

Title: Experiencing Swan Lake

Subhead: KCB puts on an iconic ballet filled with emotion and magic.

Reported By: Kora Smith

Kansas City Ballet brings *Swan Lake* to the Muriel Kauffman Theatre at the Kaufmann Center for the Performing Arts from Oct. 17-26 for the first time since 2020. I attended the show on opening night, Oct. 17, to watch the iconic ballet come to life. KCB's artistic director, Devon Carney, choreographed the ballet on the KCB dancers after the original choreography done by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov in the late 1800s. I have been doing ballet for the last 14 years, and as a ballet dancer, I can confidently say that this performance was phenomenally put together and a must-see for all ages of artistic performance lovers.

*Swan Lake* follows the story of Prince Siegfried, who, upon hunting, falls in love with Odette, a swan by day and human by night, as she is under the sorcerer Von Rothbart's spell. Later, Siegfried attends a grand ball where he must choose a princess to be his bride. He only wants Odette, who is stuck on the lake as a swan. However, the mysterious Odile, who reminds Siegfried of Odette, arrives at the ball. After being transfixed by the wrong girl, chaos erupts between Siegfried, Von Rathbart and Odette.

*Swan Lake* has an easy-to-follow but intriguing storyline, and KCB's production represented it well. Ballets are presented through movement, not words. So it can sometimes be challenging to understand what is going on. After seeing the ballet, I believe that even if you're not a ballet dancer or familiar with pantomime or the *Swan Lake* storyline, you will easily catch on to what is happening. When Carney came out to thank the audience for attending before the ballet started, he also explained some of the frequently used pantomime in *Swan Lake* to the audience. The

easy-to-follow storyline engages and puts the audience on the edge of their seats as love, heartbreak and magic come to life onstage.

I saw cast one perform with Kaleena Burks as Odette/Odile and Andrew Vecseri as Prince Siegfried. I was blown away by how Burks perfectly captured the alternate personalities of both Odette and Odile. As Odette, she portrays a soft and emotional act, with me and most likely many other audience members to feel emotional empathy towards the character. Her movements were light and fluid, and she was constantly impressing me as she hit every balance. As Odile, she was fierce and fiery, while being full of energy. She looked as though she was having so much fun performing the role of Odile, calling for a very entertaining Act III; possibly my favorite act of the night. I was also impressed by Vecseri's contribution to the Prince's emotional ride throughout the ballet. He also displayed precise technicality in his movements.

To no one's surprise, I thoroughly enjoyed KCB's production of *Swan Lake*, and I believe anyone else - even if they don't have a ballet or artistic background - will enjoy and feel the emotions of the ballet as well. You can catch the last few shows of *Swan Lake* on Oct 23, 24, 25 and 26. For the 25-26 season, KCB will also perform *The Nutcracker*, *Snow White*, *Stars and Stripes* and *The Great Gatsby*.