



# ORLANDO BALLET

JORDEN MORRIS | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## MICHAEL PINK'S **DRACULA**

### Study Guide



Dancers: John Abenaty (USA), Kenna Gold | Photo: Zavesco Photography

**"Welcome to my house! Enter freely  
and of your own will!"**

These are the words Count Dracula uses to greet Jonathan Harker the first time he arrives at the castle. Similarly, this audience guide was created to introduce you to Michael Pink's *Dracula*, which premiered in 1996. This style of "dance drama" is Pink's signature way to tell stories through ballet with totally new elements while remaining true to the intents of the classical art form.

Milwaukee Ballet Artistic Director and co-creator of the ballet, Michael Pink, based this work on the novel by Bram Stoker written in 1897. Though many choreographers have jumped onto this gothic bandwagon, no version is quite like his in scope and size.

He and his creative team, comprised of film director Ken Russell, composer Philip Feeney, costume and scenic designer Lez Brotherston and co-creator Christopher Gable, are deep believers in the magic of good stories and the integrity of remaining true to the original storytellers.

There are moments in the ballet that make it feel like the words Stoker wrote are leaping off the page and onto the bodies of the dancers. For instance, take a moment and visualize this passage from Jonathan Harker's journal about

the first time he arrived at the Count's castle:

*"He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him to stone. The instant, however, that I stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed cold as ice? More like the hand of a dead than a living man." It's as though the icy encounter is unfolding before your very eyes.*

The creative team took special care to use not only the choreography, but all of the design elements to create a cinematic experience. For example, they see Act I as a black and white movie where we don't see any color until Dracula's blood red cape. Getting goosebumps yet?

Read on in this guide to find a character guide, a synopsis, fun facts about the production, and plenty of info for you to sink your teeth into and prepare for the show.

**Special thank you to the Milwaukee Ballet for  
providing this content as well as photos from their  
production.**

# Character Guide



**DRACULA:** Based on the historical figure, Vlad the Impaler, a tyrannical leader who inspired fear the world over with his bloodthirsty ways of killing his enemies (impalement and mass burning to name a few). In the story he is a vampire, an immortal creature who has traveled to England in the soil of his homeland. He can shape shift into a bat, a wolf or vapor.



**VAN HELSING:** A man of God and one of the most advanced scientists of his day - an expert of the mysterious and supernatural. He runs the sanatorium where Renfield is a patient. Dr. Van Helsing is summoned once Lucy has fallen ill. It is believed that the heroic Van Helsing was created as an alter-ego of sorts for the often sickly Stoker.



**JONATHAN HARKER:** A businessman whose firm sends him to Transylvania to conclude a real estate transaction with Count Dracula. Young and naïve, Harker finds himself a prisoner in the castle and barely escapes with his life. He is forever haunted by visions of that night, which he dare not share with his fiancé, Mina, or his friends.



**MINA:** Jonathan Harker's fiancée and Lucy's best friend. Mina represents the new Victorian working woman. She is an assistant teacher, can read, type and write shorthand. The men rely on Mina's intelligence in their hunt for Dracula.



**LUCY:** Mina's best friend. An attractive, vivacious young woman engaged to Arthur Holmwood. The demise of Lucy's health unites her friends and family to save her. Lucy Westenra's name means "Light of the West".



**ARTHUR:** Lucy's fiancé and a friend of her other suitor, Quincy. Arthur is the son of Lord Godalming and inherits the title upon his father's death. Lord Arthur Godalming's name comes from King Arthur who saved his own country, just like Arthur is trying to do. Godalming means "giving alms to God".



**QUINCY:** A plainspoken American and another of Lucy's suitors. Though Quincy doesn't win Lucy's hand, he remains a steadfast friend. Quincy Morris represents the new world (America) coming to save the old world (Europe).



**RENFIELD:** A patient at the mental asylum with a habit of consuming living creatures: flies, spiders, birds and so on, which he believes provide him with strength, vitality and life force. He is obsessed with Dracula and exhibits this strange behavior to show his "master" that he is an obedient and devoted servant.



# Synopsis

## Prologue

Jonathan Harker's mind is flooded with images of his terrifying experiences in Transylvania...in his delirium his nightmares have been dreadful; wolves, poison, blood, ghosts, demons...

## Act I

### Charing Cross Station, London

Mina and Dr. Van Helsing accompany Harker to the station as he sets off on his journey to see Count Dracula in Transylvania, where he is to conclude the Count's purchase of properties in England. A mental patient, Renfield, causes a disturbing incident while being escorted through the station.

