choreography by Lew Christensen

Staged by Leslie Young

Music by Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky

The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts

February 14 - 23, 2020



Artists: Hannah Carter, Alejandro Diaz | Photo: Duane Rieder

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The Origins of *Beauty and the Beast*



When it was published in 1740, *Beauty and the Beast* was a new take on an centuries-old canon of stories, fairy tales and myths, found in all cultures of the world, about humans who fall in love with animals. Maria Tatar, author of *Beauty and the Beast: Classic Tales About Animal Brides and Grooms from Around the World*, notes that these stories - about love, courtship, romance, marriage - give “a vivid, visual grammar for thinking about abstractions: cruelty and compassion, hostility and hospitality, predators and victims.”* They explore issues that are “as old as time:” the layers, complexities and contradictions at the heart of relationships. Just a few of these stories include:

- *Cupid and Psyche* - Ancient Rome
- *The Grateful Crane* - Japan
- *The Girl Who Married a Snake* - India
- *The Swan Maiden* - Sweden
- *The Piqued Buffalo-Wife* - Native American
- *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* - Norway

Image: [East of the Sun, West of the Moon, by Kay Nielson, 1914](#)

French author Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve gave the world the most beloved animal bride and groom story in 1740 when she wrote *Beauty and the Beast* (*La Belle et la Bête*). A fairy tale, it was originally meant for adults - at the time just as many fairy tales were published for adults as for children. The novella-length fantasy, among other issues, explores love, marital rights, and a woman’s control over her own sexuality and destiny.

In 1756 Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont reworked Villeneuve’s story, made it much shorter, removed many of Villeneuve’s details and published it in an instructional manual for children. This version was translated throughout the world and ultimately inspired Disney’s films, Lew Christensen’s ballet, and numerous adaptations. De Beaumont’s story was intended to be a didactic tool to

teach manners, good behavior and moral and character lessons: Beauty’s sacrifice of her freedom for that of her father is seen as selfless and virtuous; Beauty’s sweet, generous disposition (her “beautiful” behavior) are contrasted with that of her jealous, mean and materialistic sisters (their “ugly” behavior). De Beaumont also eliminated many of Villeneuve’s mature elements and replaced



them with tamer situations. In Villeneuve's version, the Beast comes to Beauty every night with the question, "Will you sleep with me?" De Beaumont changed the question to "Will you marry me?"

In 18th-century France (as in many cultures before and since) girls and young women have faced the prospect of arranged marriages - unions agreed to by their families for economic, social or other reasons. Often marriages were to men they'd never met and /or who were much older. In *Beauty and the Beast* de Beaumont sought to provide a pathway to deal with the anxiety of leaving home and entering the fearful, "monstrous" unknown of a new marital and sexual relationship. In the story, that fear is transformed / conquered with empathy. It's Beauty's capacity for empathy that allows her to see beneath the Beast's monstrous exterior to his humanity, and empathy is the avenue through which she learns to love him. In addition, Beauty's love has the power to change the Beast - to allow his humanity to be fully realized.

After 250 years the story has never lost its appeal, inspiring countless adaptations in literature, film, and theater many times over.

*Maria Tatar, "Beauty and the Beast: Mythical and Primal," [Breezes from Wonderland](#), 2017

Image: [Beauty and the Beast, by Walter Crane, 1874](#)

Select List of *Beauty and the Beast* Adaptations

1740 Original fairy tale (for an adult audience), by Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve.

1757 Fairy tale for children, by Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont (an adaptation of Villeneuve's story). This version becomes known the world over.

1841 Theatrical premiere at Covent Garden, London. The first of many adaptations for the stage through the 19th and 20th centuries around the world.

1946 Film, *La Belle et la Bête*, by Jean Cocteau, French poet and filmmaker.

1952 Film, *The Scarlet Flower*, a Soviet animated feature film.

1958 Ballet, by Lew Christensen, San Francisco Ballet.

1987 Television series, in which the Beast lives in the sewers of New York City and Beauty is an attorney.

1991 Animated film, by Walt Disney Studios. Disney repeatedly attempted and scrapped animated versions of the fairy tale (they noted the difficult storyline) in the 1930s, 1950s and 1980s.

