

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Research the history of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*, making use of the following interview with Matthew Bourne, Etta Murfitt and Adam Cooper (the original Swan):

[CLICK HERE to watch](#)

Using information from this video and from your own internet research and reading, identify key influences and inspirations; and in particular, the creation of the principal character of the Swan.

- Explain how the theme of 'jealousy' is established in *Swan Lake* and how this emotion becomes a key struggle for the main characters; and how these struggles are portrayed to the audience. Some things to explore include:
 - The relationship between the Queen and the Prince
 - The pressure of Royal duty and familial ties
 - The role that class and wealth plays in creating gulfs between the Royal family, their associates and the general public
 - The tension between the Prince's real-life and the life he craves
- Explain how the use of costume design by Lez Brotherston in *Swan Lake* extends the audience's understanding of the main characters, their role within the story and their personalities. Think about:
 - Colour
 - Material
 - Era
 - Style
 - The way the costume affects their movement

[CLICK HERE to read our interview with Lez and explore his costume designs](#)

- In Alistair Macauley's book, *Matthew Bourne and his Adventures in Dance*¹, Matthew describes the role of the Prince as 'an amalgamation of characteristic of different kings and princes'. One of the real-life monarch's that inspired the part is King Ludwig II of Bavaria (often referred to as the Swan King). Research this king and identify which aspects of his personality and lifestyle may have been most significant in influencing Scott Ambler (the original Prince) and Matthew Bourne in his creation.
- Matthew describes *Swan Lake* as 'psychological'. Explain what you feel he means by this, and back up your ideas with specific examples from the show.
- Analyse the use of different movement and dance styles in the choreography of *Swan Lake*. You should provide clear examples from the work to show how the different styles enhance the choreographic presentation and intention; and help convey the story to the audience.

¹ 'Matthew Bourne and his Adventures in Dance' conversations with Alistair Macauley. Published by Faber & Faber, 2000



MATTHEW BOURNE'S
**SWAN
LAKE**

- Choose one other version of *Swan Lake* created by a different choreographer - for example, by Mats Ek, Liam Scarlett, Marius Petipa, Toni Basil (a blend of street dance and ballet), Norman Morrice or David Dawson - and compare and contrast it to Matthew Bourne's version for New Adventures. What are the similarities and differences? For each work reference (where appropriate) elements of the content and creative process i.e.:
 - Genre
 - Style
 - Dance structure
 - Subject matter
 - Movement content
 - Use of physical setting
 - Use of aural setting
- Explore how Matthew Bourne's version of *Swan Lake* uses the backdrop of 1960's London to enhance some of the key ideas within the story – the repressive nature of Royal duty set against the freedom and liberation of the Swinging Sixties, especially in Act One Scene 6. Re-imagine the plot using a different period in history and location and explore how this might alter the way the characters and storyline develop in reference to the following themes.
 - Desire & Sexual Longing
 - Hope
 - Loss Acceptance
- Analyse the connection between the Tchaikovsky's score and Bourne's choreography in *Swan Lake*. You should provide clear examples from specific sections of the score to exemplify how this connection enhances the choreographic presentation and intention.

Matthew Bourne

- Examine the success of New Adventures in relation to the way it has brought classical ballets to a more contemporary, mainstream audience. Choose 2 or 3 of Matthew Bourne's reimagined ballets (Nutcracker!, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* etc) and identify what you feel are the core elements that help these pieces appeal to audiences with an interest in ballet, contemporary dance and theatre, for example.
- Matthew Bourne often takes inspiration from old movies for to inspire aspects of his work. Give 3 examples from any of his past works where you can identify moments that are reminiscent in some way of old black and white/early colour films. Detail:
 - What the piece is
 - Which particular section you are referring to
 - How it is reminiscent of an old film or movie
 - What that adds to the choreographic presentation and/or intention
 - What you like/don't like about it, and why



MATTHEW BOURNE'S
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- Matthew Bourne credits many different individuals as having inspired his work over the years. Taking just a handful of artists that he has acknowledged as influential in some way, (these include directors, designers, performers and choreographers), choose 2 to research and identify in what way they have been significant to Bourne, and how and where we may see those influences in his work. Choose from:
 - Lea Anderson
 - Frederick Ashton
 - Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers
 - Busby Berkley
 - Isadora Duncan
 - Alfred Hitchcock
- Matthew Bourne has developed a large body of work over the years. Choosing 3 of his works from the past 10 years identify what you feel are common aspects to the work; and how they are used. This can include an analysis of the way the set, costume and lighting are used, as well as the choreography. Identify a minimum of 5 core components that you feel are synonymous with Bourne's work.
- Explore the role of artistic license in Matthew Bourne's work; and how he uses that to enhance an aspect of the storyline and/or make a key theme of the piece more relevant to a modern-day audience. Among other things your analysis could include:
 - The alteration of character's 'usual' genders (e.g. male swans in *Swan Lake*, a male Angel in *Cinderella*, a male rather than female love interest for *Dorian Gray* in the show of the same name)
 - Setting a well-known piece in a different era and/or location
- *The Telegraph* is credited with the following statement: "Matthew Bourne has utterly changed the landscape of dance forever". Respond to this statement and detail whether or not you would agree with this sentence, and why? Use examples to back up your response. These may include:
 - Evidence from Matthew Bourne's work
 - Other quotes from other sources, including Matthew Bourne himself
 - Examples of other dance companies, choreographers, performances
 - Your own experience of Matthew Bourne's work; as well as that of dance generally

