

LA BELLE ET LE BETE

malandain | tchaïkovski



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 **malandain**
ballet | biarritz

LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE

Ballet for 22 dancers

Length 77 minutes

Choreography Thierry Malandain

Music Piotr Ilitch Tchaïkovski

Set and costumes Jorge Gallardo

Lighting design Francis Mannaert

Dressmaker Véronique Murat

Set and accessories production Frédéric Vadé

Masks production Annie Onchalo

Coproducers

Opéra Royal / Château de Versailles Spectacles, Biennale de la danse de Lyon 2016, Opéra de Saint-Etienne, Ballet T - Teatro Victoria Eugenia Donostia / San Sebastián, CCN Malandain Ballet Biarritz

Partners

Donostia / San Sebastián Capitale Européenne de la Culture 2016, Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi, Opéra de Reims, Opéra de Vichy, Teatro Mayor de Bogota, Fondazione Teatro Comunale Città di Vicenza, Equilibre-Nuithonie-Fribourg, Théâtre Olympia d'Arcachon, Théâtre - Le Forum de Fréjus

PREVIEW

with the Basque National Orchestra
Versailles – Opéra Royal
11, 12 and 13 december 2015

CREATION / FRENCH PREMIERE

LYON - 17^a Biennale de la Danse, Amphithéâtre
Cité Internationale 16, 17, 18 september 2016

Ballet masters Richard Coudray, Françoise Dubuc Dancers

Ione Miren Aguirre, Raphaël Canet, Mickaël Conte, Ellyce Daniele, Frederik Deberdt, Romain Di Fazio, Baptiste Fisson, Clara Forgues, Michaël Garcia, Irma Hoffren, Miyuki Kanei, Mathilde Labé, Hugo Layer, Guillaume Lillo, Claire Lonchamp, Nuria López Cortés, Arnaud Mahouy, Ismael Turel Yagüe, Patricia Velazquez, Laurine Viel, Daniel Vizcayo, Lucia You González



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FOREWORD

Like Jean Cocteau, whose film was released in 1946, everyone has read "Beauty and the Beast" which the French author Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont borrowed from Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve in 1757 to "please young people while educating them." (1) This benevolent governess, who called herself "Mademoiselle Bonne" (literally "Miss Good" in French), had something of a "good fairy" about her and knew how to pass on the gift of not growing old. For man does not live by bread alone; keen on perfection, he feeds himself above all on love, beauty and everything that dazzles the eye.

In fairy tales, there is often a moral at the end of the dream before returning to reality. Creating a symbolic link between beauty and morality, Cocteau wrote in *The Difficulty of Being*, after the ordeal he endured during the filming of *Beauty and the Beast* that "Art is only worthy in my opinion if it has a moral." (2) - in other words, ethics that match the artist's needs. Although fascinated by beauty, which she celebrated in all its forms, Madame Leprince de Beaumont invites us to place more importance on the goodness of the soul than on beauty. Therefore, by winning Belle's heart with his spirit, the Beast freed himself from his animal form and ugliness and was transformed back into a handsome prince. His metamorphosis was due to the most perfect and harmonious love.

This love for an almost divine beauty, which conforms to the ideal bequeathed by Antiquity, continued to foster artistic creation in the 18th century. The artist conjured up an ideal man from his imagination that all men should strive to be more like. He did his utmost for this accomplished man. Out of step with this ultimate harmony of the individual and of individuals together, Mechanization, which sparked both enthusiasm and curses after the Romantic period, saw modern art detach itself from the Universal to focus on the Individual, personal experiences, human misery, noise and fury, but also on the suffering associated with the difficulty of taming beauty.