### Transylvania

Harker arrives in Transylvania where he watches as villagers enact a violent ritual of sacrifice to protect their village from the dangers that threaten on All Souls Night. The ceremony is interrupted by a sinister figure, Count Dracula's coachman. Despite the desperate appeal of a bereaved woman, Harker continues his journey to Dracula's castle.

### Castle Dracula

#### i) Arrival ii) Vampires iii) Dracula & Harker

The Count welcomes Harker into his home and, having made him comfortable, withdraws. Harker sinks into a reverie and is visited by three women who both fascinate and terrify him. His seduction is interrupted by an enraged Count Dracula who distracts the vampire women with a live blood offering. Dracula now begins his domination of the helpless Harker. As the climax of their union approaches, Harker's scream of terror wakes him from his nightmare and he finds himself in the sanatorium with his fiancée's arms around him.

## Act II

### Winter Garden at the Grand Hotel, Whitby

At a Tea Dance in the Grand Hotel, Mina's friend Lucy dances with her suitors, while unbeknownst to them, a Russian ship approaches with a sinister and dangerous cargo. Only Harker is sensitive to the impending danger. A violent storm interrupts the dance, breaking open the windows, and at the height of its fury, the figure of Dracula appears on the terrace. The hotel guests are unaware of his presence, but Lucy is drawn to him. As the sound of the storm returns, Dracula disappears and Lucy is discovered dazed and almost unconscious.



## The Sanatorium

Lucy is taken to Dr. Van Helsing's clinic where her anxious fiancé and her friends visit her. As they leave for the night, Van Helsing, who has noticed the strange puncture marks on Lucy's neck, takes the precaution of surrounding her with wild garlic. This does not prevent a second visit from Count Dracula. Later that night, Lucy's body is discovered on the floor of her bedroom. The heartbroken men grieve the loss of this beautiful young woman. As her fiancé places a crucifix on her lips, Lucy attacks him violently before escaping into the night. She has become Nosferatu, one of the undead.

Act III

## Act III

### Mina's Room

Mina, alone in the sanatorium, thinks of the terrible danger that is hovering over them all. After the departure of the men, she and Van Helsing are startled by the escaped mental patient, Renfield, who attacks Van Helsing and draws blood before being overpowered by the wardens. Concerned for Renfield's suffering, Mina tries in vain to comfort and understand him. As she waits anxiously for the return of the men, she imagines with horror what her friend Lucy has become.

The men fail in their attempt to find Count Dracula, but later that night, as Harker sleeps, the Count enters Mina's room. Van Helsing discovers them as Dracula suckles Mina with his own life blood. Van Helsing has no power to prevent the Count from escaping and taking an unconscious Mina with him.

Count Dracula has chosen to celebrate his union with Mina in the vault at Carfax Abbey. His heartbeat is the pulse that summons the Nosferatu to the ceremony. Renfield has become the sacrifice, and it is his blood that links the undead as they dance in adoration of their master. As the celebrants prepare for the consummation of the ritual, an explosion blasts through the crypt and daylight floods into the vault.

Dracula can withstand the light, but his power is diminished. His adversaries pursue him and finally drive a stake through his heart. The survivors are left to come to terms with their experiences.



## Did You Know?

### Spine-tingling fun facts



- Dracula was published on May 26, 1897. Author Bram Stoker died in 1912, and just ten years later, the first motion picture based on the novel, *Nosferatu*, was released in Germany.
- Dracula lore has made its way into a number of pop-culture classics; *Interview with the Vampire*, *Shadow of a Vampire*, Kiefer Sutherland's cult classic *Lost Boys*, *Twilight* and *True Blood* to name a few.
- Bram Stoker did not have the luxury of surfing the web to do his research for the novel, nor was he able to travel to Transylvania to see what it was like firsthand. Yet, his book is so historically accurate that researchers and historians have been able to trace Jonathan Harker's journey through this treacherous land.
- There is a species of bat called the "Vampire Bat". While they don't go searching for innocent mortals, they are fond of livestock and will bite and feed on these animals while they sleep.
- Transylvania is a real place. The present day region is 55,146 square kilometers in the middle of Romania surrounded by the Oriental and Apuseni Mountains.
- The original score by Phillip Feeney contains soaring musical themes and layers of sound effects like knocking, howling, whips and tingling tea cups. For the chorus during the Blood Litany, Feeney translated the Latin text into Romanian to give it a more mysterious and ancient sound. When originally recorded by Opera North in Elland Church in Yorkshire, England, the singers were delayed for a bit due to - wait for it - a BAT flying in the belfry! It seems Count Dracula may have been there in spirit.



