

ADÈLE GERAS & EMMA CHICHESTER CLARK

My First Ballet Stories



DISCOVER THE *magic* OF THE BALLET

ADÈLE GERAS & EMMA CHICHESTER CLARK

My First
Ballet Stories

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

DISCOVER THE *magic* OF THE BALLET

GISELLE ✧ COPPÉLIA ✧ SWAN LAKE
SLEEPING BEAUTY ✧ THE NUTCRACKER ✧ THE FIREBIRD



DISCOVER THE *magic* OF THE BALLET

Meet the wicked fairy Carabosse
as she takes her revenge on Princess Aurora. . . .

Join Clara and her Nutcracker
on their magical Christmas adventure. . . .

And discover the secret of "The Lake of Swans". . . .

Perfect for budding ballerinas, these enchanting retellings
capture the thrill and emotion of the great ballet stories,
while a section at the back of the book details further
fascinating facts about each ballet.

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Coppélia and The Firebird

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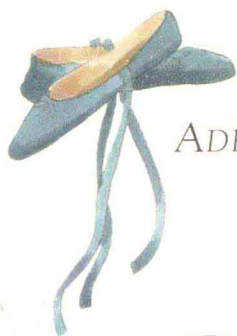
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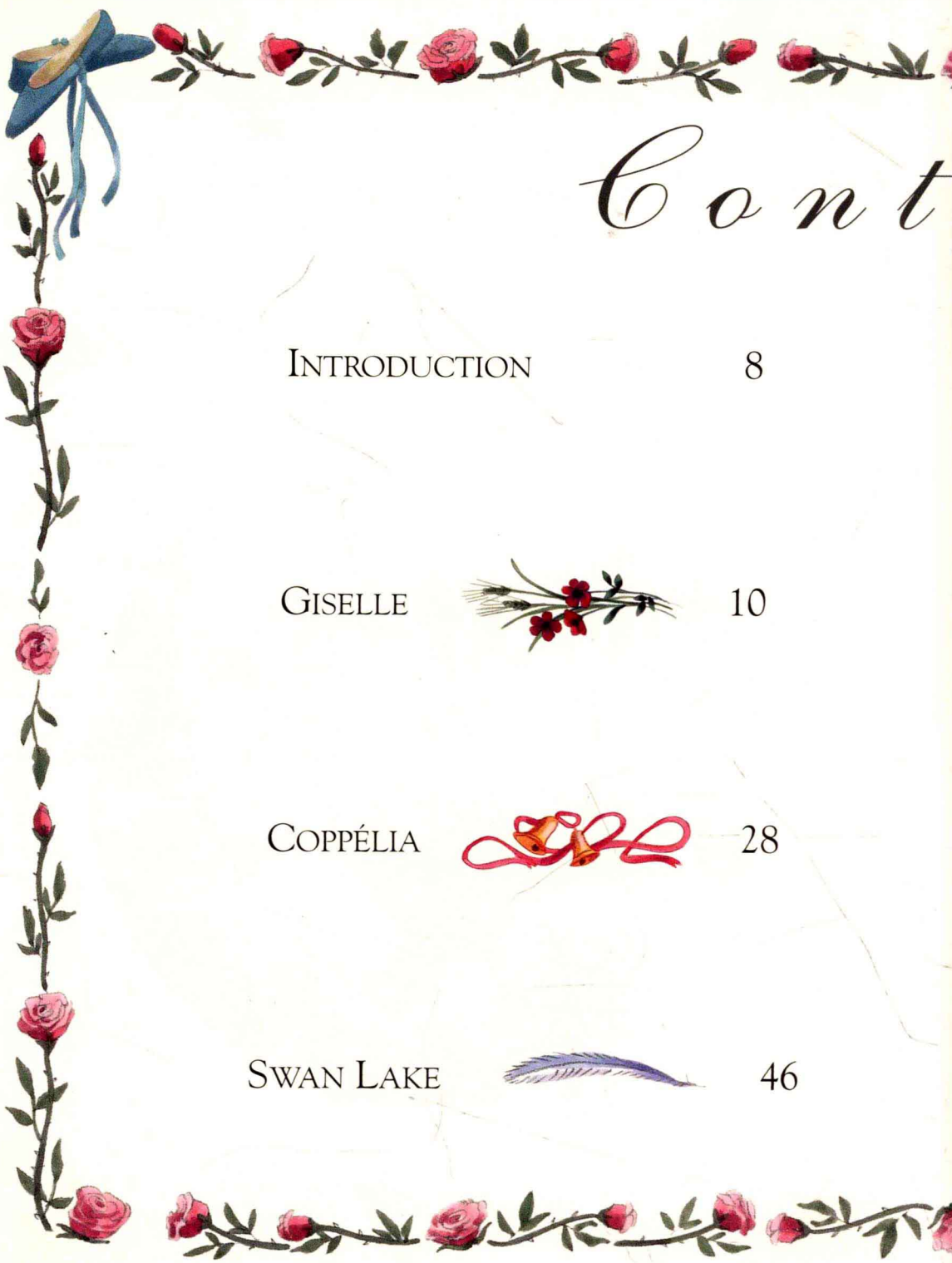
★ *My First* ★
Ballet Stories



