



MATTHEW BOURNE'S  
PRODUCTION OF

# The Red Shoes

'ENCHANTING'  
EVENING STANDARD

★★★★★  
'ENTHRALLING'  
DAILY EXPRESS

'COMPELLING'  
DAILY TELEGRAPH

NEW/ADVENTURES

## VISUAL GUIDE



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

# INTRODUCTION

This visual guide is designed for any audience members who would like to familiarise themselves with what to expect from The Red Shoes before they get to the theatre. The story is told entirely through dance and music with no speech, so this guide should help you follow along.

It contains images and information about the characters, story and the production in general. We hope this resource makes your visit more enjoyable.

If you have any comments, please get in touch at [office@new-adventures.net](mailto:office@new-adventures.net).

# SHOW NOTES

## THEMES WITHIN THE SHOW

- Love, Obsession, Loss, Duty, Ambition, Art.

## PLEASE BE AWARE

- The Red Shoes is approximately 2 hours long, including a 20-minute interval.
- The age guidance for this show is 7+.
- The dancers shown playing the characters in this guide may not be the same dancers you see in the show, but the character costumes will be 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.
- A prop gun is used in the first half of this show, it does not go off.
- The production contains themes of suicide and death.
- There are set pieces, lighting effects, and music which create a sinister or intense atmosphere.

# VICTORIA 'VICKY' PAGE / THE GIRL & BORIS LERMONTOV

## Victoria 'Vicky' Page/The Girl:

(Vik-taw-re-uh (Vik-ee) P-ay-juh)

Victoria is an unknown, young, beautiful and ambitious ballerina.

She is cast as the lead in Ballet Lermontov's new production, The Red Shoes.

## Boris Lermontov:

(Buh-or-iz Ler-mon-toff)

Lermontov is bold, ruthless, and charismatic.

He believes love should not get in the way of career and is furious when he learns that Victoria is in love with Julian.



MEET THE CHARACTERS



# JULIAN CRASTER & IRINA BORONSKAJA

**Julian Craster:**  
(Jo-lu-en Crah-stah)

Julian is a young, struggling composer and conductor.  
He is driven by his passion for music.

**Irina Boronskaja:**  
(Ay-reen-a Boh-ron-sky-ah)

Irina is the glamorous lead Ballerina in Ballet Lermontov.  
She suffers an injury and is unable to perform when the  
ballet tours to Monte Carlo.



MEET THE CHARACTERS

# IVAN BOLESLAWSKY / THE BOY & GRISCHA LJUBOV / THE PIMP

## Ivan Boleslawsky/The Boy:

(Ay-van Boh-le-slav-sky)

Ivan has a confident and larger-than-life presence when performing in the Ballet.

He is clearly dedicated to his work with the company, though he is quite self-obsessed.

## Grischa Ljubov/The Pimp:

(Gree-sha Loo-boff)

Grischa is the company's ballet master and main choreographer. He is highly strung, but a brilliant and expressive dancer.



MEET THE CHARACTERS

# THE BALLET LERMONTOV, LADY NESTON & DIMITRI

## The Ballet Lermontov:

(Bah-lay Ler-mon-toff)

Ballet Lermontov is a world-leading ballet company,  
based in Covent Garden in London.

They tour all over the world and are a tight-knit company.

## Lady Neston:

(Lay-dee Nes-ton)

Lady Neston is Victoria's Aunt.

## Dimitri:

(Dee-meat-ri)

Boris Lermontov's Secretary and Company Manager.



MEET THE CHARACTERS

# ACT ONE




# SCENE ONE

## ON A STAGE IN COVENT GARDEN

Dancing couples enter from the sides, creating a smoky, dream-like atmosphere. The music intensifies, as Grischa enters and dances with Irina's character. Lermontov and his company assistant, Dimitri, are seen in the wings.

As the lights come up to reveal the ballet's audience, Vicky is spotlighted. She enters onto the stage, overwhelmed by what she has seen as the dancers' spin around her.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** A prop gun appears on stage as part of the ballet, and is pointed at some of the characters.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Spotlights may shine light into the audience.



