NEW/ADVENTURES



★★★★★

'A valentine to the power of love'

LA TIMES

# Matthew Bourne's CINDERELLA

Music by Prokofiev

## VISUAL GUIDE

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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

# INTRODUCTION

This visual guide is designed for audiences who want to familiarise themselves with *Cinderella* before they get to the theatre. The story is told entirely through dance and music with no speech.

Our guide contains images and information about the characters, story and the production in general. We hope this resource supports your experience of the show.

If you have any comments, please get in touch at
**access@new-adventures.net**



# SHOW NOTES

## THEMES WITHIN THE SHOW

- Family, Conflict, Life & Death, War, Love

## PLEASE BE AWARE

- Cinderella is approximately 2 hours 20 minutes long, including two 20 minute intervals.
- The age guidance is 8+
- This production is set in London during the Blitz of 1940.
- The production contains depictions of bombing raids, destruction of buildings and explosions.
- The production uses smoke and haze effects, strobe lighting, loud noises (including explosions and sirens) and theatrical smoke to create these depictions.
- The dancers playing the characters might be different from the ones in this guide, but the characters and their costumes will be exactly the same.
- The audience will clap during the show, for example when a big scene ends. You can join in if you want to.

## *TRIGGER WARNINGS*

- Trigger warnings and sound warnings are listed in The Story section of this guide.
- The production contains themes of war and destruction.
- The production contains depictions of bombing raids, destruction of buildings and explosions.
- A prop gun is used in the second part of the show. It goes off in the second scene of Act Two.

# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## CINDERELLA

Cinderella is a kind, imaginative dreamer living with her cruel stepmother Sybil, who isolates her from the rest of her family. She dreams of a better life, filled with glamour and beauty. Guided by a watching Angel, her life begins to magically transform.



## HARRY, THE PILOT

Harry is a World War Two pilot. Though traumatised by the war and suffering from a head injury, he falls in love with Cinderella after she tends to his wounds. The two search for each other across a devastated London.



# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## THE ANGEL

The Angel is a powerful and elegant figure, dressed in a shimmering white suit. He decides the fate of others; whilst he guides Cinderella, he also decides who lives and dies amid the war's devastation.



## SYBIL, CINDERELLA'S STEPMOTHER

Sybil is a stern, controlling and selfish stepmother who mistreats Cinderella and favours her own children. She keeps secrets from her family and is fearful that Cinderella may figure them out.



# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## CINDERELLA'S FATHER, ROBERT

Cinderella's father, Robert is a quiet and reserved man, dominated and ill-treated by his wife, Sybil. He suffers from PTSD, a consequence of physical and psychological trauma from the First World War and occasionally uses mobility aids such as a wheelchair and a walking stick.



# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## IRENE

Irene is attractive, self-centred and pushy. The war is a major drawback to her and her social life. She loves her weekly fashion magazines and And somehow manages to look stylish in spite of the shortage of new clothing due to rationing.



## VIVIEN

Vivien is stroppy, moody and bitter. She's disappointed with her life and irritated by her family. Her boyfriend Stan is loyal and doting, but she shows him no appreciation.

Irene and Vivien look down on Cinderella and treat her poorly, influenced by their mother Sybil. However, as time goes on, they grow closer and start to treat Cinderella with more affection and kindness.

# MEET THE CHARACTERS

## MALCOLM, VERNON AND ELLIOT

The three stepbrothers create more difficulty for Cinderella. Malcolm, Vernon and Elliot are quite different in nature but Vernon, the middle brother, is particularly deviant due to his rather unhealthy obsession with her.



# THE STORY

# ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE: THE FAMILY HOUSE

Cinderella is cleaning her family home and serving tea to her sisters. Cinderella's three stepbrothers, Malcolm, Vernon and Elliott appear and they are creating chaos in the house. The family receives an invitation to a ball. However, Sybil, Cinderella's stepmother, makes it very clear that Cinderella will not attend. Alone, Cinderella slips on a pair of sparkly shoes and her stepmother's fur coat. She daydreams of a glamorous life, while her stepbrother Vernon watches her unsettlingly.

The Angel appears. Cinderella cannot see them, but they guide her movements. An injured World War Two pilot called Harry stumbles into Cinderella's family home. She tries to help him, but he is banished from the house by her family members and she is stopped from going after him. Cinderella's family head to the ball without her. Guided by the invisible Angel, Cinderella seizes her moment to leave. She packs a suitcase with Harry's pilot hat and her sparkly shoes before leaving home.



***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Projections depicting scenes from the Blitz. Scenes of fire, destruction.

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Prop toy gun used and held at Cinderella by one of her brothers.

*Sound warning:* Low sounds of bombing.

# ACT ONE

## SCENE TWO: THE BLACKOUT

Cinderella steps out into the foggy streets of London. She is searching for Harry who is lost and confused. He catches a glimpse of Cinderella, but they keep getting separated. Crowds of people are in gas masks which scares Cinderella. The Angel intervenes again, tempting her with an invitation as she continues to look for Harry in the darkness.

