

MICHAEL PINK'S *Cinderella*

APRIL 4-7 | MARCUS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

AUDIENCE GUIDE

This audience guide invites you into the enchanting world of Michael Pink's *Cinderella*, which first premiered at Milwaukee Ballet in 2009. The timeless story of Cinderella, however, goes much further back...

The first recorded version of a "Cinderella" character was Rhodopis, whose story was told by the Greek geographer Strabo in the last century BC. In this story, Rhodopis's sandal was stolen by an eagle and delivered to the Pharaoh of Egypt, who searched the world for its owner. Variations of this story spread throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East in the following centuries.

Perhaps the two most famous versions are those told by the Frenchman Charles Perrault and the German Brothers Grimm. Perrault's version introduced the now-iconic pumpkin, fairy godmother, and glass slipper, while the Brothers Grimm wrote a darker version that was subsequently portrayed less often on stage and screen. Disney's *Cinderella* closely follows the family-friendly details of Perrault and has become the most recognizable "Cinderella" character in our modern age.

While details of the story may vary, the constant factors in *Cinderella* include an innocent girl who has lost her mother and is forced into servitude, typically by her stepmother and stepsisters. We often find a magical combination of Cinderella's animal friends, the mystical presence of the natural world, a fairy godmother, tests of faith, acts of kindness, and the victory of good versus evil, all of which lead Cinderella out of the ashes and into the arms of her Prince—and more importantly, to her own freedom.

Our story has all of this and then some! Michael Pink's version has its own twist, but you'll see all the beloved elements of *Cinderella* on stage like you never have before. The creative team took special care to use not only the choreography, but ALL of the design elements to create a cinematic experience.



Luz San Miguel and Randy Herrera. Photo Mark Frohna.

Dancers from the Milwaukee Ballet School & Academy will join our Company onstage, and Sergei Prokofiev's magical score will be performed by the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra in this unforgettable performance.

Cinderella

It's a "Travesti"! Men Wearing Dresses in *Cinderella*



The evil (but hilarious!) stepsisters in *Cinderella* just might steal the show. However, they aren't played by any of our talented female dancers, as you might expect; they are in fact portrayed by four of our men. While some versions of the ballet do cast women as the stepsisters, having men do it accentuates the extremity of their theatricality, making them literally bigger, ganglier, more distorted, and thus funnier.

This tradition of men donning skirts and dancing as women "en travesti" (as it is formally called in ballet) goes back to ancient Greece. When ballet was popularized centuries later in the 1600s, it was man's territory; in fact, women weren't even allowed to do first position for nearly the first 75 years of its history.

It wasn't until the 1700s that female dancers garnered critical attention. The "Maries" were the first two to gain celebrity: first Marie Sallé for her long flowing hair, looser costumes and dramatic interpretations, and then Marie Camargo for her shortened skirt, flatter shoes and fancy footwork. In fact, her skills caused critics to cheer her ability to "dance like a man".

While the practice of men dancing en travesti began in earnest (with women doing it too, performing the roles of male characters), eventually men and women each took their role in ballet. With the technical prowess of the men of The Ballet Russes in the early 1900s, men came back into the spotlight as dancers in their own right.

Nowadays, this convention is used for comedy. If you've never seen Les Ballets Trockadero, a company of men who dance and dress in drag – pointe shoes and all – look them up on YouTube. While they do it to be funny, they are technically strong too, and the centuries-long convention continues on Milwaukee Ballet's stage accordingly



Cinderella

THE CHARACTERS



CINDERELLA

A servant girl mistreated by her stepmother and stepsisters, Cinderella dreams of escaping their household for an evening by going to the royal ball.



PRINCE

The heir to the kingdom, a ball is held in the Prince's honor so he can find a wife. Enchanted by Cinderella upon their first meeting, he dedicates himself to finding her again.



CINDERELLA'S MOTHER

Though she has passed away, Cinderella's mother watches over her, giving her strength and courage.



STEP MOTHER

The evil second wife of Cinderella's father, the stepmother is determined to stop Cinderella from going to the ball and to convince the prince to marry one of her daughters instead.