1994 Broadway musical, by Disney and based on the animated film, running until 2007.

2017 Live-action film, by Walt Disney Studios, based on the animated film.

About the Ballet

Beauty and the Beast was created in 1958 by Lew Christensen, artistic director of San Francisco Ballet. It was so popular that the company performed it alongside *The Nutcracker* as its holiday fare for years. It was refurbished by Christensen in 1982 with updated choreography and new sets and costumes. PBT bought the production in 2014 and refurbished it. The ballet premiered in Pittsburgh in 2015.

Synopsis (Expanded)

Act I



In a dark and beautiful forest, stags, nymphs, and other mysterious creatures dance and fly through the night. Here there is an enchanted garden that belongs to the Beast - a Prince who long ago was cursed to be a beast.

Into the magical garden wander Beauty and her father. Beauty's father innocently plucks a rose for her. The Beast is enraged and they are terrified. He chases the father from the garden and holds Beauty captive.

Beauty dances alone in the garden - she aches with fear and sorrow. The garden Caryatids and

Rose Bushes try to comfort her. The Beast sees her and his heart is full. He finds himself falling in love with her, but he looks at his beastly self in despair: he knows she could never love him. He tries to dance with her and give her a rose. At first she feels his presence but can't see him - when she finally notices him she's terrified and runs from him.

The Beast utilizes everything at his command to cheer Beauty up and to show her his love. He summons his court to entertain her. Agile Simians burst into the garden with acrobatic dancing and spectacular jumps. They present Beauty with gifts from the Beast: flowers, birds, jewels, and crown. They build her a golden throne and help her into a sparkling new gown. Magic Flowers and charming Bluebirds also dance and entertain her.



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In spite of these wonderful gifts, Beauty is still unhappy. The Beast comes to her to tell her of his love, offering her the rose. Beauty is terrified. She breaks free from the castle guards and flees from the palace. The Beast is plunged into grief and mourning. He collapses in his garden and dies of a broken heart.

Act II

Beauty finds her way back to her home and reunites with her father and sisters. Her sisters are jealous of her beautiful dress and the other gifts she received from the Beast.

Later that night, she thinks about the Beast and realizes that he wasn't trying to scare her - he was trying to show her kindness and love. After she falls asleep, the stags from the Enchanted Forest appear at her house. They toss a rose into the cottage. She wakes up and realizes that this is a sign that the Beast needs her. She wonders what to do, and then grabs her cape and hurriedly follows the stags back to the palace.

Back in the Beast's garden a funeral procession is underway. Beauty arrives and finds the Beast lying on a funeral bier. She is too late. She is devastated - she knows now that she loves the Beast. Beauty runs over to him and kisses him; then crumples to the floor and sobs. Suddenly, the Beast stirs. An arm moves, then his chest rises. Slowly, he rises. He tears



at his beastly shell, which little by little falls away. Finally he rips off his beast head - and is revealed to be the kind and gentle Prince he once was. Beauty's pure heart and true love have broken the curse.

The Prince graciously greets his servants. He again offers the rose to Beauty, and this time, she accepts it. Everyone in the kingdom rejoices. The Prince and Beauty get married in a magnificent wedding celebration in the palace. The Courtiers dance and the Roses perform a beautiful waltz. Beauty's father and sisters attend too. Beauty and the Prince dance a thrilling and romantic pas de deux and live happily ever after.

Photos, top to bottom: Nurlan Abougaliev, Joseph Parr, Amanda Cochrane; Amanda Cochrane, Artists of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School; Alexandra Kochis, Alejandro Diaz and Artists of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. Photos by Rich Sofranko.

The Music

The score for *Beauty and the Beast* is a compilation of excerpts of works by Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky, which were arranged by Earl Bernard Murray when the ballet was created in the 1950s. The works include Symphonies Nos. 1, 2, and 3; Orchestral Suites Nos. 1, 2, and 3; and *The Storm*, Opus 76.