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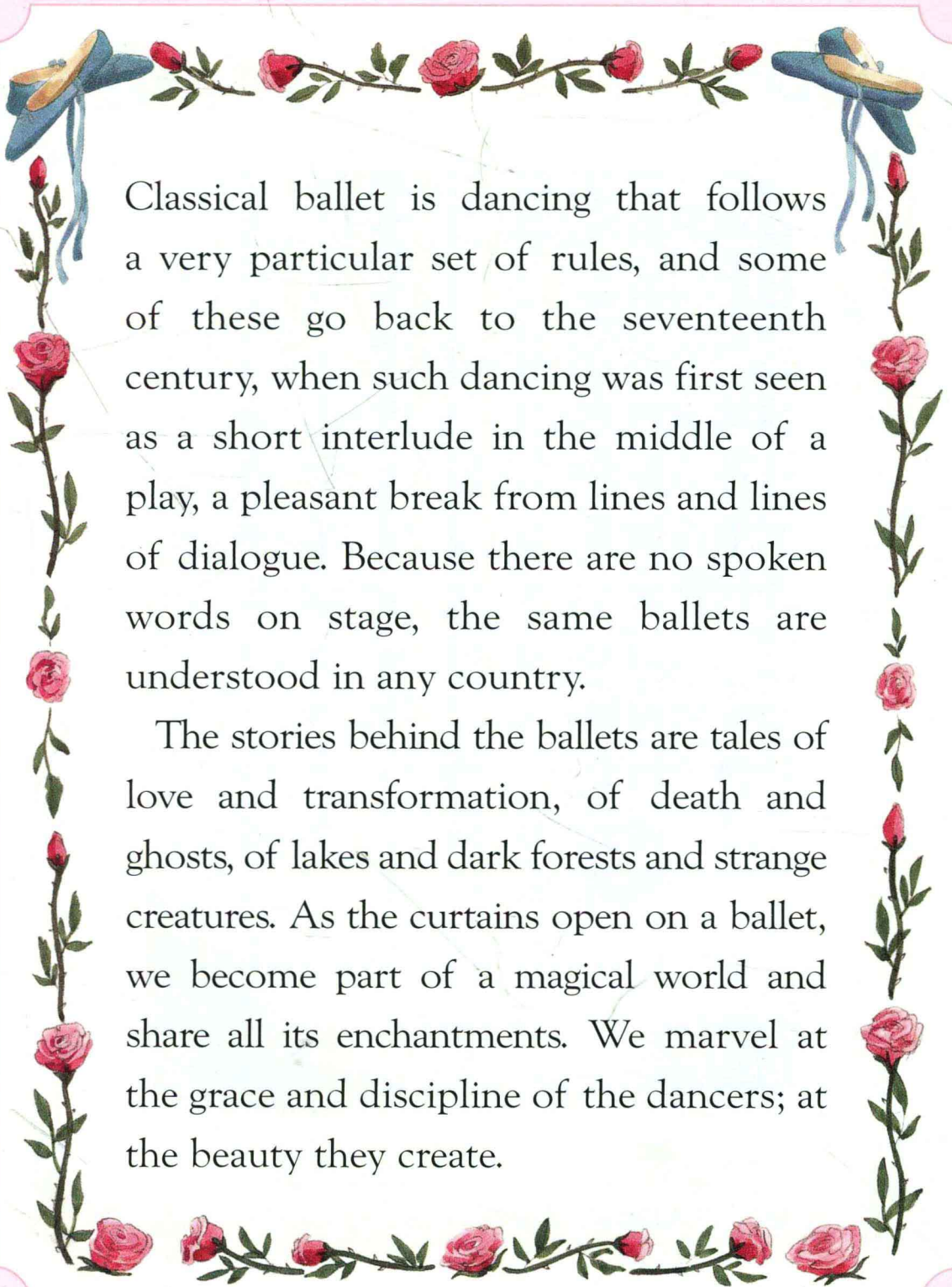