You may have seen a post pop-up from time-to-time about Dracula's castle being for sale. According to a 2014 article in The Daily Mail, Count Dracula's Transylvanian castle (proven only by local lore) has been put on the market by its Romanian archduke owner with a reported asking price of at least £47million. Hilltop fortress, Bran Castle, is the eastern European country's biggest tourist attraction, bringing in 560,000 visitors annually. Previous owners of the castle, which dates back to 1211, range from Saxons to Hungarians and Teutonic knights. In the days of Romania's Habsburg royal family, Bran Castle was given to Queen Marie, the last Queen consort of Romania and granddaughter of Queen Victoria. When she died, she bequeathed the castle to her daughter Princess Ileana. But after the Communists came to power in 1948, the family was given 24 hours to leave the country. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Bran Castle was restored to them, and Ileana's son Dominic and daughters Maria Magdalena and Elizabeth have been running it ever since. Now in their 70s, they are ready to sell and see it move toward the future, perhaps with the additions of a hotel and other tourist attractions. Interested?



## The Man Behind the Legend | Dracula



When we think of "Dracula", most of us think of a black-caped, elegantly dressed, pale skinned, larger-than-life character with slicked-back hair. However, Vlad Dracula, the man who originally coined the name, was not so caricatured.

Vlad Tepes (Tepes means "the Impaler" - a nickname that came when he became leader of Romania) was born in 1431 from a line of strong warriors and leaders whose heritage goes back to the founding of Wallachia, a state that is still part of present day Romania.

Vlad's father (also named Vlad) was invited to be initiated into a society called the "Order of the Dragon". He began to go by the name "Dracul", which in Romanian, means "dragon", and used the insignia of a dragon and a cross. Dracula means "son of the dragon", thus the connection to Vlad III, who was trained in knighthood as a child.

Vlad rose to the position of "voivode" (a Slavic word meaning "warlord" or "supreme chief") and was in and out of this position for the next 20 years. Though he did not stay in power for long periods of time, his reputation, power and influence on the country were great and long-lasting. His tactics were ugly, psychological, and brutal. His nickname, Vlad the Impaler, came from his favorite way to kill; impalement.

The stories about Vlad Dracula spread like wildfire even when he was still alive. Depending on where one is from, the opinion of Vlad Dracula ranges from patriotic hero to devilish bloodthirsty villain. Part folklore and part spicy history, Vlad is almost always associated with violence and blood. One pamphlet that was circulating in Germany in the 15th century was called "The Frightening and Truly Extraordinary Story of a Wicked Blood-drinking Tyrant Called Prince Dracula."

# Michael Pink - Choreographer

Michael Pink is the longest serving artistic director in Milwaukee Ballet history. Since joining the Company in December of 2002, he has established himself as a prominent member of the Milwaukee arts community, demonstrating his commitment to the future of dance through new work, education and collaboration.

His artistic vision for Milwaukee Ballet continues to be exciting and challenging. His long-awaited production of *Peter Pan* signified a major landmark in the Company's history and was broadcast nationally



by PBS in Spring of 2014. His production of *Romeo & Juliet* has also been broadcast by MPBS. In 2008, the Wisconsin Dance Council presented Pink with the Choreography/Performance Award. In 2014, the Milwaukee Press Club honored him with the Headliner Award for service to the arts. He received the Civic Music Association's award for Distinguished Citizen – Professional in the Arts in 2015. He recently accepted the Educational Excellence Award from the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts which recognizes organizational achievement of a nonprofit that exemplifies collaboration in the arts.

Pink is an international choreographer whose theatrical productions of *Dracula*, *Esmeralda*, *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *La Bohème*, *Don Quixote*, *Mirror Mirror*, *Dorian Gray* and *Beauty and the Beast* have been hailed as 'Classical Ballet for the 21st Century'. His first professional work, 1914, was nominated for a West End Theatre Award, London.

His early choreographic work won him first place in the Frederick Ashton and the Royal Society of Arts Choreographic Competitions. He worked as a répétiteur for Rudolf Nureyev at the Paris Opera and La Scala Milan. He trained as a classical dancer at The Royal Ballet School and danced with English National Ballet 1975 to 1985.

Pink was the founding director of Ballet Central in London; he also served as associate artistic director of Northern Ballet.

He continues to build strong working relationships with other Milwaukee Arts groups, where his credits include *A Christmas Carol*, *Assassins*, *Cabaret* and *Next to Normal* for Milwaukee Repertory Theater, as well as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Matilda* for First Stage.



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**DRACULA**

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Steinmetz Hall | Dr. Phillips Center

[OrlandoBallet.org](http://OrlandoBallet.org)