While the music for the *Beauty and the Beast* was not composed as a ballet, the music works together as a seamless score. In his lifetime Tchaikovsky composed just three scores for ballets, all of which are masterworks of the genre: *Swan Lake* (1877), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *The Nutcracker* (1892). Learn more about Tchaikovsky online at [Encyclopedia Britannica](#).

Musical Highlights

Beauty and the Beast is structurally framed with Tchaikovsky's [Orchestral Suite No.3 in G](#). The ballet not only begins and ends with sections of Orchestral Suite No. 3, but pieces are used throughout the middle of the ballet to create a musical throughline.

Overture: The ballet opens with [Movement I: Élégie](#), known for the sweetness of the melodic line. It starts out gently and becomes increasingly passionate as the forest of the ballet begins to come alive. The

The Enchanted Forest: [Symphony 1, III Scherzo](#)

The Transformation: ["The Storm," Opus 76](#) (the first minute or so).

Beauty's Variation (solo) in the Garden: [Orchestral Suite No. 3](#) (begin at 35:40)

The Wedding : [Symphony No.2](#)

The Choreography

Beauty and the Beast Choreographer Lew Christensen is considered the 20th Century's first great American-born dancer and choreographer. He was artistic director of San Francisco Ballet from 1951 to his death in 1984. He created *Beauty and the Beast* in 1958.

Christensen grew up in a family of dancers in Brigham City, Utah. He took social dancing classes taught by his uncle at the family's school. His first professional experiences as a performer came when his brother Willam organized a small dance troupe and booked performances on the vaudeville circuits of the 1920s - they were an immensely popular act.

At the time there were no resident ballet companies in the U.S., but there was a school - the School of American Ballet, founded by Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine. In 1934, Christensen began taking classes there and Balanchine immediately sensed his vast potential. Balanchine cast

him in seminal roles, including the lead in his *Apollo*. Christensen also began to spread his choreographic wings. His first renowned work was *Filling Station*, which is considered the first truly "American-made" ballet, created by an American, based on an American theme, danced by an American company, and with music and designs by American artists.

In 1948, Lew joined his brother Willam as co-director of the San Francisco Ballet and returned periodically for the next few years to New York City Ballet as Balanchine's ballet master. In 1951 Christensen succeeded his brother as artistic director; under his direction the San Francisco Ballet gained both national and international stature. Christensen continued to lead the company until his death in 1984.

A few highlights of Christensen's choreography in *Beauty and the Beast*:



The Forest Nymphs' grand jetés: grand jeté means "big throw." It is a big jump where the dancer does a split high in the air, throwing one leg out to the front and the other out to the back. In the beginning of the ballet, the Forest Nymphs jeté back and forth across the stage - the jumps make them look like they're flying through the night sky.



The Beast and Beauty's first dance: In this pas de deux (dance for two) the Beast's costume presents significant challenges. The idea in this scene is that Beauty has a sense of the Beast's presence, knows he is there, but doesn't see him. The dancer portraying the Beast has to keep out of her line of vision, so has to partner her from behind while she balances and turns in arabesque. He holds her waist with one hand (normally it's two hands) and in addition can't really feel her waist because his hand and arm are covered with the heavy fur of his costume. This is a difficult and tricky maneuver.



The Stags and Bluebirds: Christensen's choreography for these characters is very clever, mimicking the real creatures' positioning, movements and movement patterns, though with an exaggerated and abstract flavor.



The Lead Simian: This character is not on stage for long, but his is a virtuoso role. Watch the dancer's turns in the air (*tour en l'air*). He starts in fifth position, then pliés (bends his knees), jumps straight up, turns 360° in the air, and lands again in plié, with feet reversed. Dancers sometimes just call it a "tour." The choreography calls for double tours, which is two 360° revolutions in the air! These turns are also incredibly fast. Note that in order to jump as high as possible, the first plié is very deep to harness the strength of the dancer's legs.

The Wedding Pas de Deux (dance for two): This thrilling culmination of the ballet packs in a lot of technical difficulty with daring lifts (the Prince tosses Beauty into the air) and powerful jumps. In his solo, the Prince performs a series of rigorous *entrachets* - as he jumps into the air he beats his legs together at the calves, first to the front, then to the back, multiple times.