In *The Confiteor of the Artist*, Charles Baudelaire wrote "Oh, must one eternally suffer, forever be a fugitive from Beauty? Nature, pitiless enchantress, ever-victorious rival, leave me! Tempt my desires and my pride no more! The contemplation of beauty is a duel in which the artist screams with terror before being vanquished." (3)

With his references to mythology and his writing style inherited from the 17th century, the maverick

Cocteau was considered as being a "classic". He added youthfulness to his style by arguing that "art only exists if it prolongs a scream, laughter or a complaint". (4) The notion of the wounded artist then played a central role in his works and especially in *Beauty and the Beast*. That is what we will try to express in the ballet. Without reflecting on every version of the tale, one can see a rite-of-passage story aimed at resolving an individual's duality in which Belle embodies a human being's soul while the Beast represents its vital force and instincts. One can also see with Cocteau the representation of the artist's inner demons in the dual nature of the Beast. Lost unity or human nature torn apart, these two possibilities remind us of Friedrich von Schiller who saw in art the means to reconcile the spirit with the senses and to "give birth to a harmonious, balanced, fair and accomplished society". (5)

In the meantime, as a half-man and half-beast, both handsome and ugly, the Beast's creative power pertains to at least six elements such as love, the rose, the key, the horse, the looking-glass and the glove. Let's say that love is the agent of revelation and its



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transformation. The rose naturally embodies beauty itself as a symbol of the perfection achieved and mystical rebirth. The key calls to mind both secrecy and how to access knowledge and fulfilment. The horse symbolizes the race against time and vitality. The highly symbolic looking-glass represents hope, a door to another world, and the illusion of vanity. Finally, the glove represents the hand of the creative artist, but also his most primary and noble duty to entertain men in a dignified manner while introducing them to beauty.

This eye-opening task is daunting since the ideal beauty we are all striving for is rarely achieved in the eyes of those who are trying to understand! In any event, the ballet, choreographed with Tchaikovsky's symphonic scores into which the master of harmony "pours his soul like a lyric poet" (6), is slightly based on the concept of a drama within a drama. It calls to mind the play Moliere called *The Impromptu at Versailles* (7), in which he represents himself staging a comedy that must be performed two hours later in front of the King, but nothing is ready. "Oh, what strange animals to be governed are actors" (8) says Molière's double. In the end, the author gets the King to wait for his new creation until later. Our reality is entirely different, but because dreams come true if you follow your heart in fairy tales and since love is the manifestation of beauty, and the Beast, rid of

his inner demons and by taking the right steps, can marry Belle in the open for the world to see, both of them overwhelmed by the splendour of beauty in the tale's happy lie.

■ Thierry Malandain

- (1) Motto of Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont
- (2) *The Difficulty of Being* by Cocteau, Rocher Books, Monaco, 1983, p. 218
- (3) *Paris Spleen* by Baudelaire, Michel Lévy Bros., 1869
- (4) *The Difficulty of Being* by Cocteau, Rocher Books, Monaco, 1983, p. 219
- (5) *L'Art pour éduquer? (Art to Educate?)* by Alain Kerlan, Laval University Press, 2003, p.205
- (6) Tchaikovsky, letter to Nadejda von Meck dated 5 December 1878
- (7) One-act prose comedy performed at Versailles on 14 October 1663
- (8) *The Impromptu at Versailles*, Scene 1



SYNOPSIS

Eugène Onéguine, Op. 24 Interval and Waltz

An artist with body and soul, a man with his joy, pain and hopes tells the following story:

Once upon a time there was a wealthy merchant who had two sons and three daughters. The youngest was so lovely and so much admired that everyone called her Belle which made her sisters very jealous. The two eldest were arrogant because of their wealth and attended balls every evening. The merchant suddenly lost all his wealth and all he had left was a small farmhouse far from the city.

Symphony No.6 Pathétique 1. Adagio Allegro non troppo

While her sisters snivel and whine, missing high society and beautiful clothes, Belle gets used to her new situation. There are even gentlemen courtiers who wish to marry her, but she cannot imagine leaving her father. The family has been living simply for a year when the merchant hears that one of the ships on which he had merchandise is back in port. This news starts the two eldest daughters thinking, and just as their father is about to leave, they ask him to bring back dresses and all kinds of things for them while Belle only asks for a rose.

