

Swan Lake



The wildly successful premiere of Swan Lake in 1877 gave its composer, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, instant rock star status. The ballet's infectious melodies spread throughout Russia like – well, like a highly infectious disease, and was the first documented instance of music going viral. At the same time, swan-themed merchandise began to pervade Russian popular culture. Everywhere you looked, it was swan this or bloody swan that. Which didn't sit well with Tchaikovsky, for the commerce wasn't benefiting the composer one bit. So when one day he was summoned to St. Petersburg to receive an award from the city council, but instead he was handed a lousy swan, you might forgive him his angry response – which did not sit well with either the city council *or* the swan. *Especially* the swan.