FATHER

Cinderella's living guardian, the father fails to protect her from the cruelty of her stepmother and stepsisters



STEPSISTERS

Ugly and hateful, Cinderella's stepsisters make her life miserable while planning to seduce the prince.



JACK

Cinderella's only friend, Jack makes it possible for her to attend the ball.

Cinderella

SYNOPSIS

Prologue

Cinderella and her father stand mourning at her mother's grave under the imposing presence of her soon-to-be stepmother and stepsisters. Above them appears the spirit of Cinderella's mother, ever-present, watching over her.

Act I

Cinderella is miserable at home with her newly formed family. Her stepmother and stepsisters have ostracized her and demoted her to a servant. Her father tries to object but is overpowered by the threesome. Cinderella's only friend is the houseboy, Jack, who, unbeknownst to her, is her guardian angel. Jack cheers Cinderella with the gift of a bird in a beautiful cage. He tells Cinderella that, like her, the bird is captive but longs to be free, and assures her that her mother's spirit is watching over her.

Excitement fills the household when the herald arrives with invitations to the Prince's ball for everyone except Cinderella. The stepmother sends for dressmakers, milliners, wig and shoemakers. Alone again, Cinderella takes out a simple but beautiful dress, a gift from her mother, and imagines what it would be like to go to the ball. Jack enters with the dancing master and violinist. Cinderella asks if she too may go to the ball. Her stepmother asks what she would wear, and Cinderella shows her the simple dress, which the stepsisters tear to pieces.

The spirit of Cinderella's mother appears, and this time Cinderella sees her. Confused and enchanted, she follows her mother's spirit through the fireplace into a magically enchanted garden. Cinderella gazes in awe as Jack and the spirits of the garden bring her glass slippers, a beautiful ball gown, four white mice, and a pumpkin, which are transformed into a carriage with a team of horses ready to whisk her away to the ball. Her mother warns Cinderella to be home by midnight otherwise all the magic will disappear and sends her to the ball.

Act II

Colors swirl and cheer abounds at the Prince's ball. The Prince makes his royal entrance and Cinderella's stepmother wastes no time introducing her daughters in hopes he will make one of them his princess. Each stepsister attempts to impress the Prince with a dance, but the Prince is mesmerized the moment he sees Cinderella. Spellbound, the two dance together.

The Prince gives all of his guests the traditional gift of an orange before he and Cinderella dance alone in the palace ballroom. The clock strikes midnight. Remembering her mother's warning, Cinderella dashes out of the ballroom, leaving the Prince only a glass slipper with which to find her.

Act III

The Prince scours the kingdom in search of Cinderella. Hopeful maidens try on the slipper, all unsuccessfully, and the Prince loses hope of ever finding the beauty he met at the ball. Meanwhile, Cinderella is still asleep with her head in her mother's lap. She awakens and reminisces on her wonderful evening dancing with the Prince. Jack enters and the three celebrate Cinderella's happiness. She produces the single glass slipper, her one memento from that magical evening. The stepsisters enter, one feeling a little worse for wear, and argue about who the Prince liked better. Cinderella accidentally gets between them and is attacked. Surprisingly, she fights back but is punished when her stepmother arrives. Her father stands helpless. The doorbell rings and the herald announces the arrival of the Prince. Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters warmly greet him. Each stepsister tries on the glass slipper. When it fits neither sister, Cinderella reveals her matching slipper. The Prince has found his love. Cinderella forgives her stepmother and sisters and reassures her father of her love. Cinderella and the Prince live happily ever after.

Cinderella

TRIVIA

Our “glass slippers” are pointe shoes covered in silver sequins. There are 205 large sequins and about 14 small ones per shoe. Some of them will fall off when the ladies are dancing! (More clues for the Prince, right?) Each shoe takes about an hour to sequin.



“Cinderella stories” in sports are as moving and emotional as the fairy tale itself. Defined as “situations in which competitors achieve far greater success than would reasonably have been expected,” these stories are often made into movies like *Hoosiers*, *The Blind Side* or *Miracle*, about the 1980 USA Olympic Hockey Team.

The men playing the Stepsisters have to wear character shoes. These are leather, heeled shoes that the ladies wear when doing character roles and more formal, court-style dancing such as in the ball scene of *Romeo & Juliet* or the party scene of *The Nutcracker*.

