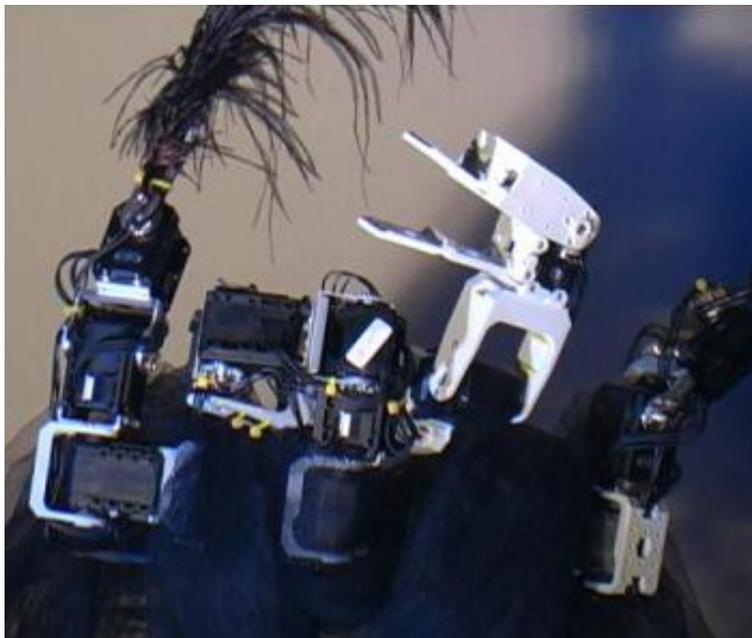


Dancing robot swan makes people misty-eyed

Bird bot developed at Sweden's Malardalen University dances an alternately gentle and dramatic Dying Swan that reportedly has moved people to tears.

by Leslie Katz | September 22, 2010 11:03 AM PDT



Tchaikovsky probably never envisioned a prima ballerina that looked quite like this.

(Credit: Kerstin Gauffin)

We jaded old Cravers have seen plenty of dancing robots [http://www.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-10469212-1.html] in our day, but a robot *rond de jambe*-ing to music from Tchaikovsky's epically tragic "Swan Lake"? Now *that* gets under our feathers.

The robot swan, developed at Sweden's Malardalen University, dances an alternately gentle and dramatic Dying Swan choreographed by dancer Asa Unander-Scharin, who is not a robot.

The piece, just over four minutes long, has reportedly moved people to get misty-eyed [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-09/src-

