

# THE SLEEPING BEAUTY



STUDENT MATINEE PACKET

# ABOUT BALLET ARKANSAS



Ballet Arkansas traces its origins to the Little Rock Civic Ballet, founded in 1966 by Lorraine and Donald C. Cranford. Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 1978, the organization has, over the course of its 47-year history, touched the lives of more than half a million Arkansans through its performances, education programs, and community engagement initiatives. Today, Ballet Arkansas stands as the only professional ballet company in Little Rock and is widely recognized as the state’s premier ballet organization—serving audiences across every region of the Natural State.

Under the visionary leadership of Michael and Catherine Fothergill, Ballet Arkansas has grown into one of the 75 largest ballet companies in the United States, according to the Dance Data Project. The company of 17 world-class dancers presents an annual season of vibrant programming that spans classical masterpieces, landmark works of American dance, and world premieres by some of the field’s most innovative choreographers. With a performance and broadcast reach extending to all 50 states and over 60 countries worldwide, Ballet Arkansas engages nearly 50,000 audience members each year and serves as a powerful cultural ambassador for the state of Arkansas.

Ballet Arkansas is proud to serve as the official dance presenter of the Robinson Center, Little Rock’s most prestigious performing arts venue, and to hold the distinguished designation of Arts Partner Company in Residence at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts. These partnerships amplify the company’s capacity to deliver high-caliber, multidisciplinary programming to diverse audiences while deepening its integration within the state’s broader cultural ecosystem.

A recognized statewide leader in dance education, Ballet Arkansas is home to a thriving School for Dance that provides exceptional instruction to hundreds of students from diverse backgrounds. Led by a distinguished faculty, the School is complemented by the organization’s robust educational outreach initiatives, which engage more than 10,000 K–12 students annually. In addition, over 300 young dancers participate each year in Ballet Arkansas’s celebrated Community Cast productions, cultivating meaningful access to the performing arts and nurturing the next generation of artists and arts patrons across Arkansas.

# THE LIFE OF A PROFESSIONAL BALLET DANCER



Ballet Arkansas's company of 17 professional dancers are full-time, salaried employees who receive employment benefits and work a standard Monday–Friday schedule. Many are graduates of the nation's most prestigious university dance programs, while others have trained at some of America's finest ballet institutions.

Each day begins with a 90-minute ballet class to condition and prepare their bodies for the physical demands ahead. The remainder of the workday is dedicated to rehearsals, where—on average—it takes 25 hours of practice to learn just one hour of performance material. Once choreography is “staged,” dancers devote the rest of the rehearsal period to refining every detail for the audience's enjoyment. While they are artists, they are also professional athletes, balancing artistry with peak physical performance.

In addition to mastering thousands of intricate dance steps and precise musical phrasing, company members must memorize hundreds of light cues, navigate shifting formations, and bring each character to life with theatrical nuance. Producing any Ballet Arkansas production requires hundreds of hours of meticulous rehearsal.

In fact, a 2020 ranking by InsuranceProviders.com and the U.S. Department of Labor identified dance as the most physically demanding job in the United States. The intensity of the profession often leads dancers to retire from performing in their mid-thirties, transitioning to other roles within the arts.



## AUTHOR

Charles Perrault (12 January 1628 – 16 May 1703) was a French author and member of the Académie Française who helped establish the literary fairy tale as a genre. His 1697 collection *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Stories or Tales from Times Past) includes *La Belle au bois dormant* (The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood), the classic fairy tale that became the foundation for one of the world's most beloved ballets. In 1890, composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and choreographer Marius Petipa transformed Perrault's story into *The Sleeping Beauty*, which premiered at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg and remains a cornerstone of the classical ballet repertoire. Ballet Arkansas's production of *Sleeping Beauty* is inspired by Perrault's timeless fairy tale and the enduring artistic legacy of Tchaikovsky and Petipa.



## COMPOSER

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) studied at the Conservatory in St. Petersburg, Russia. Tchaikovsky is one of the most popular and influential of all romantic composers. His work is expressive, melodic, and grand in scale, with rich orchestrations. His output was prodigious and included chamber works, symphonies, concerti for various instruments, operas, and works for piano. His creations for ballet include Swan Lake, The Nutcracker, and The Sleeping Beauty



# THE STORY

## PROLOGUE & ACT I

### Prologue & Act I

A kingdom rejoices as King Florestan and Queen Florine celebrate the christening of their infant daughter, Princess Aurora. Fairy godmothers gather to bestow gifts of beauty, grace, joy, and virtue upon the young princess. The festivities are interrupted by the unexpected arrival of the wicked fairy Carabosse, who, having been excluded from the celebration, places a terrible curse upon Aurora: on her sixteenth birthday, she will prick her finger on a spindle and die. Before despair can take hold, the Lilac Fairy softens the curse, declaring that Aurora will not die but instead fall into a deep sleep, to be awakened only by true love's kiss.

Sixteen years later, the kingdom celebrates Aurora's birthday with music, dancing, and the arrival of four noble princes hoping to win her hand. As the festivities unfold, a mysterious old woman appears carrying a spindle. Curious, Aurora takes the spindle and accidentally pricks her finger, fulfilling Carabosse's curse. She collapses before the horrified court. The Lilac Fairy arrives to reassure the grieving king and queen, casting a spell that sends the entire kingdom into a peaceful slumber, where they will remain until the day Aurora is awakened and the prophecy is fulfilled.



