

# SWAN LAKE

## Synopsis

**Prologue** - In a meadow near the Fortress of Louisbourg early 1700's

A young maiden picks flowers in anticipation of her betrothal and marriage. She is spotted by Von Rothbart, a sorcerer and creature of the surrounding woods - half man and half wolf - who, struck by her beauty, captures her and turns her into a swan for his personal possession.

**Act 1** - Inside the walls of the Fortress of Louisbourg some years later

There is great anticipation for the arrival of ships from France and the return of Siegfried, the son of the Governor and the most eligible bachelor in New France. Young members of the minor colonial nobility have gathered to welcome him back after his long absence and education in France. The festivities are interrupted by his mother, the Countess, who unable to wait for his arrival at the Governor's Apartments, has come to meet him. She brings him a family medallion signifying his coming of age and tells him a ball has been arranged in celebration of his return. In attendance at the ball will be several young ladies of appropriate status, one of whom he must choose to be his bride. Dismayed at the news and not at all interested in getting married, Siegfried pleads with his mother then asks his tutor to intercede but to no avail. Brooding and rebellious, Siegfried feels the pull of the surrounding woods. He decides to go hunting on his own and leaves the Fortress.

**Act 2** - In the surrounding woods and lakes

This is the domain of Von Rothbart, a tortured creature of unrequited love. Both man and animal, he hunts the forest ensnaring anyone crossing his path. Hearing Siegfried approach, Von Rothbart lures him deeper into the forest using his most prized possession - the maiden Odette now queen of the Swans. Siegfried is mesmerized by Odette's beauty and purity. Losing sight of her but coming face to face with Von Rothbart, Siegfried rushes after them right into the middle of a flock of swans. Mistaking them for ordinary swans, Siegfried tries to shoot one down but Odette rushes in front of them and pleads for all of their lives. Odette, who can only be released from her bonds by someone who swears his true love to her, and Siegfried, who has never met a more exquisite creature, fall in love. Before Odette can tell Siegfried what he must do to release her, Von Rothbart intervenes and Siegfried is left alone with an aching heart.

## **Intermission**

### **Act 3 - At the ball in the Fortress of Louisbourg**

Eagerly guests, delegations from visiting merchant ships and eligible matches gather in the great hall. When the countess enters she is dismayed to learn that her son has not yet arrived. She signals the ball to start. A dejected Siegfried finally arrives at the ball, but after paying only polite interest to the young ladies from whom he is to choose a bride, he rejects them all. The ensuing commotion is interrupted with the arrival of two unannounced guests - Von Rothbart in the guise of a man and on his arm a beguiling young lady, Odile his daughter who has been transformed to look like Odette. Siegfried immediately invites Odile to dance with him and is soon too blinded by desire for the striking creature in his arms to notice that anything is amiss. Overcome with joy he asks his mother to let him marry Odile. When she acquiesces, Von Rothbart steps in demanding that Siegfried first swear on his heart his true love for Odile. Readily agreeing Siegfried swears his love only to realize that he has been duped by the laughing Von Rothbart and Odile. Grief stricken he rushes out of the great hall.

### **Act 4 - In the surrounding woods and lakes**

The tears of swans mourning Siegfried's broken faith with Odette gather into a lake. Siegfried runs onto the banks looking for Odette. He finds her devastated by his betrayal. When Siegfried tries to spirit her away, Odette tells him there is nothing that can be done now. Siegfried has forfeited his pledge of true love; they cannot be together because he can no longer release her from her bonds. Von Rothbart is there to claim his Odette, his prized possession, yet Siegfried tries to protect her. Standing his ground, Siegfried is mortally wounded during the ensuing fight yet manages to kill Von Rothbart. As Siegfried's life slips away, Odette is released from her bonds; his ultimate sacrifice gains her freedom.