**Cinderella - Introduction**

Welcome to this introduction to Northern Ballet’s **Cinderella.** The ballet is based on the universal magical story of a young woman’s search for love. The choreography and costume design is by David Nixon OBE, the music is composed by Philip Feeney and the set design is by Ali Allen.

The production lasts for approximately 2 hours including a 20 minute interval. The live audio description will be given for VocalEyes by Pippa Moore and Joanna Myers. Please be aware that the production contains short periods of flashing and strobe lighting effects.

The Vocaleyes audio-described performance at the **Theatre Royal, Nottingham** will be on **Saturday 23rd November**. There will be an Insight into the production, followed by a touch tour from 12 noon, the introductory notes will start at 2.15 pm and the performance itself at 2.30 pm.

The following introduction includes information about **Cinderella,** descriptions of the set, characters and costumes. All VocalEyes show introductions are available as an audio mp3 file in the 'What's On' section. For access information for the Theatre, please click on the theatre name, on the ‘What’s On’ page.

As part of this introduction we describe the show’s characters. To avoid causing unintentional offence, please do not describe a performer using their character description if you meet them at the touch tour.

Cinderella is universal. A version of the story can be found with hundreds of variations in nearly every culture, country and continent, including Africa and Asia. In this version, the story is set in imperial Russia - approaching the story from a real, but still very magical point of view.

All 40 dancers in the company are lithe and athletic, some dressed in traditional Russian costume in rich jewel colours. Women wear full, multi-layered skirts to mid-calf length, some with a tight-waisted jacket, others with a full-sleeved white blouse under a high-waisted pinafore top, decorated with braid. Some wear boots but most wear pink pointe shoes. Their hair is smoothed back from the face into a chignon or a single long plait down the back. Men wear full sleeved, coloured shirts caught at the waist with a belt. Trousers are mostly white and tucked into high boots, belling out over the tops.

Peasants and servants are similarly dressed but in darker, heavier fabrics. The women’s hair is covered in a headscarf and they wear little black boots, digging their heels into the ground in traditional dances.

The story moves through several different locations, and stylised scenery frames the open stage throughout, its pale floor a silky sheen.

The ballet opens on a glorious summer day. As the curtain rises a golden glow floods the stage. A tree stands over to the left. It’s smooth brown trunk is curled tightly at the base, like a snail’s shell, it rises curving into the shape of a capital C, then vanishes into a broad densely packed canopy of yellow and purple flowers, which stretches along the top of the stage. The unusual shape of the tree trunk, a curl sweeping up into the shape of a large C, is a shape that is repeated in some of the other locations.

Below, a crumpled silver surface, about two metres wide, stretches across the back of the stage, suggesting a river. The lower 2 metres of the back wall of the stage is filled with an image of yellow flowers, the area above a plain bright blue. Servants carry in white wicker picnic hampers, water jugs and a yellow rug.

Cinderella is sweet and pretty, spinning and springing, light and carefree, full of childish delight at her birthday gifts. Her orange pinafore dress with a high waist is worn over a pale yellow blouse and her hair is in a long plait. Over this she wears the traditional Russian ‘povyazka’**,** a stiffened arched headdress that stands up like a lacy tiara.

Her father, Count Serbrenska, is kind and strong. He cuts a dashing figure as he leaps across the space, in a shirt of pale green and shiny black boots. Cinderella’s Stepmother is at first gracious and charming, but later, after the death of her husband, her movements and gestures become brittle and full of anger, her pale face tight and pinched with grief. She wears a soft olive green skirt and jacket, decorated with dark orange braid, but she’s mainly black in her widowhood.

Her daughters Natasha and Sophia, Cinderella’s stepsisters, dance together, arms round each other’s waists, full of fun. They tease and exclude Cinderella for their amusement, but later are forbidden by their mother to have anything to do with her! They wear skirts and blouses with cropped pinafore tops – Natasha in a deep red skirt and Sophia in green. They also wear the povyazka headdress.

Young Prince Mikhail bounds in, in boyish high spirits, attempting unsuccessfully to cover his excitement with a bit of grown up dignity. He wears billowing white trousers tucked into soft leather black boots, and a plain military style jacket of midnight blue velvet.

Summer passes… The family moves to Moscow but Cinderella’s stepmother makes it clear that Cinderella is now nothing more than a servant to the family.

The ‘vault like’ kitchen that becomes Cinderella's new home is framed by heavy white walls that angle in from the sides, distorted and claustrophobic, up to the ceiling, with a couple of very high, narrow windows. The back wall is dominated by a rectangular alcove, containing a black range with a chimney stretching up from it, and a broad flat ledge on the left. The walls of the alcove are darkened with soot, and patches of soot stain all the kitchen walls. There is a wooden door in the right-hand corner of the alcove leading out of the house, with coats hung at the right hand end.