Characterization: Because the Beast is heavily costumed we can't see his expressions, so his movement is incredibly important. Movement alone has to convey the turmoil he feels, so even the tilt of his head or the positioning of a hand has to signal meaningful emotion. This choreographic depth and detail that is key to the story and to the audience's understanding of the Beast's character.

Image Credits: Artists of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre; Nurlan Abougaliev, Amanda Cochrane; Diana Yohe, Gabrielle Thurlow; William Moore; Mashiro Haneji; Alexandra Kochis, Alejandro Diaz.

The Répétiteur

Ballet is an art form that is taught in person, through demonstration, from one dancer to another. While a ballet company also uses videos of other company's or their own past performances, ballet is still largely handed down through demonstration and instruction by a *répétiteur* (from the French verb *répéter*—to repeat—one who teaches the steps and roles of a ballet a company of dancers). He or she often has an intimate connection with a particular choreographer's work. Many choreographers (or their trusts) have a corps of *répétiteurs* who travel to ballet companies to teach and rehearse their works.



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The *répétiteur* for *Beauty and the Beast* is Leslie Young, a former dancer at San Francisco Ballet for 19 years (where *Beauty and the Beast* originated). Ms. Young joined San Francisco Ballet as an apprentice in 1985 and rose to the rank of soloist. After retiring she created and ran the San Francisco Ballet School Trainee Program under director Helgi Tomasson. She worked as a choreographic assistant and ballet mistress for Julia Adam (PBT performed Adam's *Ketubah* in 2014) and has also set works of Val Caniparoli, Tom Ruud and Helgi Tomasson. She graduated from the Benesh Institute at the Royal Academy of Dance with a Certificate in Benesh Notation and is a recipient of the Princess Grace Award. As a dance educator, Ms. Young has taught master classes, given lectures and has modeled and collaborated on projects, including an exercise video for *Felissimo* (1999) and *Ballet for Dummies* by Evelyn Cisneros (2003).

Ms. Young initially taught the ballet to PBT dancers and to ballet masters Marianna Tcherkassky and Steven Annegarn in 2014. Because of this prior experience with the work, Tcherkassky and Annegarn were able to start rehearsing the 2020 production with the company early in the season; Ms. Young came to PBT to coach the company for the four weeks prior to the performances.

Image Credit: Artists - Luca Sbrizzi, Gabrielle Thurlow. Photo by Aimee DiAndrea.

Costumes and Sets

The sets and costumes were designed by Jose Varona, a noted opera, ballet and theater designer, in the early 1980s when the ballet was refurbished at San Francisco Ballet. When Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre purchased the *Beauty and the Beast* production in 2014, the costumes hadn't been touched in nearly 30 years. They had collected years of dust, and here and there bits and pieces had deteriorated with time. PBT Costumier Janet Marie Groom took on the monumental task of refurbishing the ballet's 104 costumes. She hired a free-lance costume craftsman to tackle the elaborate masks and armor, which are a feat of design and engineering.

Costume Fun Facts!



When PBT purchased the production, the fancy dress that the Beast gives Beauty was nowhere to be found. There was no pattern or even a photograph of what the dress was supposed to look like. Ms. Groom did some digging and found an original black and white costume rendering at the Museum of Performance and Design in San Francisco. She also came across some very grainy video from a 1984 performance that gave a hint of the original lavender color. Armed with those two clues, Ms. Groom created an entirely new dress, in several different sizes to fit different dancers in the role.



The PBT Costume Shop created two new gold tutus for Beauty to fit two different ballerinas. Because of the layering, hand-stitching and beading, constructing the tutus took an entire month of work.



The Simians' unitards are hand-painted; their fur is actually sheer fabric that's been frayed to look like animal fur.

The Beast's ornate cape is made of screening and leather, which are appliqued, painted with layers of color for texture and depth, and glittered. There is boning in the collar to make it stand up. The cape is a unique and beautiful work of art unto itself.

The Stags' heads are made of leather, which has held up over the years much longer than a synthetic material would have. They're sprayed with Lexall, a product used on car interiors, to keep them supple.