THE STORY

# SCENE TWO

## LADY NESTON'S HOUSE, AFTER THE SHOW

At a party hosted by Lady Neston after the show, her niece, Victoria performs for the guests. Julian Craster refuses to play the music Victoria chose for her dance and she must instead improvise to his music.

Lady Neston's guests admire Vicky's dance, but Boris Lermontov is more impressed by Julian's music. He hands Julian a business card, appearing to offer him a job.

Irina is in Covent Garden. She holds a white ballet tutu, and dances with it on stage. She is joined by Ivan, who then takes the spotlight.



# SCENE THREE

## COVENT GARDEN, BACKSTAGE

Grischa is leading the dancers in a class, with Julian playing the piano. Vicky and Joyce, another auditionee for the company, join the class as a part of their audition. Lermontov watches them, selecting Vicky to join the ballet company.

Julian is left on stage with a grand piano. Julian imagines conducting a full opera house orchestra, to his own music.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Spotlights may shine light into the audience.



THE STORY

# SCENE FOUR

## PARIS

Irina and Ivan are in full make-up and costume, joined by the Ballet Lermontov ballerinas. As the dancers bicker with Lermontov and the creative team, Vicky slips into a daydream, dancing the lead solo from the ballet, Les Sylphides. This catches the attention of Lermontov.

As the company continues to rehearse, Irina cries out in pain as she falls to the floor, having injured her ankle. Chaos breaks out, the company circling around her before carrying her out of the rehearsal.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Physical depiction of injury.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Spotlights may shine light into the audience.



THE STORY



# SCENE FIVE

## MONTE CARLO

The dancers are enjoying themselves on the beach as they arrive in Monte Carlo. Vicky, accompanied by Julian, is about to go to her hotel when she is stopped by Lermontov's Secretary, Dimitri and handed a note.

She reads it, leaving excited. Dimitri joins his boyfriend, Ivan on the beach. As they leave, the dancing continues.



THE STORY

# SCENE SIX

## THE TERRACE OF LERMONTOV'S HILLTOP MANSION

The creative team are looking over designs for the production. Vicky is unsure why she has been invited to Lermontov's mansion. She looks over the set designs, costumes and the red shoes she will wear in the show.

Lermontov and Vicky are left and dance a duet. Lermontov lifts Vicky into the spotlight and disappears into the darkness.



# SCENE SEVEN

## THEATRE IN MONTE CARLO

The whole company is rehearsing for The Red Shoes, including Irina who is now on crutches due to her injury. Vicky's nerves are comforted by Lermontov, whilst being handed a costume by Edith.

The red curtains are drawn as everyone leaves, apart from Julian. As the title 'The Red Shoes' is projected behind him, he begins to conduct the orchestra.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Dimitri holds up a conducting stick in a shadowy scene, as if to threaten a company member when they haven't left the stage quickly enough.

 **SOUND WARNING:** There is high-pitched, fast paced music in the scene.





# SCENE EIGHT

## THE RED SHOES BALLET

The Girl (Vicky) and The Boy (Ivan) travel from the suburbs to the city. Suddenly, a sinister Pimp (Grischa) appears. Intrigued by her beauty, he lures The Girl away with the promise of fame and fortune, enticing her with a pair of red shoes.

The Pimp seemingly hypnotises The Girl until the power of the red shoes overwhelms her. The shoes drag her around independently, forcing her to stop without a break. She journeys to a vibrant, busy dance hall, through a wild forest before getting lost in a storm.

The Girl arrives at her own funeral and sees The Boy who has become a priest. He “senses” her presence around him as she desperately reaches for him. Eventually, The Boy releases her from the shoes and she collapses and dies.





# SCENE EIGHT

## THE RED SHOES BALLET




- ⚠️ **TRIGGER WARNING:** Flickering spotlight, causing shadows to appear around the stage at the beginning of the scene.
- ⚠️ **TRIGGER WARNING:** Spinning and flickering projections throughout the 'nightmare' sequences.
- ⚠️ **TRIGGER WARNING:** Some may find the character of The Pimp unsettling and scary in this scene.
- ⚠️ **TRIGGER WARNING:** Depiction of a funeral and The Girl's death at the end of the scene.