On his way back home, the merchant gets lost. The wind is so strong that it knocks him off his horse. Shortly after, he sees a light coming from a castle. He goes inside where a table is laden with food and drink. The next morning as the merchant is about to leave, he remembers that Belle had asked him for a rose and picks the whitest one he can find.

Hamlet Op. 67

At that very moment, he hears a loud noise, and is confronted with a Beast so hideous, that he almost passes out. "You're so ungrateful", says the Beast. "I saved your life by welcoming you inside my castle, and in return for my hospitality, you steal my roses that I love more than anything in the world. You must die for this misdeed. However, I'm willing to forgive you if you send one of your daughters to die instead of you."

All alone, like the Artist facing his inner demons, the Beast who suffers from his ugliness summons the things which symbolize his metamorphosis – a key, a horse, a looking-glass, a glove and the love which will save him.

A few hours later, the merchant arrives home and tells his children the tale of what happened to him. Hearing his story, they start shouting and insult Belle who was not weeping. "Why should I weep because my father is going to die? He will not die since the Beast is willing to accept one of his daughters. I will let him unleash all his rage on me." Belle then goes to the Beast's castle.

Symphony No.5 - 2. Andante cantabile

Terrified at first, Belle did not suffer the fate she so dreaded. She is welcomed graciously by the Beast and lavished in luxury. But every evening he asks her the same question, "Will you be my wife?" Belle refuses. Her only desire is to see her father again who she sees sick with grief in the looking-glass. The Beast finally lets her go home and Belle promises that she will return in one week.

Symphony No.5 - 3. Waltz

When Belle sees her father again, they embrace each other for over a quarter of an hour. Her sisters are almost die of jealousy when they see her dressed like a queen. But very quickly, she feels sad about having abandoned the Beast when she sees him lying half-dead in the looking-glass.

Symphony No.6 Pathétique - 4. Finale. Adagio lamentoso

When Belle returns to the castle and finds the Beast lying on the ground, she goes to him and says, "You shall not die. You shall live and be my husband." Upon uttering these words, she sees the castle shine brightly and the Beast turns into a Prince.



PIOTR ILITCH TCHAÏKOVSKI



Born on the 7th of May 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia, top Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky had French roots. His mother's father was a Frenchman, André d'Assier. Having been looked after as a child by a French governess, Fanny Durbach from Montbéliard, Tchaikovsky also wrote and spoke the language of author Mrs. Leprince de Beaumont. In July 1868, he traveled

for the first time to France. From then on, he would go there almost every year. In Paris, where his piano music was known in private circles, he attended concerts and met composers, in particular Camille Saint-Saëns who gave him his first audition of the *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy Overture, unsuccessfully directed by Jules Pasdeloup on 10 December 1875. He would have happier days in September 1878 during the International Concerts at the World Fair where Nikolai Rubinstein played Piano Concerto No. 1 and directed *The Storm*. This symphonic fantasy would be heard again on 9 March 1879 at Châtelet, directed by Jules Pasdeloup, prior to pianist Ludovic Breitner performing Piano Concerto No. 4 on 9 November 1879. Then in January 1880, Edouard Colonne conducted Symphony No.4 in F Minor, Op. 36, for the first time ever in Paris.

In 1885, French music publisher Félix Macker purchased the musician's works saying he did so «in order to spread highly original compositions throughout France which were written by a distinguished composer from the new Russian school». Three years later, Tchaikovsky began a European concert tour in Paris on the 4th and 11th of March 1888. At the head of the Colonne Concert, he directed pieces including the Eugene Onegin Opera, some of which was kept for *Beauty and the Beast*. French music critic Camille Bellaigue then wrote, «Mr. Tchaikovsky orchestrates brilliantly. He sometimes thinks like Schumann, and other times he composes like Mendelssohn, with the same clearness and lightness. One could only criticize him from time to time for being a bit too violent. In short, here's a musician who we'd like to get to know better. Rather than say farewell to him, we say goodbye for now.»

