

Cleveland Ballet to end season with ambitious, fairytale production of classic ‘Sleeping Beauty’

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During rehearsal, Johan Mancebo (The Raven) operates the two-story tall dragon in Sleeping Beauty. Cleveland Ballet

CLEVELAND, Ohio --Cleveland Ballet will end its season with four performances of “Sleeping Beauty” from April 25-27. The classic tale, set to a score by composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, will be staged at Playhouse Square’s Connor Palace. Tickets start at \$28.



Timour Bourtasenkov, who recently replaced Gladisa Guadalupe as artistic director of the Cleveland Ballet, is producing a fresh interpretation of the tale.

“‘Sleeping Beauty’ is considered one of the most technically challenging of classical ballets. Cleveland audiences will see a new iteration of Cleveland Ballet with dances that test the technical and acting skills of our company,” said Bourtasenkov, in a press release. “In addition to the choreography, we are elevating the entire production with opulent sets and costumes.”

Just wait until you see the wicked fairy Carabosse’s ominous two-story tall dragon, with its dramatic 30-foot wingspan, move across the stage.

The choreography, new to Cleveland Ballet, is from Carolina Ballet’s renowned Founding Artistic Director Robert Weiss. This production is especially sentimental for Bourtasenkov who, in 2008, played the Prince in Carolina Ballet’s premier production.

In this production, the demanding role of the Prince is danced by Narek Martirosyan and Lorenzo Pontiggia.

“Classical ballets are the most challenging to perform,” says Martirosyan. “As a dancer, you have a wealth of emotions and energy that you want to share with the audience. However, in this genre, you must be very careful. Unlike other dance styles where you can fully open and express yourself freely, even being ‘crazy’ on stage, in classical ballet you must maintain strict control over every movement and detail.

“It requires an exceptional level of discipline and technical mastery to convey the intended emotion and artistry without compromising the precision and elegance demanded by the classical form,” he explains.

Svetlana Svinko is Aurora to Martirosyan’s prince. She says every ballerina dreams of having “Sleeping Beauty” in her repertoire.

“This role is difficult because it is a technically and physically demanding role in which it is necessary to create the image of a young innocent girl,” she said. “I hope that when the audience comes to the performance, they will be able to get into the world of fairy tales and at least forget about their daily problems for a while.”

Gabriela Checo, who also plays Aurora, says the role has pushed her limits.

“Aurora is a joyful, strong, and delicate female character,” she says. “The role has brought me so much growth as a dancer.”

“It is a challenging role because you must look effortless even if you are doing highly technical steps,” she says. “It combines elegance with strength as a soloist, but also with all of her partners, especially her relationship with Prince Desire and bringing into life their love story.”



“Sleeping Beauty” -- based on works by Charles Perrault and The Brothers Grimm -- is the story of Princess Aurora. Act one begins with the celebration of her birth. Kind fairies dance and bless the baby princess with gifts of beauty, grace, and kindness.

The party is halted by the Wicked Fairy Carabosse and her Raven. Because they were not invited, Carabosse places a horrible curse on the baby: On her sixteenth birthday Aurora will prick her finger on a spindle and die.

The Lilac Fairy intervenes. While she cannot reverse the curse, she softens it. Instead of dying, Princess Aurora will fall into a deep slumber until awakened by true love’s kiss.

The act continues to the princess’s 16th birthday where she dances with four suitors before the fateful spindle prick. At that point Aurora and the partygoers fall into deep sleep.

Act two jumps time and opens with Aurora sleeping and the Prince on a hunting trip. In a dream, the Lilac Fairy introduces the Prince to a vision of Aurora. He is smitten, so he travels to the castle to find her. There he encounters Carabosse and battles her dragon. When he succeeds, he kisses Aurora and wakes her.

The wedding scene closes the two-hour (plus intermission) classical ballet.

The cast includes 53 members -- 30 local and international dancers, one trainee, 19 students from the Academy of Cleveland Ballet and three adult guests.

The roles of Princess Aurora and the Prince will be performed by Svetlana Svinko with Narek Martirosyan at 7 p.m. on April 26 and 27. The same roles will be performed by Gabriella Checo with Lorenzo Pontiggia at 1 p.m., April 27.

Before the evening shows, ticketholders can participate in Jewels with the Queen. The queen will be in costume in the lobby posing for photos and handing out sticky jewels for face décor. This ends 15 minutes before show time. After the Saturday matinee five to seven cast members in full costume will be available for photos.

In addition to its regularly scheduled performances, Cleveland Ballet is offering a student matinee and Pay What You Can opportunity at the final dress rehearsal at 10 a.m., April 25.

To purchase tickets, visit clevelandballet.org/sleeping-beauty or call Cleveland Ballet ticketing at 216.320.9000 ext. 107.

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