Around the outside of the alcove, a narrow strip of brass curls at the bottom, then traces up the left hand edge, and back across the top, echoing the shape of the ‘C’ tree trunk by the river side. Everywhere is draped with dirty kitchen cloths, but they don't entirely disguise the gleaming black sheen of the range and the ledge, giving a clue to a transformation to come… The only other furniture in the kitchen is a square, box shaped kitchen table, with a plain wooden chair, both painted a faded pale grey. A number of copper pots and saucepans sit on the table and the range. As the story moves on, the image of a black mound filled with a jumble of pots and pans rises, framing the alcove, higher each time the story visits the kitchen, until this mountain of washing up has almost reached the ceiling.

Time passes.. and Cinderella is now shopping at the winter market.

The back drop is a painted vista in yellow and orange, of market stalls and a view of the city, with its traditional onion shaped church domes. Two rectangular, freestanding stalls slide in, one on either side, both painted the same vibrant shades of orange and yellow. The right hand stall is laden with brightly coloured baskets overflowing with fruit and vegetables, and on the left, rolls of rich silks and velvets are on display. Cinderella, released momentarily from the drudgery of her servant life enjoys watching the spectacle of the stilt walkers, acrobats, and jugglers dressed in exotic costumes in brilliant colours, as the crowd weaves amongst them. A Magician threads his way through the throng, gathering little crowds as he demonstrates his tricks, though sometimes he fumbles them! His calf length, full skirted coat of shimmering silver velvet whirls around him as he spins, changing colour with the light, his gold cravat gleaming at his neck. His small, soft conjurer’s hat matches his coat but its pointed end flops over to one side.

Cinderella is still in orange, but her dress is now plain, ragged at the hem with only an old shawl round her shoulders, her hair now swept up into a bun.

The Prince and his friends are watching too! He is still buoyant and fresh-faced but definitely grown up, no longer a lad. Broad shouldered, and handsome, his mop of hair has transformed to a neat military trim. His waist length uniform jacket is midnight blue with an upright collar and is adorned with gold braid frogging across his chest, above skin tight blue/grey breeches and black boots.

Cosily wrapped up against the winter chill, Stepmother, Natasha and Sophia arrive in huge cream coloured fur-coats wrapped round them up to their chins. Beneath them are gowns with fitted satin tops with fichu necks and big, frothy net skirts; Natasha in deep claret red and Sophia in pale gold, while their mother’s dress is in darkest mourning black.

Cinderella flees to the Crystal Lake. A frosted glass half-moon arches over the stage, framing a brightly lit space. This icy glass has jagged edges and is covered with angular pencil line patterns like cracks in ice. Mist drifts across the surface, and projected onto the back is an enchanted snow glade - hazy projections of fine skeletal trees immersed in falling snow, against a pale icy sky.

Among the skaters are the Prince, his friends and the Magician from the Market. Here, Cinderella’s ragged orange dress stands out among the glittering white and gold of the dresses of the Prince’s friends skating in pairs on the ice with expansive sweeping movements and many lifts, But Cinderella holds her own and the Prince watches her with admiration.

At home again, after this brief respite - Cinderella discovers that her Stepsisters have been invited to a Winter ball. As the invitation arrives, a front-cloth fills the stage, revealing – as though we’re a fly on the ceiling - a green baize desktop. A brass desk lamp at the top casts light down the desk, on which sits a giant goose feather quill pen, and a huge white envelope, the flap fixed by a red wax seal with the initial M.

**Act 2**

The second act opens with an opulent Winter Ball given by the Prince and his parents. An ornate gold structure frames the stage resembling the pedestal supports of a Fabergé egg. The side columns with their lion paw feet are adorned with garlands of gold foliage.

A blue, oval window gleams at the top like a central jewel. Later, the lower half of a decorative blue egg is lowered to sit within the pedestal and Cinderella enters the ballroom from double doors within it.

The Prince, his parents and his best friend, Nikolai arrive at the Winter Ball. Nikolai is a young man in a royal, blue velvet, Russian style tunic above white breeches.

Cinderella arrives in silver and white, her skirt shimmering like ice, and no-one, except her Stepmother and Stepsisters know who she is.

Cinderella runs home, past front cloths showing scenes that seem to drag her back in time, until she is back in the gloomy kitchen once more, slumped on the floor.

The front cloth of the invitation returns. The triangular shaped envelope flap is raised up to form a tent like top, and the two sides of the envelope are opened out, revealing an alcove containing a stylised white drawing room. Here a white sofa stands on the left and an occasional table and small chair on the right. The fireplace in the middle and the portraits on the wall are all monochrome, traced with delicate pencil lines.

To enhance your enjoyment of the skill and artistry of the dancers, we include a brief description of some ballet terms.