There are air raid sirens and search lights in the sky, a loud explosion is heard, and Cinderella falls to the floor from the impact. Angelic figures appear to fly across the sky and the Angel whisks Cinderella away on a motorbike and sidecar to the ball.



***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* People wearing gas masks.

*Sound warning:* Dogs barking at multiple points.

*Light Warning:* Bright searchlights that may shine into the audience.

*Sound warning:* Loud siren.

*Sound warning:* At 50 minutes, there is a loud bomb explosion and screaming for 4 seconds.

*Light Warning:* Flashing lights.

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Cinderella is struck and falls to the floor.

*Sound warning:* Sirens and explosions at the end of the scene.

# INTERVAL

The interval will be 20 minutes. The audience will clap and maybe cheer at the start of the interval.

You can stay in your seat or leave the auditorium. You might want to buy a drink or snack or use the toilet in the interval.

# ACT TWO

## SCENE ONE: THE CAFÉ DE PARIS, A DANCE HALL

The Angel magically reverses time in a bombed-out ballroom, restoring it to its former glamour as dancing couples return to life. The ball begins and Sybil is led onto the dance floor by the bandleader, Alphonso. A fanfare announces the arrival of celebrated pilot Harry and his companions Tom and Dick.

Cinderella appears at the top of the staircase in a stunning white gown. She spots Harry and it is love at first sight, they launch into a grand waltz before moving apart across the room.

Sybil is trying to steal Harry's attention whilst her daughters, Vivien and Irene, set their sights on Tom and Dick. The service men and women, and the bandleaders alike are overwhelmed by Cinderella's beauty and grace. They try to dance with her but Cinderella only has eyes for Harry. As an air-raid siren sounds outside and the guests panic, Alphonso signals the all-clear and the ball resumes. Before the night is out, Cinderella and Harry slip away together into the darkness.




***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

- *Sound warning:* At the start of the scene, loud airplanes noises, sirens and bombs going off. This lasts for around 8 seconds.
- *Light Warning:* Flashing lights.
- *Light Warning:* Flickering light depicting fire.
- *Trigger Warning:* Dancers are lying across the stage following the explosion, depictions of death and injury.
- *Light Warning:* Large disco ball flickering and spinning.
- *Sound warning:* There is a loud bomb explosion for 4 seconds.
- *Sound warning:* Siren sounds for 14 seconds.

# ACT TWO

## SCENE TWO: THE PILOT'S LODGINGS

As Harry gets ready to leave, Cinderella begs him to stay - they fall into a heartfelt and tender duet. There are flashbacks to Cinderella's tragic existence at the hands of her cruel family, including her stepmother shooting and injuring her father.

The Angel becomes an Angel of Death, and his dramatic movements cause destruction all around him. As the clock chimes midnight, time rewinds and bombs fall outside Cinderella's house. She is injured and carried away on a stretcher. Harry stumbles through the wreckage, finding only her silver shoe, he fears he has lost her forever.



***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

- *Sound warning:* Clocks ticking throughout the scene.
- *Trigger Warning:* A prop gun is fired by Sybil at Cinderella's father, Robert.
- *Sound warning:* A gunshot is fired and heard for around 3 seconds.
- *Light Warning:* Flickering projections and flashing lights for around 35 seconds.
- *Trigger Warning:* Parts of the set collapse suddenly.
- *Sound warning:* Sounds of electrics fusing.
- *Light Warning:* Bright flash of light towards the end of the scene.
- *Trigger Warning:* Depiction of dead and injured bodies being carried.

# INTERVAL

The interval will be 20 minutes. The audience will clap and maybe cheer at the start of the interval.

You can stay in your seat or leave the auditorium. You might want to buy a drink or snack or use the toilet in the interval.

# ACT THREE

## SCENE ONE: THE STREETS OF LONDON

The Blitz is making Londoners fearful, as the Angel walks amongst them, unnoticed. He follows people walking the streets, indicating when they are going to lose their lives. The Pilot clutches Cinderella's shoe - he has bloody bandages covering his head injury and looks confused, receiving strange looks from passersby.



***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

*Sound warning:* Thunder sounds for 4 seconds.

*Sound warning:* Light thunder and rain sound throughout.

# ACT THREE

## SCENE TWO: THE LONDON UNDERGROUND

Harry is seen underground; he encounters a more seedy and dark side of London during the Blitz. He is robbed by one of the people he meets underground.

***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

✴ *Light Warning:* Flickering light effects.