The Magic of the Ballet



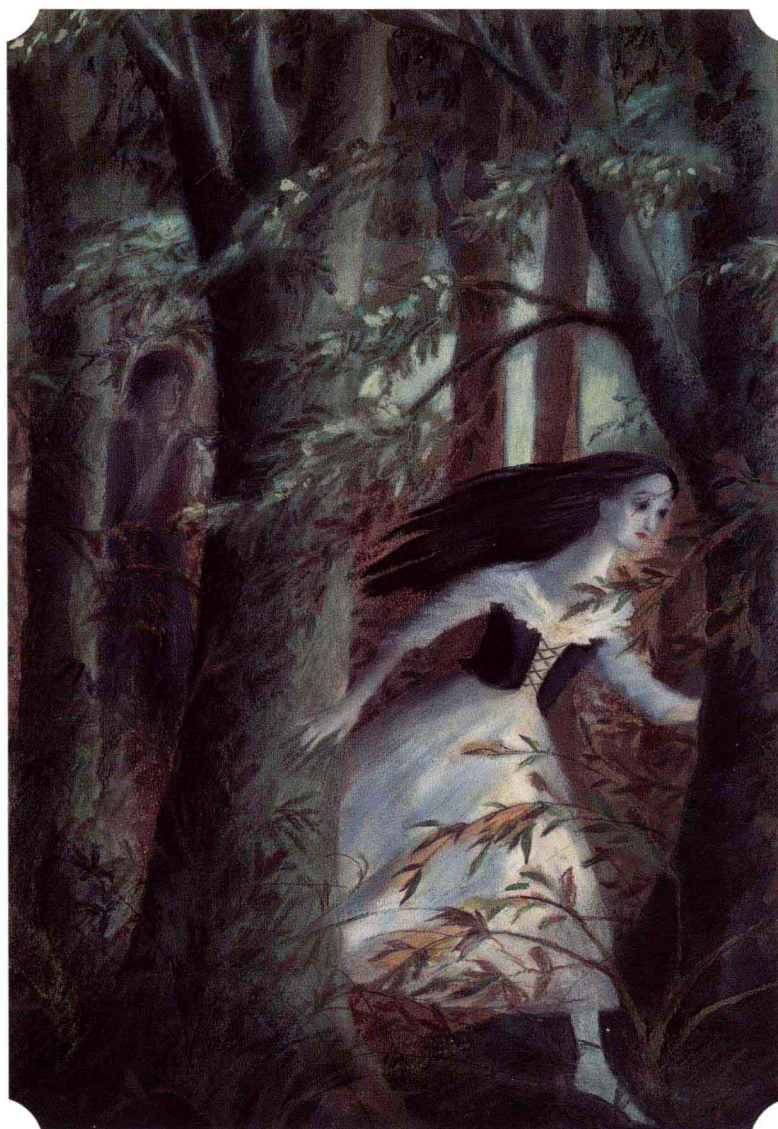
HUMAN BEINGS LIKE TO move their bodies in time to rhythm. Even the tiniest babies enjoy being rocked or gently bounced as you sing to them, and we all know how feet long to move when we hear a strong and exciting beat. “That’s toe-tapping music,” we say, and what we mean is we would like to dance to it.

There are many different kinds of dancing: folk, ballroom, tap, and so on.

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring a central horizontal branch with several red roses and green leaves. This branch is flanked by two blue bows with yellow centers. Vertical branches with red roses and green leaves extend from the top and bottom of the central branch to the left and right edges of the page.

Classical ballet is dancing that follows a very particular set of rules, and some of these go back to the seventeenth century, when such dancing was first seen as a short interlude in the middle of a play, a pleasant break from lines and lines of dialogue. Because there are no spoken words on stage, the same ballets are understood in any country.

The stories behind the ballets are tales of love and transformation, of death and ghosts, of lakes and dark forests and strange creatures. As the curtains open on a ballet, we become part of a magical world and share all its enchantments. We marvel at the grace and discipline of the dancers; at the beauty they create.



*"It was Giselle's voice, and I was filled with
a happiness I thought was lost forever."*

Giselle



EVERYTHING THEY SAY ABOUT old age is true. I find that I remember in the clearest detail everything that happened to me in my youth, and yet I would have difficulty in telling you what I ate this morning when I awoke.

Sometimes I forget how quickly the years have gone by, and, when I catch sight of myself in the glass, I do not recognize the white-haired old man I see. This cannot be me, Albrecht. Albrecht was tall and straight. He had clear blue eyes and a smiling mouth. And he was loved, oh, yes indeed. I may have forgotten many things, but the memory of Giselle's love for me still remains. I think of her every day, and there is a small, vain part of my soul that rejoices to think she never saw me as an old man. To her, I am still young.



MY FIRST BALLET STORIES

Giselle lived in the village of . . . but no, the name has gone. No matter. It was a collection of small, well-kept cottages that clung to the side of a hill where the forest ended.

I was hiding in this village, I confess it. I had become bored with palace life, with ceremony, with decorum, and all I wanted that spring was to roam through the woods like a peasant, hunting when it suited me.

