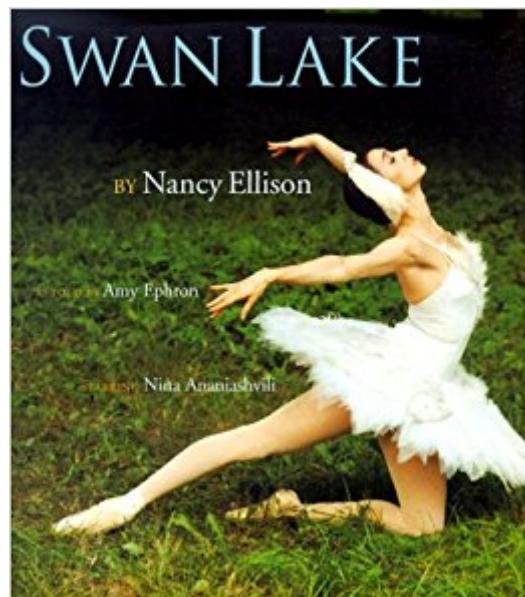


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## Swan Lake



## **Synopsis**

Starring Nina Ananiashvili! The Swan Lake ballet--a universal favorite for children and adults alike--is charmingly brought to life through Nancy Ellison's captivating pictures. Photographed in and around Moscow's spectacular Kuskovo Palace, Swan Lake is a wonderful introduction to the beloved story and ballet as well as an enchanting keepsake for aficionados of the bittersweet tale. The ballet comes vividly to life on every page: lonely Prince Siegfried, walking along the shore of the palace, happens upon a group of swans transforming into lovely young maidens before his eyes. Siegfried is enchanted with the beauty and grace of the swan queen, Odette. She and her princesses are under the spell of an evil magician, which can only be broken when a prince promises to love her forever. Young readers will follow the story with bated breath as Siegfried promises to marry Odette--but is his love strong enough to break through the magician's spell? NANCY ELLISON is a photojournalist, whose work has appeared in many publications, including the New York Times, Vanity Fair, Vogue, LIFE, and Newsweek. She has had numerous exhibitions of her work, and her photographs are in many public and private collections. She and her husband reside in New York City. AMY EPHRON is a novelist, screenwriter, and producer. Her literary works include White Rose; una rosa blanca; and A Cup of Tea. She was executive producer for the highly acclaimed film A Little Princess. She lives in Los Angeles, with her three children. NINA ANANIASHVILI is the principal dancer of the Bolshoi Ballet and the American Ballet Theatre. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Gold Medal in the Moscow International Ballet Competition, the State Prize of Georgia, and the State Prize of Russia. In addition to dancing with the Bolshoi Ballet and the American Ballet Theatre, Ananiashvili has also appeared with the Royal Danish Ballet, the Kirov Ballet, the Royal Swedish Ballet, the Boston Ballet, the Munich Ballet, and the Tokyo Ballet, among others. 80 pages of photographs in full color, 10 x 9 3/4"

## **Book Information**

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Grade Level: 2 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Photographed on the grounds of Moscow's Kuskovo Palace and featuring prima ballerina Nina Ananiashvili and members of the Bolshoi Ballet, this picture book retelling of Tchaikovsky's most famous ballet would seem just the ticket for young balletomanes and yet serious ballet fans may be the most critical. First, this telling departs from the original, unabashedly letting daylight in upon the magic (the ballet's swans turn into maidens only at night; these swans can also assume human form by the banks of the lake, in daytime). Photos of classically costumed dancers en pointe on grass outdoors may strike purists as more jarring than atmospheric, and the literal-minded staging of the scenes beside ponds, in gilded state rooms, against palace gardens overshadows the drama created by the dancers' movements. Disappointingly, several photographs of particularly impressive leaps and poses are bifurcated by the gutter. Meanwhile, the audience for the text is hard to discern. Ephron's storytelling is straightforward enough for young readers, but the cutting-edge type style, with some phrases enlarged, and the book design, with words like "seduction" and "betrayal" and "agony" inserted into the backgrounds, seem geared to the MTV set and may well confuse younger readers. All ages. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 4 Up-It is a challenge to capture the magic of this ballet through illustrations and photographs without the power of the music and the ephemeral beauty of the dance movements that make it so unforgettable. The creators of this book have tried to capture some of this magic by choosing as the setting the lovely grounds and magnificent buildings of the Kuskovo Palace near Moscow. The outside scenes are attractive with statuary and formal gardens surrounding the dancers from the Bolshoi Ballet, but the fact that all of this occurs in the daylight rather than at night on an isolated lake detracts from the haunting sense of enchantment for which Swan Lake is so famous. The scenes at the Grand Ball are much more effective with the opulent costumes of the dancers highlighted by the gold-trimmed palace walls. The story itself is recounted in a straightforward fashion, and the full-color, mostly full-page photos are clear and detailed. However, the slightly enlarged print at the beginning and/or end of certain passages is distracting. This book's appeal will

be limited to devotees of ballet, who will enjoy studying the graceful poses of the dancers, but even they may not find that this interpretation weaves a magical spell. Carol Schene, Taunton Public Schools, MA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Beautiful book with beautiful pictures of Swan Lake play in Kuskovo Palace. The scenery is stunning.

My 5 year-old is into ballet and just loves this book which I bought used for 5 dollars. It is in near perfect condition! This is a book both children and adults won't tire of.

Fans of "Nina Ballerina" (Nina Ananiashvili) will treasure this book, because the Swan Lake story is illustrated with beautiful photos of the Russian ballerina. You can see how she uses her whole body to change from the loving Odette (in white) to the cruel Odile (in black). One reservation: I wouldn't use this book to introduce children to the ballet. The bold theatrical makeup, designed to be visible from the audience, is almost overwhelming in the closeup photos. For a child, Rachel Isadora's illustrations are a better introduction to the story. Still, Ellison's book is a "must-buy" for balletomanes and Nina fans.

Nina Ananiashvili, in addition to having world-class ballerina skills, is a treat for the eyes ... she is beautiful. The photographs in the book are excellent and should be in any Nina admirer's collection. I was considering buying portraits from her website, but they are quite expensive. This book fills the bill. The story is told at a child-level and captures the essence of Swan Lake. However, I didn't care for the variations introduced wherein Rotbart is unharmed, and the swans can transform near the gardens by the lake, even by day.

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