

Ballet Moves II

NOTES ON BALLET REPERTOIRE:

1. **The Four Cygnets** is a divertissement from Act II of “Swan Lake,” choreographed by Lev Ivanov, ca. 1895, to music by Peter Tchaikovsky. Maintaining a skater’s hold throughout, the four little swans perform intricate footwork in perfect unison. The precision of their relevés, beats, and pas de chat have made this short piece an audience favorite for over a century.

This variation is accompanied by a MIDI score of the Tchaikowsky music.

2. **The Bluebird Variations (Male and Female)** are excerpted from the last of “Sleeping Beauty.” Considered the pinnacle of the Classical Era of ballet, this work was choreographed by Marius Petipa in 1890, to music by Peter Tchaikovsky, based on the fairy tale by Charles Perrault. The Bluebird Pas de Deux, a divertissement from the Wedding of Princess Aurora and Prince Desiré, depicts the soaring flight of an enchanted bird that lures Princess Florine from her castle turret. The Male Variation, first danced by the virtuoso Enrico Cecchetti, is a gala tour de force for the danseur, with its series of temps de poisson, brisés volés and multiple beats. Fleetness of footwork highlights the dazzling Female Variation with its quick changes of direction, sweeping bourrées and darting relevés.

The male variation is presented at 12 frames per second to a metronome beat of 1 beat per second. To play the variation with most prerecorded versions of the Tchaikovsky music, the frame rate should be increased to 12.5 fps (with the lead in frames adjusted). The female variation is presented at 26.2 frames per second with a metronome beat, to be increased to 30 fps to the music.

3. **The Peasant Pas de Deux** is a divertissement now performed in Act I of “Giselle,” the ballet considered to epitomize the Romantic Era of Ballet. Although “Giselle” was first performed in Paris, 1841 (with choreography by Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot to a score by Adolphe Adam), this variation was likely inserted by Marius Petipa (to music by Bergmuller) when the ballet was restaged in Russia. It extends the structure of the classical pas de deux (duet, male solo, female solo, coda) by presenting two solo variations for each dancer. The duets contain partner work developed late in the 19th century to incorporate the ballerina’s improved pointe technique and use of the blocked shoe (e.g., longer balances and supported promenades en pointes). Pas en pointes complemented by generous ports de bras highlight the charming Female Variations. The exuberant Male Variations display the hallmarks of Russian classical technique that revived the status of the male dancer in the late 19th century: broadly sweeping movements, bravura leaps, and multiple turns. (Note: The “Peasant Pas” is sometimes dance by two couples with each dancer performing the opening section, one variation, and the coda.)

These excerpts are given with no sound track. The opening duet includes a quick

allegro section (Bars 1-27, 1aPeasantPasDeDeux.lfa) that links directly to a slower adage section (Bars 28-45, 1bPeasantPasDeDeux.lfa). These are followed by a male solo (2aPeasantPasDeDeuxM1.lfa), a female solo (2bPeasantPasDeDeuxF1.lfa), a second male solo (3aPeasantPasDeDeuxM2.lfa), then a second female solo (3bPeasantPasDeDeuxF2.lfa) that leads directly into the coda (3cPeasantPasDeDeuxCoda.lfa).