The Statues' masks, headpieces and armor are made of screening and fabric, which are then soaked in plastic to harden. Couch foam is used to give multi-dimensionality to the facial features. The interiors are coated with liquid rubber.



Image Credits: Artists - Amanda Cochrane (both photos); Alejandro Diaz.
Photos: Rich Sofranko; Duane Rieder; Kelly Perkovich.

Theater Programs

Friday, Feb. 14, 7 p.m. OPENING NIGHT PREVIEW: Join us for this special preview of the ballet with *Beauty and the Beast* répétiteur Leslie Young. In the theater. No reservations necessary.

Saturday, Feb. 15, 7 p.m. INSIGHTS: Assistant to the Artistic Director Robert Vickery and Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr discuss performing in *Beauty and the Beast* at San Francisco Ballet and offer a preview of the evening's performance. Mezzanine level. Reservations requested:

www.pbt.org/insights-registration-beauty/

Sunday, Feb. 16, 1 p.m. TALKS WITH TERRY: Watch a few minutes of the company's warm-up class and participate in an audience Q&A with Director Terrence S. Orr. In the theater. No reservations necessary.

Saturday, Feb. 22, 1 p.m. FAMILY POINTE: Hear the story of *Beauty and the Beast*, meet characters from the ballet, and get up on your feet and dance with us! This 30-minute program is a great way for families and kids to preview what they'll see on stage. Please enter at the Stage Door entrance of the Benedum Center, 719 Liberty Ave., 15222. Reservations requested:

www.pbt.org/family-pointe-beauty-22/

Theater Accessibility Services

We believe dance is for everyone! Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre is committed to including everyone from our greater Pittsburgh community and beyond in the beauty, discipline, and creativity of dance. We strive to make our company, school and art form accessible to talented and committed students and families.

Wheelchair accessibility: The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts features elevators, accessible restrooms and companion seating (available only on the main floor of the theater). Guide dogs are permitted; please inquire when purchasing tickets. Please inform your ticketing representative when purchasing to take advantage of wheelchair and companion seating.

Braille and Large Print Programs: With assistance from the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children Outreach/Braille Project, PBT makes printed Braille programs available at the Benedum Center for patrons who are visually impaired. Large-print programs also will be available. Please see front-of-house staff at the Benedum Center for a program.

Assistive Listening Devices: Assistive listening devices are available at the Benedum Center for Performing Arts for patrons who desire amplification. Neck loops are available. Please see an usher at the Benedum Center when you arrive to obtain an Assistive Listening Device, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Audio Description: Audio Description is available for all patrons to hear and experience dance through verbal description that paints a picture in the mind. For more information about our audio description program, including dates and pre-performance sensory seminars, please visit our [audio description page](#).

Closed Captioning will be available for select performances with music with lyrics; offered on request with 3 weeks advance notice. Please contact education@pittsburghballet.org for more information.

Sign language interpretation may be available for performances that use music with lyrics and educational programs only upon request. We kindly request at least two weeks advance notice before the performance or program dates to ensure that we are able to secure interpreters.

Sensory-Friendly Performances: PBT is proud to present a sensory-friendly performance once per year. [Learn more here](#).

Audio Program Notes: Audio program notes are produced for each of PBT's productions. The recordings are produced in collaboration with the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, part of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh system. [Listen and learn more here](#).

For more information about all of the accessibility services at the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, please visit the theater's [accessibility page](#).

Studio Accessibility

Dance for Parkinson's: This program, based on the Dance for PD® program, invites people with Parkinson's, their families, caregivers, and friends, to become participants in the dance process! [Learn more here](#).

Adaptive Dance: Themed around classic story ballets, our adaptive dance classes are designed for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders or other sensory sensitivities. We emphasize creative movement principles and simplified ballet technique within a welcoming and structured studio environment. [Learn more here](#).

Children's Scholarship Program: This program aims to expose more children to dance at an early age by funding need-based scholarships for talented and committed students from ages 5-8. [Learn more here.](#)

PBT in the Community: PBT's education team brings ballet into neighborhoods, schools and community centers in an effort to engage and inspire more people with the mind-body benefits of ballet and movement. [Learn more here.](#)