

Ballet: Don Quixote

Choreography: Marius Petipa

Composer: Ludwig Minkus

## The Story

"Don Quixote" is a renowned ballet based on the epic masterpiece by Miguel de Cervantes. The central plot revolves around the adventures of the self-proclaimed knight Don Quixote and his loyal squire, Sancho Panza.

In the first act, we are introduced to the vibrant village of La Mancha, where Don Quixote is smitten by the beauty of the feisty and fiery Kitri, mistaking her for his dream lady, Dulcinea. Kitri, however, is in love with the poor but charming barber, Basilio.

The second act unfolds the scheming of Kitri's father, who seeks to marry her off to the wealthy, but foppish Gamache. Amid this marital duress, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza embark on a chivalrous quest, with a series of comical misadventures, including a fight with windmills that Don Quixote mistakes for menacing giants.

In the third act, Basilio feigns suicide out of "despair" for his unrequited love. Moved by his apparent tragedy, Kitri's father reluctantly consents to their marriage. When Basilio reveals his ruse, the villagers join in a joyous celebration of Kitri and Basilio's love.

The ballet concludes with a grand wedding celebration where Don Quixote is honored as a guest. He then departs on more adventures, leaving the newlyweds to their happiness. The tale of Don Quixote is a charming narrative of romance, folly, and chivalry, immortalized through the captivating art of ballet.

## The History

"Don Quixote" ballet traces its history back to 1869 when Marius Petipa, the chief ballet master of the Imperial Theatres, was commissioned by the Tsar's Imperial Theatres to create it. The ballet was originally set to music by Ludwig Minkus, a renowned composer of ballet music. This ballet premiered on December 26, 1869, at the Imperial Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia. It was met with acclaim, and its success solidified Petipa's status as a significant figure in the world of ballet.

The original version of "Don Quixote" was a grand spectacle, featuring a cast of 150 performers and lavish sets and costumes. However, the ballet wasn't just a spectacle. Petipa used the source material from Cervantes's novel creatively, focusing less on the adventures of Don Quixote and more on the love story of Kitri and Basilio, which was only a minor subplot in the novel. He

transformed this subplot into the heart of the ballet, infusing it with energetic choreography and passionate characters.

In the early 20th century, the ballet underwent a few revisions. Alexander Gorsky, a former student of Petipa, re-staged the ballet for the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1900. He sought to infuse more realism and drama into the ballet and made modifications, such as including crowd scenes to give the ballet a more "lived-in" feel. His version of "Don Quixote" became popular and was widely performed across Russia.

Throughout the 20th century, "Don Quixote" spread beyond Russia's borders and gained popularity worldwide. Many ballet companies, including the Royal Ballet and the American Ballet Theatre, included it in their repertoire. Various renowned ballet masters and choreographers, such as George Balanchine and Rudolf Nureyev, created their own adaptations, often adding their unique touches while maintaining the original spirit of the ballet.

In the present day, "Don Quixote" remains a staple in the ballet repertoire worldwide. It is celebrated for its vivacious characters, virtuosic choreography, and the captivating love story at its core.