CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

The Swan, after Saint-Saëns

Film set to music by Camille Saint-Saëns, The Carnival of the Animals, XIII. The Swan



Arnaud Quercy

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Medium	Digital film
Duration	2 min 55 s
Image	1920 × 1080 px, 25 fps
Date	2022
Location	France
Certificate of Authenticity	N°20221231-0074
Catalogue Number	AQC0404
Collection	Passé-Future

PROVENANCE

Origin: Arnaud Quercy, Paris, France, 2022

DESCRIPTION

Musical performance

Marion Hedin, cello David Erhard, piano

With thanks to the production team, students of IESA arts & culture: Henrik Posner, Matt Stiles, Yuhan (Lea) Chen, Pasindu Ranasinghe, and to Thomas, technical manager at L'Auguste Théâtre.

In his creation on The Swan, Arnaud Quercy brings the swan back to the ballet stage, but without the ballerina. On a dark, empty stage with a wooden floor, a single beam of light falls through a light haze and draws a golden circle on the parquet. In it dances a swan-ballerina whose body is invisible: only a pair of pointe shoes with their laced ribbons, a feathered tutu, two great feathered wings in place of arms, and a crown of feathers for a head. Between the shoes and the tutu there is nothing, and yet we see the dancer.

Throughout the piece she turns, rises, opens and beats her wings, bends and unfolds in the beam of light, in white and grey feathers with a copper underside. The camera stays mostly at a distance, as from the stalls, and the image is sometimes superimposed with close-ups of the pointe shoes on the parquet or of the wings in motion, as if memory were mixing with the performance. At the end, as the melody fades, the swan folds her wings down over her tutu, stays still on her points, and the light slowly goes out.

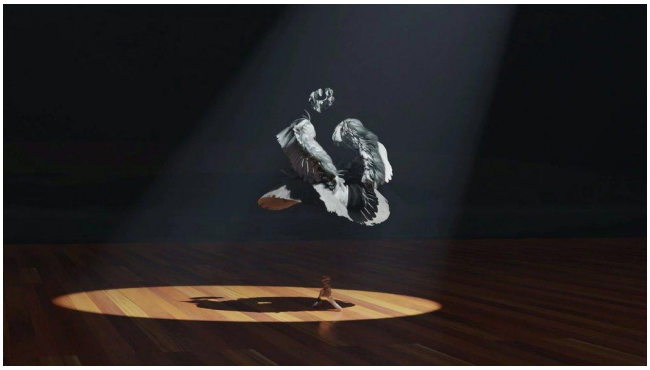
Taking away the body, Arnaud Quercy keeps only what makes the swan: the feathers, the gesture and the pointe shoes. It is a tribute to Pavlova's Dying Swan, and a reflection on what remains of a dancer once the dance is over: a presence, a costume, a trace of movement in the light.

The film was made in Blender and rendered with Cycles, for its realistic light and the volumetric haze ("Fog") that makes the spotlight beam visible. The dancer is a ballet animation rig, driven by a whole library of ballet movements, onto which Arnaud Quercy attached only separate objects: the two feet with their pointe shoes, the head, the tutu and the two wings, without any body in between. For the costume, he worked from reference photographs of Repetto pointe shoes, a feather headband, swan wings, a feather and a tutu, and used parquet textures for the stage floor. The render (about 5,440 frames at 30 frames per second) was edited in Adobe After Effects, which added the superimpositions, the title and the final fade.

At the show, the long version of the film was projected. It is cut into two parts: a main section that can run on, and a closing section that Arnaud Quercy triggered live at a precise moment in the score, so that the image ends exactly with the music played by Marion Hedin and David Erhard.

IMAGES





WHERE THIS WORK LIVES

Collection: Passé-Future

EXHIBITIONS

PasséFutur Art Show *(2022-09-30, L'Auguste Théâtre, Paris)*

THEMATIC ELEMENTS

The Swan Le Cygne Camille Saint-Saëns Carnival of the Animals Marion Hedin David Erhard Arnaud Quercy cello and piano digital film 3D animation music and image PasséFutur L'Auguste Théâtre Blender After Effects

TECHNICAL NOTES

Type	Artwork
Image resolution	1280x720 px

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