In the meantime in August 1888, he finished Symphony No.5 in E Minor, Op. 64, for which he directed the first performance in Saint Petersburg, Russia on 17 November 1888. A reflection of his own complex personality and complicated life, its theme is man against his own destiny and searching to define it. It is part of the *Beauty and the Beast* programme. On 5 April 1891, since Edouard Colonne had left to direct in Moscow, Tchaikovsky replaced him with a «splendid performance» of his own works of which the following was said, «We might have feared a bit of monotony in such an exclusive programme; but instead, thanks to the variety of pieces chosen and their strongly contrasting genre, the concert was tremendously successful.» (quote from the Gazette Anecdotique, Littéraire, Artistique et Bibliographique)

In November 1892 on composer Ambroise Thomas's suggestion, Tchaikovsky was chosen to be a corresponding member of the Académie des Beaux-arts (French Academy of Fine Arts) at the Institut de France (French Institute). The following spring, he began writing the Symphony No.6 in B Minor, Op. 74. Created in Saint Petersburg, Russia on 28 October 1893, this symphony was nicknamed «Pathétique» by his younger brother Modeste Tchaikovsky due to its turbulent nature. *Beauty and The Beast* was also set to this score. It was also Tchaikovsky's last work, who died officially from a sudden bout with cholera in Saint Petersburg on 6 November 1893. He was 53 years old.

As an aside, on 15 October 1890, he staged another performance of the music from a 16th Century Christmas at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, for which the first notation was printed in Thoinot's *Orchésographie*, a study of social dance published in 1589 and republished in 1596. Two years later when Henry IV of France put an end to the religious wars and restored civil and religious peace throughout the kingdom, this musical theme adapted by François-Eustache du Caurroy, would be used for the song *Vive Henri IV!*. The epitome of the image of perfect royalty, with different words, the melody would become the royalists' anthem during the Restoration period. Furthermore, around 1830 Franz Liszt used it in a score for piano, triangle and Basque drum. Tchaikovsky would develop it in the end from *Sleeping Beauty*, a grand finale in which the composer imagines «Apollo dressed like Louis XIV, illuminated by sunshine and surrounded by fairies». ■

PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Praiseworthy once again

The choreography, remarkably adapted to music fits like a glove and is brimming with amazingly inventive variations that are clearly visible to any 'balletomanes' keen on the art of choreography, but it's the stage design which unveils the most fascinating strokes of inspiration, demonstrating an exceptional mastery of the art. [...] The piece is indeed punctuated by heaps of little inspirational strokes of this kind, each one more entertaining than the last, always unpretentious, giving a new dimension to this ballet, strewn with bits of humour, which, nevertheless, does not diminish its extreme elegance, and thus confirming the choreographer's acute sensitivity, wit and talent.

■ *Critiphotodanse, Jean-Marie Gourreau, 13 December 2015*

Thierry Malandain's Beauty and the Beast: Beautiful and Dark

We're captivated by this duo who are two very different beings, overwhelmed by the delicacy through which their feelings slowly evolve, going from bestiality to affection and sensuality, the Beast's suffering, his fear of letting himself be tamed and Belle's fear of being won over, outside of normal criteria for being seduced. [...] From the beautiful and regal Claire Lonchampt, straight out of a romantic novel, to the amazing Mickaël Conte, a powerful Beast with impressive leaps and contagious suffering, as well as the superb precision of Arnaud Mahouy and the expressive power of Frederik Deberdt, Beauty's father. Talking about Neoclassicism is essential here due to the style of the portés, the dance ensemble patterns, the high-quality of the elegantly traditional costumes, and even the intrusion of a few pointes by little Patricia Velázquez in the role of Love.

■ *Concert classic.com, Jacqueline Thuilleux, 14 December 2015*

His play is extraordinarily beautiful, with a myriad of choreographic innovations truly making him France's leading choreographer.

■ *Le Figaro, Ariane Bavelier, 20 December 2015*

The Miracle of Love

Minimalist stage design for virtuoso choreography. Such is this new version of Beauty and the Beast created by Thierry Malandain [...].

■ *Residences-decoration.com, Serge Gleizes, February 2016*