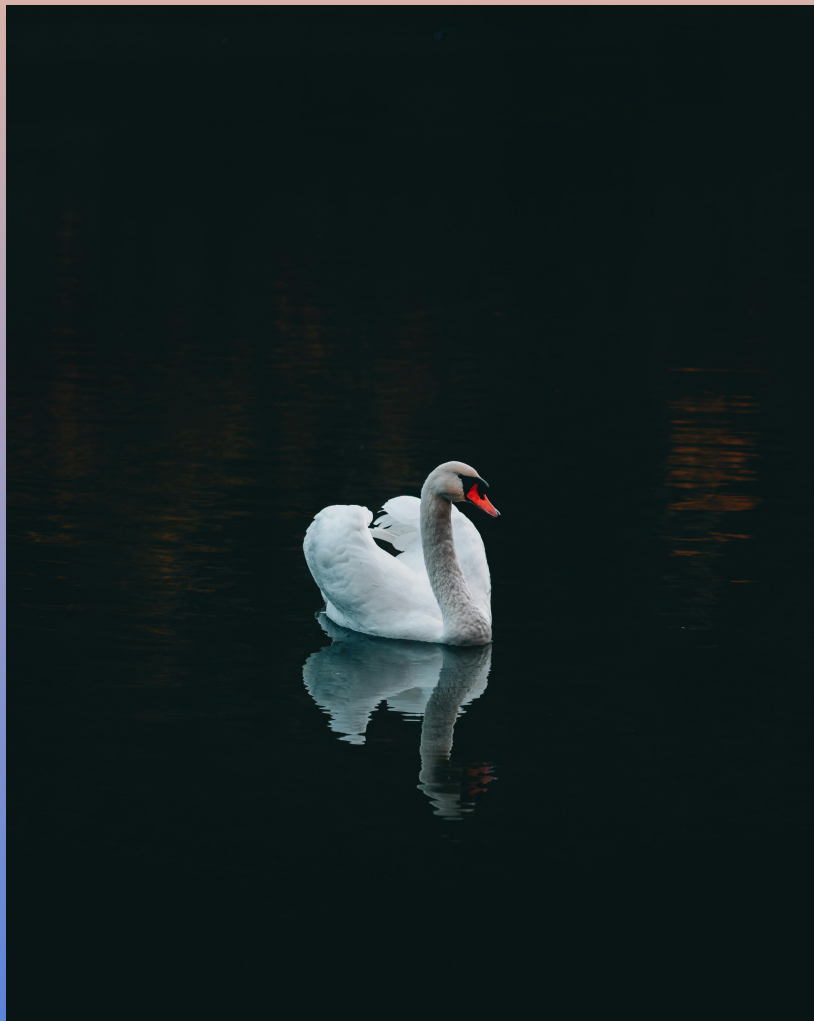




To Live Like a Swan.

Interview with Paul Destrooper, Artistic Director.

For Paul, swans are more than symbols of grace; they are emblems of fierce love. Growing up in Switzerland, he observed them not just as serene decorations of the lakes but as creatures with profound emotional depth. "They hiss, protect, and they love," he reflects, offering a glimpse into the swans' world, a contrast to the placid, peaceful, and harmless images often portrayed. Their beauty goes far deeper than the whites of their feathers.



In Switzerland, every lake is adorned with swans, notably the "mute" variety recognized by their orange beaks. The males stand out, fervently guiding and guarding their mates against rival suitors. There's much we can learn about love from these swans—they'll do whatever it takes to protect the ones they love the most.

This understanding of swans, recognizing their depth and duality, profoundly influences Ballet Victoria's *Swan Lake*. "Our *Swan Lake* is not just a fairy tale," Paul says. "It's a reflection of life, love, and the fight for what is most precious to us."

Back in the studio, the dancers return to refine the dance to perfection.

Ballet Victoria's version of Swan Lake

BV's *Swan Lake* begins at the prince's 10th birthday party, disrupted by a catastrophic event. Fast-forward ten years, and the prince, now 20, faces pressures from his mother to find a bride. This modern twist reinvigorates the classic, making it relatable to today's audiences and weaving contemporary threads into the narrative fabric of classical ballet.

Paul's vision encompasses every aspect of production, with particular attention to casting. Seeking more than technical excellence, he looked for dancers who could embody the swans' blend of grace and tenacity. This meticulous search resulted in a cast capable of conveying the story's emotional depth through their physicality. "The wingspan of a swan is a metaphor for the protective embrace and the strength of love," he notes, indicating how this influenced both casting and choreography. Dancers were chosen for their ability to reflect the swans' elegance and protective instincts, ensuring they could narrate the ballet's underlying themes—love, protection, and sacrifice—with every movement.

This casting approach ensures that each dancer not only brings technical skill to the performance but also a personal interpretation of the story's themes—love, protection, and sacrifice. "We want our dancers to stand out, to bring their unique personality and emotion to the stage. It's about telling a story that's as much about human experiences as it is about ballet," Paul emphasizes,

"I hope these themes resonate, especially with *Swan Lake* first-timers".

Have you secured your seats yet?

Join us on

Friday, May 17th at 7:30 PM
Saturday, May 18th at 2:00 PM

[https://](https://www.balletvictoria.ca/swan-lake-2024/)

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