

SWAN LAKE



PROLOGUE

The curtain opens as a young man, Prince Siegfried, dreams of finding his true love. It is during Siegfried's dream that Rothbart, the prince's subconscious mind, reveals himself. Rothbart, representing the inner conflicts of Prince Siegfried, transforms the woman into a swan, this transformation symbolizing Siegfried's struggle with love.

ACTS ONE AND TWO

In a palace garden, Prince Siegfried is celebrating his 21st birthday with his old tutor, Wolfgang. A fanfare announces the Queen Mother who disapproves of Siegfried's frivolous behavior and reminds him that he will be expected to choose a bride at the ball in honor of his birthday the very next night. The queen leaves after presenting Siegfried with a crossbow as a birthday gift.

As evening approaches, the prince is left alone in the garden and wanders off to a nearby lake, immersed in his own thoughts. Rothbart appears again, just like our unconscious mind seems to surface at times. The conflict between the two is evident, and at the end of this encounter Rothbart sets the stage for the future actions of the prince. He leaves the crossbow center stage for Siegfried to find, thus creating his desire for hunting. Then Rothbart introduces him to another one of his masterful creations, a beautiful white creature, half-woman, half-swan by the name of Odette.

As she darts into the glade, Siegfried, transfixed by this vision, takes hold of her before she can escape. Struggling to free herself, Odette looks pitifully into her captor's eyes and he releases her. Like the other swan maidens on the lake, she is under Rothbart's spell, a curse that transformed her from a beautiful young maiden into a swan. This curse only allows her to return to human form at night. This spell can only be broken if a man pledges eternal love to her. Siegfried immediately offers his vow of love, but Rothbart reappears, ordering Odette away from him.

As Odette departs, followed by Siegfried, a drift of swans glide in a single, stately file onto the shore of the lake. Their preening is interrupted when Siegfried returns. As the frightened creatures flurry throughout the glade, Odette rushes in and begs Siegfried not to hurt the swan maidens. The swan maidens move into a grand waltz of stunning patterns ending in a picturesque tableau. Odette and Siegfried then begin a pas de deux of exquisite tenderness during which she gradually surrenders herself to his love. By now dawn is approaching. The swan maidens resume their enchanted forms. Rothbart reappears and takes Odette away from Siegfried, leaving the prince alone in the forest.

INTERMISSION

ACTS THREE AND FOUR

It's now the next day and the birthday celebration begins. Among the guests at the ball in honor of Siegfried's birthday are four foreign princesses chosen as Siegfried's prospective brides. A fanfare announces the arrival of the Queen Mother and the reluctant prince, who are then entertained with national dances performed by the entourage of the princesses. After the entertainment, the prince obediently dances a waltz with the princesses, but he is distracted and distraught. As the Queen Mother presses her son for a decision, trumpets announce the arrival of unexpected guests.

A group of strangers rushes into the palace, led by a dark prince and a dazzling creature in glittering black. They too are followed by their own entourage. The woman resembles Odette but she is really Odile, Rothbart's daughter. The dark prince is Rothbart in disguise. Odile has come to entice the overjoyed prince into breaking his pledge to the innocent Swan Queen.

At first, Siegfried and Odile dance with unbridled happiness to a fervent waltz, as Odile returns to her father every so often to receive instructions. At the apex of their duet, Odette's vision appears to warn Siegfried of the plot, but the prince does not see her. Odile then deceitfully assumes Odette's gentle quivering and preening motions to reassure Siegfried.

Filled with happiness, Siegfried begs his mother to bestow her blessings on his union with Odile. Although the Queen willingly consents, the dark prince demands that Siegfried also pledge his eternal love to the Black Swan. As the prince makes his vow, the deception is revealed. At once the prince sees the vision of his true love, Odette, and runs frantically from the palace to pursue her.

Rothbart and Odile return, laughing, to the lake, followed by Siegfried, who begs Odette for forgiveness. From the broken vow comes a revelation: seeing our shortcomings, our dark side, and accepting them is the first step to overcoming our challenges. There is no perfect love, no absolute evil. Everyone, including Rothbart, Siegfried, Odette and Odile has a dark side and a bright side. When Siegfried accepts this truth, he realizes that love is indeed possible. Odette is transformed from a vision of impossible perfection into a woman, the woman he loves. By accepting his imperfections and rejoicing in his positive features, Siegfried's dream of eternal love has come true.