



**“*Swan Lake* is the consummate classical ballet: Immortal!” - Veronica Tennant**

THE SWAN LAKE INTERVIEWS:

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BALLET EXPERTS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE PRESTIGIOUS MARIINSKY BALLET, THEIR LEGENDARY *SWAN LAKE*, AND WHY THE TORONTO TOUR IS NOT TO BE MISSED

### 1. What makes the Mariinsky Ballet so special?

The Mariinsky Ballet traces its history back to the mid 18th Century when it was known as the Imperial Russian Ballet - and indeed this company and school ranks tallest in the aristocratic echelons of what we conceive as the art of Classical Ballet today. The genius of choreographer, Marius Petipa, and pedagogue Enrico Cecchetti – and later Agrippina Vaganova – are definitive and ever-continuing. All of us in ballet are directly linked by this unbroken chain of connection for classical ballet companies. Pure, classical ballet as we dream and live it today began in this astonishingly creative milieu.

### 2. What can audiences expect to gain from this chance to see this acclaimed company during one of their rare Canadian tours?

We anticipate marveling anew at the consummate expression of classical ballet technique and musicality - which, it is important to stress, is deeply schooled equally. Classical ballet at its most transcendent, is a celebration of the collective. The Mariinsky, formerly Kirov Ballet, has enthralled audiences around the world and is famed for its glorious sweep of superb dancers in unison throughout the ranks.

### 3. What are the virtues of the original version of *Swan Lake*?

The wonder of *Swan Lake* for every dancer in a classical ballet company, and to which I can speak personally having danced the dual role of the White and Black Swan Queen for all of my

twenty-five year career, is that it still is the ultimate benchmark. The physical, spiritual, interpretive challenges are as daunting to dancers of the 21st Century as they were in the 19th. To accomplish these steps with fluidity, ease, poetry and physicality – to meld the escalation of the story to its tragic climax – is a supreme feat. The original version was created on dancers who set a standard of excellence that still refines and drives our tastes and expectations today. It is a triumph of the original creative genius of Ivanov/Petipa and Tchaikovsky that their inspiration provides ever-fresh standards.

### 4. What is your opinion on the portrayal of ballet in pop culture, such as the recent movie *Black Swan*?

The movie *Black Swan* fantasized on a fictionalized horror depiction of the extreme competitiveness and quest for perfection. In fact, there is a spirit of mutual trust and generosity in the ballet world that is unique. I think it is because we grow up together, putting ourselves on the line. Every leading role is shared by as many as five Principal Dancers – it is unheard of for a ballet such as *Swan Lake* to be danced by only one interpreter in a major ballet company. If the movie draws in new audiences, they are in for a wonderful surprise when they experience the true world of ballet.

### 5. What are some key things audiences should look for to enhance their engagement with *Swan Lake*?

*Swan Lake* is the consummate classical ballet. It is a fusion; of emotion, story-telling, poetic movement visual beauty and above all, Tchaikovsky’s immortal music.