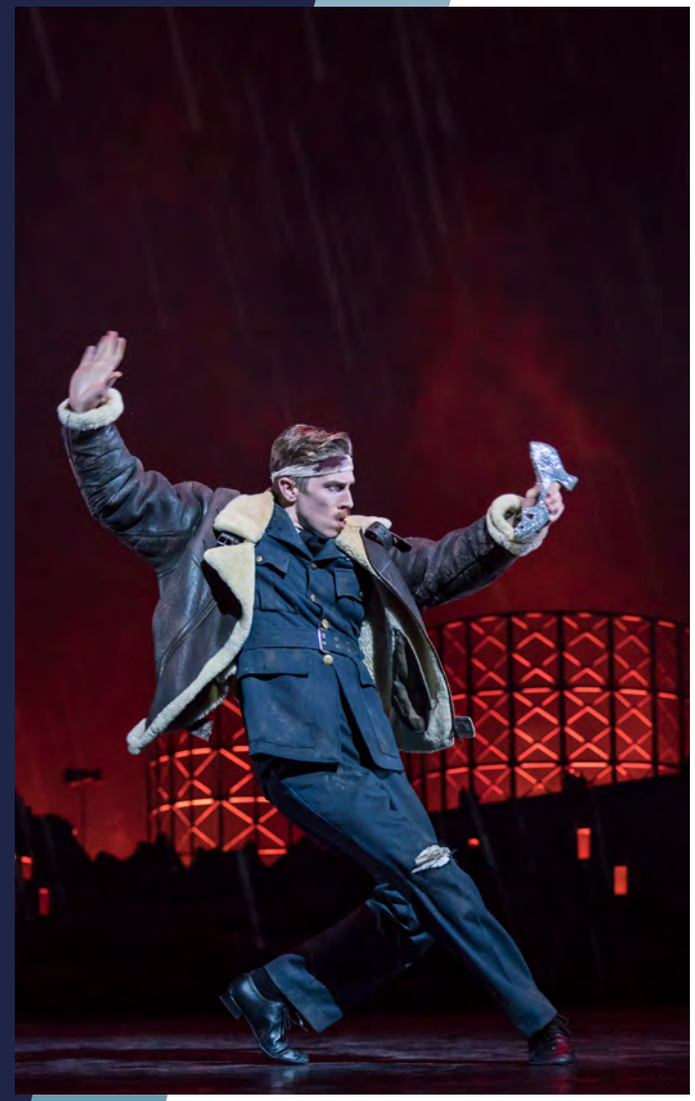
⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Depiction of a robbery.

## SCENE THREE: THE THAMES EMBANKMENT

Harry runs out of the station and throws up into the Thames. He is dancing with Cinderella's shoe; upset he has lost her. A well-dressed woman takes pity on him, but her companions start a fight, stealing the shoe and beating Harry.

***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Depiction of a fight and violence.



# ACT THREE

## SCENE FOUR: A CONVALESCENCE HOME

Cinderella recovers in hospital from her physical wounds, but she remains emotionally fragile. When her family visits, she turns them away and they are escorted out by the Nurse. Sybil slips back in and attempts to suffocate Cinderella with a pillow, stopped only by a doctor who appears to be the Angel in disguise. The family are left shocked by Sybil's actions.

Harry arrives at the hospital, receiving electroconvulsive therapy. When he and Cinderella finally reunite, there is awkwardness as they consider how little they know each other, but reuniting the pair of shoes offers a glimmer of hope for their future together.



***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

✶ *Light Warning:* Bright neon sign against darkness for around 3 seconds.

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Depiction of suffocation with a pillow for around 8 seconds.

⚠ *Trigger Warning:* Depiction of Harry receiving electroconvulsive therapy for around 20 seconds.

✶ *Light Warning:* Flickering lights.

# ACT THREE

## SCENE FIVE: PADDINGTON STATION

Harry and Cinderella are at a busy Paddington train station, all around them are young men and women separating off in couples as they set about building new futures for themselves post-war.

Harry and Cinderella are being waved off by their family, they are just married. Sybil's actions have been so awful towards Cinderella that her family now take Cinderella's side, separating themselves from Sybil and her wickedness.

Cinderella says goodbye to her father, Robert, who still seems reserved. However, as they board the train he says one more goodbye to Cinderella, kissing her on the forehead and saluting to Harry. The Angel reappears - she shows her gratitude to him and he dances around them. The Angel turns his attention to another girl, alone on the station platform, and he gently places his hand on her shoulder - a sign that he will watch over her as he has Cinderella.

The music reprises and all the characters return to stage in a VE Day victory celebration. The last to reappear are Cinderella, who is once more in her ball gown, and Harry. The festivities continue. The lights fade as the characters continue to dance the night away.



***TRIGGER WARNINGS***

*Sound warning:* Train horns

# IWM CHILDREN IN WAR EXHIBITION

If you'd like to learn more about the themes of World War Two explored in Matthew Bourne's Cinderella, visit Childhood in War at Imperial War Museum London. Through personal stories, objects and interactive displays, this free exhibition offers an accessible and family-friendly opportunity to discover what life was like for children during wartime. Childhood in War is open until 28 February 2027 and recommended for those 8+, with younger children also welcome to explore.

For more information, please visit iwm.org.uk/childhood



# THE END

When the show ends, there will be loud clapping and cheering.

People may stand up as the performers take a bow.

When you leave the theatre, you might want to talk about what you've just seen or take some time to quietly think about it on your own. The story might mean something different to you than it does to other people.

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