It wasn't really even Bathilde that I was escaping from. Our families had arranged for us to be married. Bathilde was considered to be a beauty, and her father was the Duke of Courland. My parents persuaded me that it would be a splendid alliance, and I reluctantly agreed. My flight to the village was a last chance for the kind of freedom I knew I could never have as a married man, nor as the future Duke of Silesia.

If it were not for Giselle, I probably would have returned to the palace within days, but,

once I caught sight of her, everything else in my life shrank away, and I never gave the palace or my duty a single thought. I found a cottage and paid the owner money to rent it, and I took the name of Loys.

How can I find words to describe Giselle? I loved her from the very first moment I laid eyes on her, and she loved me, too. She was pale. Her hair was like ravens' feathers. She danced for happiness, but there was always something fragile about her. I don't know how to put it more accurately. Always I had the thought in my mind when we were together: "Be careful, oh, be careful,"—for I knew she could so easily be hurt.

Hilarion, the young gamekeeper in the village, adored Giselle, too. He could see that Giselle and I loved each other, and his jealousy grew and grew.

On the morning of the harvest feast, I came very near to telling Giselle who I really was.

MY FIRST BALLET STORIES

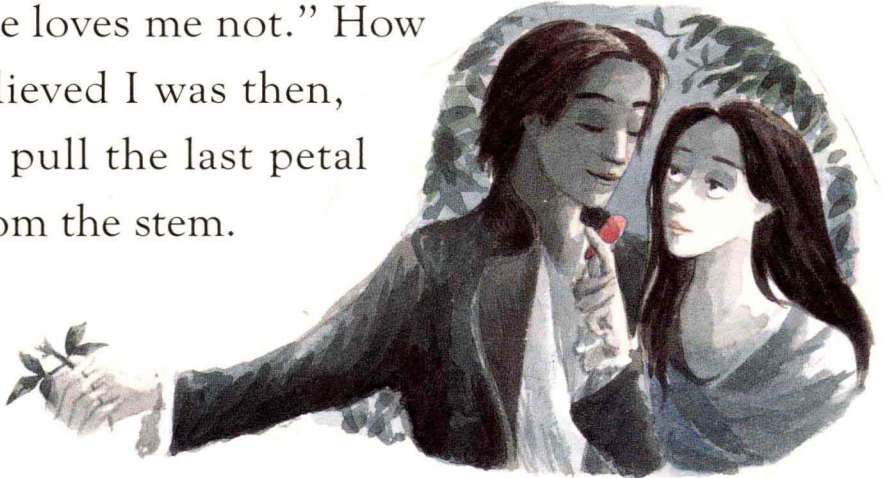
She had been teasing me, asking me why it was that I was different from other men she had known and begging me to tell her where I had come from and who my family were.

"It doesn't matter," I answered. "You are my family, my whole world. You are the one I love."

"Oh, but do you? Do you truly? Let this flower tell us." She picked a late rose and began idly to pluck the petals from it. "He loves me, he loves me not. . . ."

"Will you believe a flower that knows nothing of how I feel? Will you not believe me?"

Suddenly I was filled with dread at what Giselle would do if the last petal fell on "he loves me not." How relieved I was then, to pull the last petal from the stem.



"I love you! You see? Even this rose knows this is the truth!" I cried.

Giselle smiled, happy for the moment.

"Go with the others, Loys, to gather the last of the harvest, and I will stay here and prepare the feast," she said.

And I went. I went gladly. I thought myself the most fortunate man alive, striding away with the others into the valley while the September sun shone all around us, as golden and sparkling as the wine we would soon be enjoying. Try to imagine my joy as a bubble, and look at it now, catching the light. Soon it will burst, and neither I nor anyone else will ever lay eyes on it again.

Much later, during that long, infinitely black night, while we watched over Giselle's body before her funeral, her weeping mother told me what had happened. I hear her words even now, half a lifetime later. I still wonder if there was anything I could have done differently that



would have prevented Giselle's dreadful end.

"We heard the horns, and the hounds baying," her mother told me, "and soon a hunting party arrived in the village. Everyone gathered around, for we had never seen such grand people. Princess Bathilde was the most splendid of all, in a gown the color of a dark red rose. Everyone rushed forward, offering hospitality. Giselle helped to serve the wine, and Princess Bathilde was struck by her beauty and grace."

Here Giselle's mother paused and wiped the tears from her eyes. "Bathilde asked my poor daughter question after question. She begged her to come to the palace as her own serving lady, but, when she found out that Giselle was in love and soon to be married, she smiled kindly.

"'It is my loss,' she said, 'and you shall have my own necklace as a wedding gift.'

"She fastened a chain of gold filigree around Giselle's neck, and my daughter danced away to