- 🔊 **SOUND WARNING:** Intense and fast-paced music, with bells ringing in this scene and symbols clashing at the Dancehall.
- 🔊 **SOUND WARNING:** Multiple, sudden whistle-blows at the Dance Hall.
- 🔊 **SOUND WARNING:** Static sound when The Girl is dancing alone on stage.
- 🔊 **SOUND WARNING:** Intense, eerie music in this scene as the Pimp circles The Girl as she is dancing.

# SCENE NINE

## BACKSTAGE

The show is received with loud applause. Backstage, after the dancers have done their bows, Vicky and Julian congratulate each other, resulting in a passionate embrace. This is noticed by Lermontov, who storms off in a rage.

 **SOUND WARNING:** Loud clapping during the whole scene, with no background music.



THE STORY

# 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

## VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER

### - COMPANY PARTY

The dancers enjoy drinks and dancing at a party by the harbour. Irina has recovered from her injury. Couples gather on the promenade for late night walks, amongst them are Ivan and Dimitri, Vicky and Julian.

Julian and Vicky have begun a passionate love affair, with Lermontov watching them closely.

🔊 **SOUND WARNING:** Firework sounds towards the end of the party for around 5 seconds.

🔊 **SOUND WARNING:** Dramatic piano music suddenly plays at the end of the scene and continues into the next scene.




THE STORY

# SCENE TWO

## MONTE CARLO OPERA HOUSE STAGE

The Ballet Lermontov company is performing in Monte Carlo again, with Grischa playing an evil Puppet-Master and the rest of the dancers representing 'good' and 'evil'.

Riddled with jealousy, Lermontov finds fault in everything Julian does, pushing him to breaking point. This forces Julian and Vicky to walk out.

 **SOUND WARNING:** The dramatic piano music intensifies towards the end of the scene.



THE STORY

# SCENE THREE

## LONDON BACKSTAGE

### MUSIC HALL

Six months later, Vicky and Julian are working in a music hall, struggling to make money. As they are rehearsing, a comedic double act is leering at Vicky in her skimpy costume.

Distressed and humiliated, Vicky runs away, comforted by Julian.

 **SOUND WARNING:** Sudden symbol clash towards the end of the scene.

 **SOUND WARNING:** Sudden steam train noises.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Spotlights may shine light into the audience.



THE STORY

# SCENE FOUR

## LERMONTOV'S APARTMENT

Lermontov is alone in his apartment, agonising over how to win Vicky back.



THE STORY



# SCENE FIVE

## JULIAN AND VICKY'S CHEAP DIGS

Back in a small London apartment, Julian and Vicky, both unsatisfied with their jobs at the music hall, argue. They are being pulled between their love for each other and their passion for their art.

When Julian is asleep in bed, Vicky decides to return to the Ballet Lermontov company and leaves with her ballet shoes and suitcase in hand.



THE STORY


# SCENE SIX

## LERMONTOV'S APARTMENT

Vicky turns up at Lermontov's apartment to beg for her job back. Vicky is dressed for The Red Shoes ballet as the scene changes around her.

Grischa (as the Pimp) reappears in her mind and lures her once again with the "red shoes" – sometimes he also appears to be Lermontov (or a shadow of Lermontov).

 **SOUND WARNING:** Intense music towards the end of this scene.

 **TRIGGER WARNING:** Towards the end of this scene, Lermontov depicts tying the red shoes around his neck for around 2 seconds.



# SCENE SEVEN

## NIGHTMARE IN MONTE CARLO

The ballet and real life all begin to blur, and Vicky is haunted by the faces of Julian, Lermontov and The Pimp. The sound of an audience chanting for her builds up and begins to sound like an approaching steam train. The noise gets louder and louder, as Vicky slowly advances towards the curtains. The curtain parts and we see the intensely bright lights of the steam train charging toward Vicky, resulting in catastrophe.

Vicky's body is surrounded by onlookers and Julian arrives from London, just in time to see Vicky take her final breath. Julian removes her red shoes, and Vicky dies in his arms, mirroring the final scene of The Red Shoes ballet. Lermontov picks up the pair of shoes, walks towards the audience and holds them up, once more in their spotlight.



THE STORY

# 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.