



SLEEPING BEAUTY

From the Paris Opera Ballet

Ballet in three acts and a prologue
Based on the tale by Charles Perrault

LIVE on December 16, 2013
Starting time (GMT +1h) From 19.30 – Paris time
Duration aprox: 3hrs 10min (includes two 20 min intermissions)

Creative team

Choreography Rudolf Nureyev, after Marius Petipa
Music Piotr Ilytch Tchaikovsky
Sets Enzo Frigerio
Costumes Franca Squarciapino
Lighting Vinicio Cheli

Starring

Étoiles, Premiers danseurs and Corps de ballet

Paris Opera Orchestra and Chorus Conductor: Faycal Karoui

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The “Ballet of ballets” as Rudolf Nureyev described it, *Sleeping Beauty* remains one of the jewels in the heritage of dance. First performed in 1890 at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, the work combined the talents of choreographer Marius Petipa and composer Tchaikovsky. Inspired by Charles Perrault's tale, they imagined a “fairy-tale ballet” in which dream and reality overlap and where fairies and godmothers, and the forces of Good and Evil fight over the fate of two young people. It was not until 1989 that Rudolf Nureyev restaged the work based on the original choreography for the Paris Opera Ballet. Readopting the original order and structure of the piece, passed on by generations of dancers, he devised a choreography of dazzling academic virtuosity, alternating between lavish ensembles and pas de deux. The sumptuous sets and costumes by Ezio Frigerio and Franca Squarciapino recreate the splendour of one of the most outstandingly accomplished masterpieces in the classical repertoire.

SYNOPSIS

Prologue

King Florestan the XXIVth and his Queen declare a grand christening ceremony to be held to celebrate the birth of their first child, Princess Aurora. Several fairies are invited to the ceremony to bestow gifts on the child. Each fairy represents a virtue or likeable trait, such as beauty, courage, sweetness, musical talent, and mischief (the names of fairies and their gifts vary in productions). The most powerful fairy, the Lilac Fairy, arrives with her entourage, but before she can bestow her gift, the palace grows dark. With a clap of thunder, the evil fairy Carabosse arrives (typically played by a female character dancer, or a male dancer in drag) with her minions (generally several male dancers depicted as rats or insects). Carabosse furiously asks the King and Queen why she had not received an invitation to the christening. The blame falls to Catallabutte, the Master of Ceremonies who was in charge of the guest list. Carabosse gleefully tears his hair out and beats him with her cane, before placing a curse upon the baby princess as revenge to her parents: Aurora will indeed grow up to be a beautiful, virtuous and delightful young lady, but on her sixteenth birthday she will prick her finger on a spindle and die. The King and Queen are horrified and beg Carabosse for mercy, but she shows none. However, the Lilac Fairy intervenes. Though she does not have enough power to completely undo the curse, she alters it, allowing the spindle to cause a peaceful 100-year sleep for the princess, rather than death. At the end of those 100 years, she will be woken by the kiss of a handsome prince. Relieved that Aurora's life will ultimately be spared, the court is set at ease.

Act I

It is the day of Princess Aurora's sixteenth birthday. Celebrations are underway, though the King is still unsettled by Carabosse's omen. Catallabutte discovers several peasant ladies knitting nearby (a forbidden activity, as it involves spindles potentially harmful to the princess) and alerts the King, who initially sentences the women to prison (or death, in some versions). The Queen gently persuades him to spare the innocent citizens, and he agrees. The townsfolk perform an elaborate dance with flower garlands, and Princess Aurora arrives afterward. Carefree and lovely, she is introduced to four suitors by her doting parents. Aurora and the suitors perform the famous Rose Adagio, one of the most notoriously difficult sequences in all of ballet. Presently, a cloaked stranger appears and offers a gift to the princess: a spindle. Having never seen one before, Aurora curiously examines the strange object as her parents desperately try to intervene. As predicted, she pricks her finger on the spindle. While initially appearing to recover quickly, she falls into a swoon and collapses. The cloaked stranger reveals herself to be Carabosse, who believes that her curse still stands and that the princess is dead. Once again, the Lilac Fairy quells the hubbub and reminds the King and Queen that Aurora is merely asleep. The princess is carried off to bed, and the Lilac Fairy casts a spell of slumber over the entire kingdom, which will only be broken when Aurora awakens. She then uses her magic to cover the castle in layers of vines and brambles.

Act II

One hundred years later, Prince Désiré is at a hunting party with his companions. He is in a mooney mood, unhappy with his bossy countess girlfriend. His friends try to cheer him up with a game of blind man's bluff and a series of dances. Still unhappy, he asks to be alone and the hunting party departs. Alone in the forest, he is met by the Lilac Fairy, who has chosen him to awaken Aurora. She shows him a vision of the beautiful princess, and the prince is immediately smitten. The Lilac Fairy explains the situation, and Désiré begs to be taken to the princess. The Lilac Fairy takes him by boat to the castle, and has him cut away the layers of vines with his sword. Carabosse appears and attempts to deter him, but he and the Lilac Fairy finally manage to defeat her. Once inside the castle, Désiré awakens Aurora with a kiss. The rest of the court wakes as well, and the King and Queen heartily approve when the prince proposes marriage and the princess accepts.

Act III

The royal wedding is underway. Guests include the Jewels: Gold (male), Diamond, Sapphire, Ruby, and Silver (all female). Fairytale characters are in attendance, including Puss in Boots and the White Cat, Princess Florine and the Bluebird, Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, and, in some versions, Cinderella and her Prince. Aurora and Désiré perform a grand Pas de Deux, and the entire ensemble dances a mazurka. The prince and princess are married, with the Lilac Fairy blessing the union. The ballet ends with an apotheosis (apothéose) where all the characters make a final bow.