## ACT II & III

### Act II

One hundred years have passed, and the enchanted kingdom lies hidden beneath a forest of thorns. While hunting nearby, Prince Désiré finds himself longing for a purpose beyond courtly life. The Lilac Fairy appears and reveals the vision of Princess Aurora, whose beauty and grace captivate the prince. Moved by the vision, he vows to find her.

Guided by the Lilac Fairy, Prince Désiré journeys through the enchanted forest to the sleeping castle. There, he confronts the lingering power of Carabosse and reaches Aurora's bedside. With a kiss, he breaks the spell, awakening the princess, her family, and the entire kingdom. Joyfully reunited, Aurora and Désiré pledge their love, and preparations begin for a grand royal wedding.

### Act III

The royal palace comes alive once more as the kingdom gathers to celebrate the wedding of Princess Aurora and Prince Désiré. Fairies return to offer their blessings, while beloved storybook characters—including Puss in Boots and the White Cat, Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, Cinderella and Prince Fortuné, and the Bluebird and Princess Florine—join the festivities with dazzling dances.

As the celebration reaches its magnificent finale, Aurora and Désiré are united in marriage, symbolizing the triumph of love, hope, and light over darkness. The kingdom rejoices as the timeless fairy tale concludes with a glorious celebration of happily ever after.



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

In addition to Ballet Arkansas's acclaimed company of professional dancers, *Sleeping Beauty* features more than 100 student and community performers from across Central Arkansas. Following a highly anticipated audition process, young dancers are cast in roles such as Fairies, Pages, Royal Attendants, Garland Waltz dancers, Jewel attendants, Woodland Creatures, Storybook Characters, and members of the Royal Court and Wedding Procession. Ballet Arkansas's professional artists bring the timeless fairy tale to life in the production's principal roles, including Princess Aurora, Prince Désiré, the Lilac Fairy, Carabosse, King Florestan, Queen Florine, Catalabutte, the Fairy Cavaliers, the Bluebird and Princess Florine, Puss in Boots and other featured fairy-tale characters. Together, student performers and professional artists share the stage in one of Arkansas's most spectacular classical ballet productions, celebrating artistry, mentorship, and the enduring magic of dance.

# QUESTIONS

## TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What are the overarching themes of *Sleeping Beauty*?
2. Was the story of *Sleeping Beauty* clearly portrayed through the dancers' movements and performances?
3. How did the performers use movement and expression to bring their characters to life?
4. How did the choreography help tell the story without spoken words?
5. Which scene was your favorite and why? Describe what happened and what made it memorable.
6. What impact did the costumes, scenery, lighting, and special effects have on your experience as an audience member?
7. How did the magical moments—such as Aurora's christening, the Lilac Fairy's blessing, or the enchanted sleep—come to life on stage?
8. How might dancers, choreographers, costume designers, and stage technicians use principles of STEM to create a successful ballet production?
9. What words or emotions would you use to describe the choreography throughout the ballet?
10. Describe the patterns, symmetry, and geometric shapes you noticed in the dancers' formations.
11. Which character was your favorite (Princess Aurora, Prince Désiré, the Lilac Fairy, Carabosse, King Florestan, Queen Florine, or one of the Storybook Characters)? Explain why.
12. How did Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's music enhance the story? Which musical moment stood out to you most?
13. How did the music, movement, and staging work together to create the magical atmosphere of the ballet?
14. Describe the sights and sounds of attending a live ballet performance in a theater.
15. What examples of theater technology (lighting, scenery, stage effects, costumes, props, or sound) did you observe during the performance?

# ETIQUETTE 101

## RULES FOR THE THEATER



Attending a ballet performance is much like going to the movies—only the magic is live. The lights will dim before the performance begins, and the theater will remain dark until the end, except during intermission. Audience members are expected to sit quietly while the dancers perform, with applause warmly welcomed at the conclusion of each scene. However, loud expressions such as shouting, whistling, or screaming are discouraged, as they can distract both performers and fellow audience members.

Guests are encouraged to dress comfortably, keeping in mind that food, beverages, and chewing gum are not permitted inside the auditorium. Restroom visits are allowed as needed, but should be done quietly and with minimal disruption. Because all performance material is protected by copyright, photography and video recording are strictly prohibited.

### Rules of the Theater

- Avoid Distractions – Silence or turn off your phone and give the performers your full attention.
- Open Your Mind – Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of the performance, and enjoy forming your own interpretations.
- Be a Courteous Participant – Follow audience guidelines at all times to ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone.
- Enjoy the Show!



# SHARE THE BEAUTY OF SLEEPING BEAUTY WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

Friday February 19, 2027 • 10:30 a.m.

Robinson Center, Little Rock

A cornerstone of the classical ballet repertoire, *Sleeping Beauty* is one of the world's most celebrated fairy tale ballets. Ballet Arkansas brings this timeless masterpiece to life with its acclaimed professional company, featuring Tchaikovsky's glorious score, spectacular costumes, breathtaking sets, and exquisite choreography. Filled with enchantment, romance, and unforgettable characters, *Sleeping Beauty* offers an extraordinary theatrical experience for audiences of every generation.

Tickets: \$8 Student & \$10 Educator