

HOT SPRINGS CHILDREN'S DANCE
THEATRE COMPANY
presents

Tchaikovsky's
The Sleeping Beauty

SPECIAL STUDENT PERFORMANCES

May 15 • 10 am
Lakepointe Church

May 23 • 10 am
Woodlands Auditorium

STUDY GUIDE



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Artistic Director

Tickets available at www.hsdtc.org • 501-655-6815



The Sleeping Beauty Ballet

SYNOPSIS

The Prologue—*an introductory section of a literary or musical work*

King Florestan and his Queen have invited all the Fairies to attend the Christening of their beloved only child, the Princess Aurora. As Aurora's godmothers, they present their gifts of strength, song, honesty, beauty and wisdom. Unfortunately, no one has remembered to invite the ill-natured Fairy Carabosse. She arrives in a fury and, presenting a spindle as her gift, foretells that Aurora will one day prick her finger and die. The whole court is in despair, but happily the Lilac Fairy has not yet bestowed her gift. Though she cannot remove Carabosse's curse, she can change it. Princess Aurora will not die. Instead, she will sleep for a hundred years and then be awakened by the kiss of a handsome prince.

Act I—The Spell

It is the celebration of Princess Aurora's sixteenth birthday, and Princes from the four corners of the world have come hoping to win her hand. A nurse approaches and gives Aurora a small bouquet of flowers. As she dances around, Aurora throws the flowers to her friends and pricks her finger on the spindle concealed in the bouquet. Everyone is aghast as Aurora falls, apparently lifeless. The nurse reveals herself as Carabosse and vanishes. Now the Lilac Fairy appears and casts a spell so that the whole court falls asleep while a magic forest grows up around the castle to keep it safe for a hundred years.

Act II—The Vision

It is a hundred years later and Prince Florimund heads a hunting party. But he has no heart for the sport and dismisses his retinue to meditate alone on his longing for an ideal love. The Lilac Fairy enters and shows him a vision of Princess Aurora. Enraptured, he begs the Fairy to lead him to this beautiful vision and together they travel through changing landscapes and seasons until they reach the hidden castle, where he awakens the Princess Aurora with a kiss. This breaks the spell and causes the defeated Carabosse to disappear forever.

Act III -- The Wedding

Fairy-tale characters come to the wedding celebrations of the Prince and Aurora. They pay their respects to the bride and bridegroom, and then the whole assembly joins in a general dance. In a final apotheosis, the Lilac Fairy appears to bless the marriage.



SLEEPING BEAUTY CHARACTERS



THE SLEEPING BEAUTY CREATORS

The original Author— *The writer of a literary work.*

Charles Perrault (1628—1703) A French author who started the literary genre of fairy tales. A few of his best-known fairy tales are *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss in Boots* and *The Sleeping Beauty In The Wood*, which he published in 1697. The ballet is based on this version and many of his fairy tale characters from other stories appear in Act III.



The original Choreographer— *A person who creates dance compositions by planning and arranging movements and patterns for dances, especially ballets.*

Marius Petipa (1818–1910) was one of the most influential figures of classical ballet. Petipa was born in Marseilles, France. His father was a dancer, and Petipa began dancing in his father's travelling company when he was nine years old. Petipa was a French and Russian ballet dancer, teacher, and choreographer. He is considered one of the most influential ballet masters and ballet choreographers who ever lived. Petipa was born in France on March 11, 1818. His mother was an actress and drama teacher, and his father was a ballet master and teacher. Petipa is most noted for his long career as the Ballet Master of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres from 1871-1903. He created over fifty different ballets including *Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*, and *Raymonda*. Most of these ballets have survived with choreography that is either inspired by the original or slightly adapted for today. He was married to a ballerina and they had six children together. Petipa lived to be ninety-two years old.

Paper Dolls: As Petipa created the choreography for *The Sleeping Beauty*, he asked Tchaikovsky to come to his house and play the music for him. Petipa would move little papier-mâché figures around on a table to help him visualize the movements as the music played.

