

Cultural Daily

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Matthew Bourne's Early Adventures at The Wallis

Adam Leipzig · Wednesday, May 17th, 2017

Matthew Bourne's *Early Adventures* (at The Wallis through May 21), is by turns joyous, wry, whimsical, and exuberant. A must-see for dance lovers, and especially for fans of Bourne's later works, such as *Swan Lake* and *The Red Shoes*, *Early Adventures* feel as fresh and innovative as they were when Bourne created them 25 years ago.

Let's isolate a single moment. A man comes downstage center. His hair is slicked back; he wears a moss-green satin dressing gown, garters, and gray socks. Surveying his domain, his shoulder motivates his arm to form a wide arc, as if he is embracing his world, then he spins, back to the audience, and descends to a deep plié. Now close to the floor, he collapses onto his right side and, turning profile, bends his knees so his heels touch. At this moment, with his angular position, his feet flexed, he is the epitome of modern dance. But then he points his toes, flexes, points: in that ballet-move, Bourne jettisons conventions of style and form.



EARLY ADVENTURES by Bourne, , Choreographer – Mathew Bourne, Designer – Lez Brotherstoni, Lighting – Andrew Murrell, Theatre Royal Bath, 2017, Credit: Johan Persson

Moments like this inhabit the three pieces that comprise the evening. *Watch With Mother* begins by weaving children's games, then moves to explore the isolation of one who does not conform. *Town and Country* takes us to England at a time past, likely just before or after the Great War, and gives us tableaux of grand living in London and the countryside. Here Bourne revels in the trappings of upper-crust life and also mocks them, satirizing the master-servant relationship, skewering a fox hunt with puppets, and gently reminding us there is much beneath the surface in a longing encounter between two sexually repressed men.

The Infernal Gallop, set in an Englishman's imaginary Paris, offers one memorable scene after another, including a men's encounter in a pissoir with musical score provided by urinary harmonies, and the most hilariously deadpan can-can you have ever seen, set to the familiar Offenbach music for which this piece is named.

With Matthew Bourne's *Early Adventures*, The Wallis continues a streak of adventuresome programming, adding international vibrancy to Los Angeles's thriving arts scene.

Information and tickets: <http://thewallis.org/bourne>

Top image: Courtesy The Wallis.

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