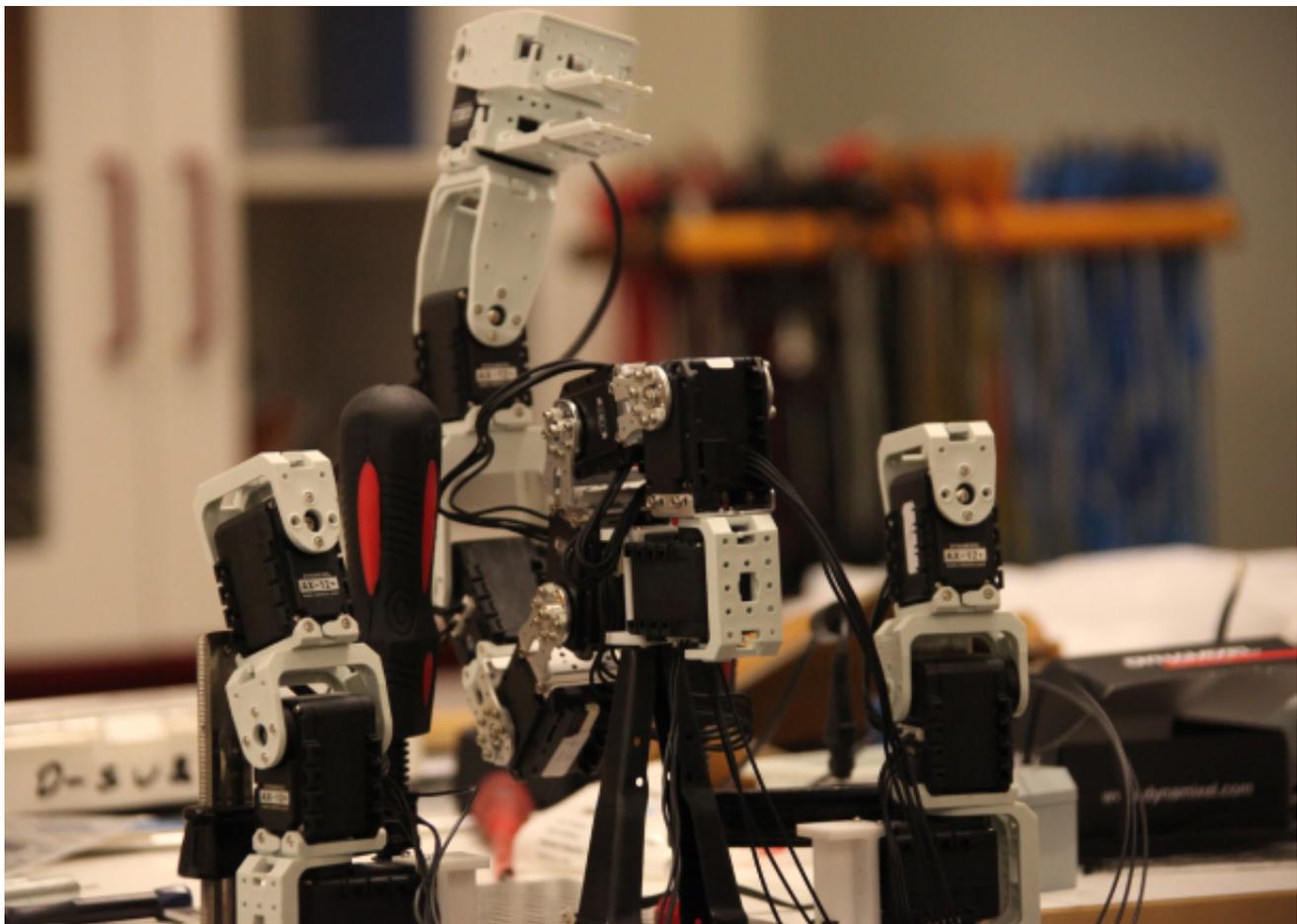
[drs092110.php](#)] and use descriptors like "touching" and "beautiful," words not often associated with machines. (We're working on getting ahold of a video of the dance, as we could really use a good cry ourselves right now).

The robot swan stands about 3.2 feet tall, with 19 joints in its white wings, neck, beak, and feet that give it the flexibility to pull off both smooth and fiery moves as demanded by the choreographer. Unander-Scharin--a professional dancer who also wrote a thesis titled "Human mechanics and soulful machines: Choreographic perspectives on human qualities in body movement"--"taught" the robot swan one step at a time; its computer "recalls" the movement pattern and then plays it as an entire dance program.

Lars Asplund [<http://www.idt.mdh.se/personal/lad/>], a professor of computer science at Malardalen, said he designed the dancing bird bot to explore the limits of what robots can do (next up: join Lord of the Dance?), and how they impact perceptions of their kind when they make an appearance in dance and **other performing arts** [http://www.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-10108211-1.html].

The swan will make its public debut Thursday at a book fair in Gothenburg, Sweden. Asplund tells CNET we'll be able to take a gander at a movie soon after.

Update, Friday, September 24, at 11:20 a.m. PDT: *And here it is* [http://www.idt.mdh.se/rc/Robocygne_20100923/Robocygne_100916.mov]



This is the dancing robotic swan from Malardalen University--out of costume.

(Credit: Lars Asplund)

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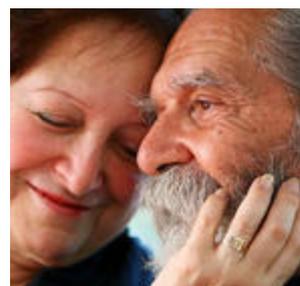
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