The Composer—*A person who writes music.*

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840—1893) is one of the most popular Russian composers of all time. He lived and composed during the 19th century which is called the Romantic period because artists, writers and musicians focused on feelings and passions more than any other theme. It was popular during this time to compose music that told a story and Tchaikovsky's ballets are often called story ballets. Tchaikovsky's compositions include 11 operas, 3 ballets and over 100 songs.



Collaborators—*People who work together and cooperate to create a work of art.*

Tchaikovsky and Petipa worked very closely to create *The Sleeping Beauty* Ballet in 1890, *The Nutcracker* in 1892 and *Swan Lake* in 1895. These ballets are some of the best known classical ballets in the world.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Music:

Pre-Performance Discussion:

Talk with your students about how music is the only thing that you hear during a ballet. Ballets are not like movies and plays, the dancers do not speak. They show their emotions through movement and pantomime. If you have access to the music you can even play parts of it to the students. Also play different types of music like classical or even hip-hop and ask them how it makes them feel. Then have them act out that emotion with the music!

Post-Performance Discussion:

Did your students like the music, what was their favorite part? Do they think it helped to show the emotions that the choreographer wanted the audience to feel? Ask your students if they have ever heard Sleeping Beauty's music before, if so where and what parts.

The 1959 Disney animated movie is probably the Sleeping Beauty that many Americans know best. Walt Disney took elements from the ballet, and the Perrault and Grimm Brothers' stories, to create his famous version. One of his most important decisions was to use the Tchaikovsky ballet score: he originally commissioned an entirely new one but soon realized the ballet's music could not be matched.



Writing:

There are many different kinds of stories. We can sort stories into groups or categories with similar characteristics. These groups are called genres of literature. A fairy tale is a fictional story with magical beings and can take place in a magical or faraway land. Fairy tales come from oral tradition and were told by one generation to the next until someone finally wrote it down. Fairy tales have good and evil characters, and usually royalty. Something magical always happens, such as a spell, and during the story a crazy problem has to be solved. Once the problem is solved, everyone lives "happily ever after". A fairy tale often teaches the reader a lesson.

- 1) Based on this description, how do we know *The Sleeping Beauty* is a fairy tale?
- 2) The fairies in *The Sleeping Beauty* give Princess Aurora the gifts of strength, song, honesty, beauty, and wisdom. If you were a fairy invited to the banquet what special gift would you give to Princess Aurora? Why?
- 3) Fairy tales often begin "Once upon a time, a long time ago." Imagine what life will be like in the future. Write a story beginning with Sleeping Beauty waking up 100 years from today. Describe how the world looks different. What is the Prince wearing? Where would the celebration be? What kind of music and food would be at their wedding celebration?

Movement:

Pre-Performance Discussions: Ask your students how different emotions make them move. Have them get up and show you how they move when they are sad, excited, or upset! Each ballet has different movements to show an emotion. For example Little Red Riding Hood has soft and timid movements, ask the students what emotion they think that would be.

Post-Performance Discussion:

Ask questions about each scene and how the movements made them feel. Have them act out those emotions. Ask how the movements were different in each scene and how they were the same. Do they think the movements were effective at getting across what the choreographers wanted the audience to feel.

Act III, devoted to the grand wedding of Aurora and the Prince, is a chance to show off the dancers' skills. Petipa decided that the wedding guests would be fairytale characters from Perrault's (and other) stories. They perform divertissements—short dances that entertain and have nothing to do with the actual story. Petipa's original choreography include Puss n' Boots, Blue Bird, and the White Cat, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, and the Wolf.

What Fairy Tale Story Character would you have added to the quest at the wedding?

The Bluebird Pas de Deux in Act III is known for its airborne choreography for the male dancer (the Bluebird), who is teaching Princess Florine how to fly. Petipa's tricky steps mimic how a bird springs, bounces and soars. It is still considered some of the most difficult choreography in the classical male repertory.