The dancing in this production is based on classical ballet steps, particularly in the several pas de deux between Cinderella and the Prince.

Fundamental to all dance, the plié is a strong, sustained bend of the knee or knees. It’s often a transition between steps or the means of take-off for jumps and spins giving the dance its strength and fluidity. The posé is a step from a plié in any direction on to the flat foot, half or full pointe often into a sustained position.

Often used is the arabesque, a position in which the dancer stands on one foot with the other stretched behind. This leg can be lifted to waist level, or the dancer can lean forward with the head almost to the ground and the leg almost vertical behind- we will call this high arabesque. One arm is lifted to eye level in front, the other is held diagonally away from the body at the back. Attitude is similar, but the raised arm is curved overhead and the raised leg softly bent at the knee.

For audio-description purposes, the Pirouette is a turn on one leg on the spot in any position; Pirouettes can be performed in, or finished in, arabesque or attitude. Turns on two legs are described as spins and can travel. Similarly we will describe jumps on the spot as simply jumps, which are high, or springs, which are lower but bouncy. Leaps are steps of elevation that travel.

During a duet – or pas de deux - one partner supports another by the waist or by the hand and walks round as he or she pivots on one foot, often on pointe, in arabesque, attitude or some other position. This is known as a promenade.

The Russian theme of this production is continued in much of the dancing, particularly in ensemble. It’s characterised by strong, punchy movements ending with a heel dug into the floor and the head thrown back, or smooth, gliding runs punctuated with stamps or clicked heels.

**Cast and Production Credits**

Choreography, Direction & Costume Design David Nixon

Set Design Ali Allen

Lighting Design Tim Mitchell

Music Composed by Philip Feeney

**Company Dancers.**

Premier Dancers: Antoinette Brooks-Daw. Javier Torres.

Principal Soloists: Hannah Bateman. Ashley Dixon. Abigail Prudames.

Leading Soloists: Mlindi Kulashe. Ayami Miyata. Joseph Taylor.

First Soloists: Nicola Gervasi. Rachael Gillespie. Matthew Koon. Kevin Poeung.

Sean Bates. Sarah Chun. Minju Kang. Dominique Larose.

Soloists:. Riku Ito. Matthew Topliss. Jonathan Hanks. Nina Queiroz da Silva.

Junior Soloists: Filippo Di Vilio. Lorenzo Trossello.

Coryphèes: Miki Akuta. Gavin McCaig. Mariana Rodrigues.

Corps de Ballet: Ayça Anil. Adam Ashcroft. Harris Beattie. Helen Bogatch. Abigail Cockrell. Ommaira Kanga Perez. Natalia Kerner. Kyungka Kwak. Heather Lehan. George Laing. Harriet Marden. Andrew Tomlinson. Matthew Morrell. Julie Nunès. Wesley Branch. Alessandra Bramante.

Apprentices: Aurora Piccininni. Albert Gonzalez Orts. Leandro Olcese.

**Further Useful Information and Contact Details**

Both Nottingham Theatre Royal and the Concert Hall welcome Guide dogs in the auditorium during a performance. Alternatively, staff are happy to offer a dog-sitting or walking service. If you are bringing a Guide Dog you will probably have informed the ticket office on making your booking. However, if you have not, or if you require any further information, please call the Access Officer, Emily Noakes on 0115 989 5609. You can also e-mail – **trch.access@nottinghamcity.gov.uk**

Should you require the support of a carer or companion, you can join the venue’s Access Requirement Register (ARR) to benefit from a reduced price on the companion ticket.

Registration on the ARR can be completed in advance of ticket booking. Alternatively, if you book tickets prior to completing the ARR, tickets will be held on reservation until the ARR application form is completed, and then payment can be processed.

An application can be completed by either the person with the disability or by the Personal Assistant if they will be booking tickets on your behalf.
Forms are available online at [**trch.co.uk/access**](https://trch.co.uk/your-visit/access/) or via hard copy, requested via the box office or email –  **trch.access@nottinghamcity.gov.uk**.
In addition, the information you provide for the ARR about your access needs will help the venue to find the best available seats for your needs. You only need to register every 3 years and it will help us look after your future enquiries and bookings more efficiently.

Please note that this information has been supplied by the venue and although every effort has been made to check details, you may still have some queries. In this case, we would ask you to contact the theatre direct for clarification. the telephone number is 0115 989 5555. Further information can be found on the venue’s website – [**trch.co.uk**](https://trch.co.uk/).

To contact VocalEyes, call us on 020 7375 1043. You can receive a copy of the free VocalEyes Newsletter with full details on all our work by calling us or by following the links on the VocalEyes accessible website.

The Newsletter is available in print, Braille, on CD or via e-mail. The website address is [vocaleyes.co.uk](http://www.vocaleyes.co.uk/)

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