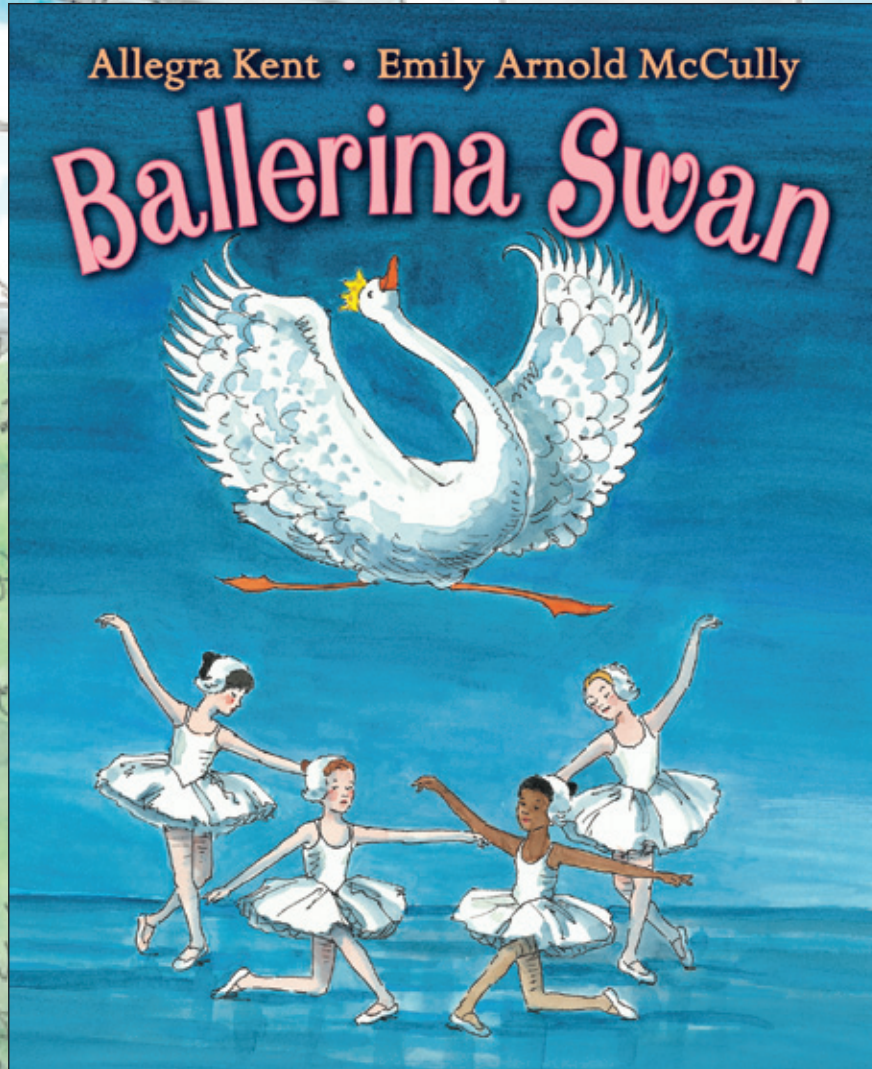


A Conversation with ...



*Prima Ballerina* **Allegra Kent**  
and  
*Caldecott Medalist* **Emily Arnold McCully**



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Though feathered, winged, and webbed, Sophie longs to dance. ...

Two great artists have created an inspiring character in this endearing swan who, in spite of obstacles, pursued her passion and made her dream come true!



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# Allegra Kent

*“The idea for Sophie’s story came to me while I was watching a swan swimming on a pond. I thought, ‘What if this graceful, exquisite creature decided to become a ballerina?’”*

“When I was nine and in boarding school, I discovered my favorite classes of the week were the folk dance sessions. Whirling and twirling to exuberant music lifted my spirits. I thought, ‘I must become a ballerina.’ I had never seen a ballet, but that wasn’t going to stop me.

“I asked my mother to take me out of boarding school so I could study ballet. The ballet school we selected had no beginners’ class. Everyone knew what they were doing except me. But the landscape of sound and movement stirred something in me—a magical realm. After class I thought for a moment and then decided to proceed. The lesson I learned was, don’t give up too quickly.

“Sophie the swan had somewhat the same problem, but not exactly. Her first teacher shooed her away. But Sophie kept persevering. Sophie and I were both bewildered for a while, but we were determined to catch up—and we did.”

Allegra Kent and  
Jacques D’Amboise



Photograph copyright by Judy Cameron

Swan Lake  
Choreography by George Balanchine  
©The George Balanchine Trust

## CAST LIST

### AUTHOR

**Allegra Kent** is one of New York City Ballet’s most celebrated ballerinas. She danced many roles created for her by George Balanchine, as well as the role of Odette in *Swan Lake*. Ms. Kent has written three books for adults. This is her first book for children.





# Emily Arnold McCully

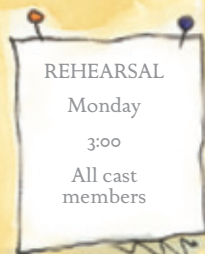
*“The theme of **Ballerina Swan** is one that I have employed in my own stories: find what you love to do, then persevere, practice, and take chances; learn from failures to master skills and become freely creative. This story is a uniquely charming iteration of my favorite theme.”*

## CAST LIST

### ILLUSTRATOR

**Emily Arnold McCully**

has won many prestigious awards, including the Caldecott Medal. She draws upon her passion for ballet as well as her masterful artistic skills to create paintings with elegant cityscapes, expressive gestures, and an exquisite swan.



“Allegra’s writing is so straightforward and respectful of her characters, human and avian. Here is a student filled with desire but with serious shortcomings to overcome, not to mention the snap judgment of her teacher. She keeps trying and succeeds.

“I decided that the pictures should be just as straightforward and convey honest feeling. Of course, putting a swan in the middle of a children’s class is startling and strange—qualities that art should have. Yet the situation had to be played straight. I hadn’t ever drawn a swan—or ballet dancers. I studied lots of pictures of dancers and summoned sense memories of performances I saw over the years at New York City Ballet.

“I never took ballet lessons, though I do love to dance and I have played lots of sports. In my illustrations, I love trying to suggest the body in motion in space. Every creature is capable of gestures that convey feelings we recognize and identify with. And my favorite illustrations? Sophie on the windowsill full of longing, and her great leap up in the air.”



# Ballerina Swan



tendue



arabesque



plié



grand jeté



port de bras



révérence



"The Dance of the Little Swans"  
pas de chat



épaulement

