

NEW/ADVENTURES

The Red Shoes

LEARN & EXPLORE



ABOUT NEW ADVENTURES

New Adventures is an iconic and ground-breaking dance-theatre company. Since 1987, we have been known for creating works that have altered the public perception of what is possible when it comes to telling stories without words. The company is led by celebrated choreographer and director, Sir Matthew Bourne.



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RED SHOES

Bourne watched Powell and Pressburger's iconic film *The Red Shoes* as a teenager and, at this point, had never seen a ballet live on stage. As a young adult with a love for performance and theatre, *The Red Shoes* provided a glimpse into an elitist, glamorous and intriguing world that was unknown to Bourne. The film's classic love story is set within the working lives of a world-renowned touring ballet company, the Ballet Lermontov. Bourne identifies parallels between Ballet Lermontov and his own company, New Adventures, despite not being a ballet company themselves. Bourne's ability to identify with the Ballet Lermontov helped create his vision for reinventing the film's well-loved characters for his own company. Bourne explains, "The film's genius is to make that theatrical world at times surreal, larger than life and highly cinematic. My challenge was to capture some of that surreal, sensuous quality within the more natural theatre setting".

A common feature between Ballet Lermontov and New Adventures is that they both share a love of touring, domestically and internationally, under the creative vision of their respective artistic directors. The film's characters are

depicted very much as individual dancers within the company, yet are bound by a familial sense of collaboration, loyalty and ambition towards success. When embodying these personas on stage, Bourne believes the New Adventures cast can empathise with the personal struggles behind each character. Whilst character research plays a large role in the creative process, each dancer experiences or understands the sacrifices and dilemmas behind the desire to be a professional dancer, performer or artist.

Inspired by the fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen and the original film directed and produced by Powell and Pressburger, *The Red Shoes* is Matthew Bourne's love letter to the world of theatre.

KEY THEMES

The production explores the fairy tale world of a ballet company and the stories it tells that blend into the real life tale of love, ambition and artistic and personal fulfilment, until the two are barely distinguishable.

Here are some of the key themes explored in the production:

- **Love vs. Art** – The difference between love for an art form and love for a person
- **Career vs. love** – The internal struggles between love and the lure of highest artistic achievement
- **Passion** – Characters express passion for their artform
- **Obsession** – Characters demonstrate obsession for success and stardom.



THE PRODUCTION

To put on a show like *The Red Shoes*, we rely on the skills of lots of talented people. Before and during the rehearsal period, a creative team works closely together to determine what the show will look, feel and sound like, including:

- **Director & Choreographer** – Sir Matthew Bourne OBE
- **Composer** – Bernard Herrmann (with re-orchestrations by Terry Davies)
- **Set & Costume Designer** – Lez Brotherston OBE
- **Lighting Designer** – Paule Constable
- **Sound Designer** – Paul Groothuis
- **Video & Projection Designer** – Duncan McLean
- **Associate Artistic Director** – Etta Murfitt OBE
- **Resident Director** – Neil Westmoreland

[Watch the Behind The Scenes video featuring the lighting and the video and production designer, to find out more about their roles in the production.](#)

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Set in the golden age of 1940s ballet, *The Red Shoes* tells the story of Victoria Page who is a young and passionate dancer, dreaming of becoming a star. Boris Lermontov is a powerful and enigmatic impresario of a world-renowned ballet company; his attention is caught by Victoria and he casts her in a new ballet titled *The Red Shoes* which is about a girl whose magical shoes force her to dance until death.

Her performance is a triumph, sparking a sudden success which soon becomes complicated when a romance blossoms between her and the ballet's young composer, Julian Craster. Lermontov's jealousy and obsession forces Victoria to choose between her career or love.

Struggling with the choices she makes, boundaries between performance and reality begin to blur, leading to a heart-wrenching and tragic finale.

[Read about the full story in more detail.](#)



CREATIVE TASK

Creating a motif based on a theme:

1. Using the theme of passion, brainstorm words that describe something you are passionate about. For example – painting, football, music
2. Choose four to six words and create a movement that embodies each word
3. Connect the movements together to create a motif or short phrase
4. Optional: introduce different directions, change of level, a turn, an elevation and a suspension to the motif
5. Develop the motif by repeating the phrase but changing the dynamics with each repetition. For example, start small and soft, like a whisper, then build to an explosive and expansive shout.



FIND OUT MORE

- [Meet the dancers](#)
- [Learn more about the plot, themes and characters](#)
- [Watch the trailer](#)
- [Find out more about careers in theatre](#)
- [Learn more about New Adventures](#)

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