

Northern Ballet



Ugly Duckling

a ballet for children



The Story

On a bright sunny day three little ducklings hatch from their eggs. One more egg is still to open and the three yellow ducklings and Mother Duck wait with excitement.

When the final egg cracks open out comes the fourth duckling, Ugly. She looks very different to the others; grey, fluffy and ragged. She doesn't dance the same way as the other ducklings either!

The duckling family goes to the pond to swim. When the lifeguard sees Ugly, he points to a sign that says 'Ducks only' and won't let her join in with the others. Poor Ugly cries and runs away. If she is not a duck, what kind of animal is she?

As Ugly walks between the reeds she comes upon a pair of frogs who jump and dance in front of her. She thinks to herself, 'Perhaps I am a frog too', and tries to join in their fun but she cannot leap as high as them nor move the way they do. The frogs grow bored and hop away.

Two black cats are basking in the sunshine. Ugly comes along and the cats curiously inspect her. They dance around her, nudging and poking her, until they are sure she is clearly not a cat like them. Disappointed, Ugly is left alone again.

As night begins to fall Ugly curls up under a tree and falls fast asleep. Suddenly a beautiful Swan Queen appears and begins to dance in the moonlight. Ugly awakens and dances with her. Everything feels right. The Swan Queen vanishes and Ugly falls back to sleep.

The sun rises on a new day. A fox sneaks up behind Ugly, licking his chops and sniffing at her. When she turns around he bows graciously: the perfect gentleman. Ugly is charmed by the fox but every time she turns away he tries to eat her! The fox chases her back and forth until she traps him in the picnic blanket and he falls into the pond.

Ugly finds herself on her own once more. She is lonely and sad. Winter is coming. While a furious storm rages, something extraordinary happens – Ugly is transformed.

As winter melts away, little Ugly dances like a true ballerina. She has discovered she is not a duckling at all, but a beautiful swan. The frogs, cats, ducklings and the Swan Queen come to dance with her until the time comes for her to join a flock of swans. Ugly and the Swan Queen say farewell and the other animals wave goodbye.

Choreography Dreda Blow & Sebastian Loe

Set Design Dave Gillan

Lighting Design Alastair West

Costume Design & Realisation Julie Anderson

Music Arrangement John Longstaff

Music played live by members of Northern Ballet Sinfonia

Stanley & Audrey
Burton Theatre



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