

2 December 2009

The Sleeping Beauty

Timeless smash hit returns to enchant audiences

"A feast for ballet fans and a delightful fantasy for novices.... full of show-stopping moments of technical wonder"
Sunday Herald Sun September 2009

Sydney audiences have **SOLD OUT The Australian Ballet's return season of Stanton Welch's masterpiece *The Sleeping Beauty* - as the company prepares to bring the production to the Opera House from 4 December.**

Premiering in 2005, this dazzling interpretation of a classic favourite struck a powerful chord with the public.

Achieving critical and audience acclaim, *The Sleeping Beauty* is a lavish version of the traditional showpiece created by The Australian Ballet's Resident Choreographer and Artistic Director of Houston Ballet, Stanton Welch, and eminent designer Kristian Fredrikson. It is beautifully enhanced by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's rich score.

On creation of his version Welch said: "I felt that *The Sleeping Beauty* was becoming a lost classic. I wanted to bring back a sense of excitement and adventure."

The Sleeping Beauty features some of the very last sets and costumes created by the visionary Fredrikson before his death in November 2005. For this production he created rich, colourful and opulent sets and costumes - a magical and exotic world influenced by the East on a grand scale.

Shortly before his death Fredrikson said: "This is the greatest epic about the triumph of good over evil. *The Sleeping Beauty* is the grandmother of all ballets."

The Australian Ballet's full company of 67 dancers will bring numerous character roles to life including charming animals, irresistible fairies, and the ravishing baddie Carabosse.

Artistic Director David McAllister said *The Sleeping Beauty* provided many opportunities for each dancer to shine. "It's wonderful to have such a stunning production which showcases the amazing talent in the company!" he said.

Former Sydney boy and Principal Artist with The Royal Ballet in London, **Steven McRae**, will join The Australian Ballet in Sydney to star in select performances at the Sydney Opera House.

With its theatrical magic and cinematic quality *The Sleeping Beauty* promises to be the most extravagant dance event of the year.

The story

In this production, the original classic tale of Princess Aurora's 100-year sleep by French author Charles Perrault is given a fresh coat of paint.

The Sleeping Beauty is a dramatic adventure story about two fairies - Summer and Winter - and the fight to ensure Princess Aurora is locked away in ice for 100 years, dooming the kingdom to perpetual darkness.

Only the Prince can rescue Aurora from captivity, bringing dawn to another day. In Welch's 2005 interpretation, this timeless fairytale becomes a greater story about the nature of good and evil, replete with romance, enchantment, and three acts of beautiful dancing.

Welch infused the tale with fresh, fiendishly difficult choreography and brought to life a cast of unforgettable characters. Fredrikson, meanwhile, conjured a series of opulent fantasy worlds, from the gilded to the glacial, evoking the exoticism of the Orient and the Middle East.

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Sydney, Opera Theatre, Sydney Opera House

4-23 December 2009

with the Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra

Melbourne, State Theatre, the Arts Centre

9-19 September 2009

Bookings: australianballet.com.au 1300 369 741

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About the production

The 'big three' Tchaikovsky ballets, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, were all staged by the Ballets Russes companies. They also have a very special place in The Australian Ballet's repertoire, gracing the stage in many guises since the company began its life with a performance of *Swan Lake* in 1962.

In 2005 The Australian Ballet commissioned Stanton Welch to bring his interpretation of *The Sleeping Beauty* to the stage. Like Diaghilev's production, The Australian Ballet's new '*Beauty*' was a daring undertaking, but one that paid off handsomely for audiences.

The ballet was The Australian Ballet's biggest to date, with over 300 costumes and four fully realised sets, including a palace, an enchanted forest and a frozen wonderland.

Sadly, Kristian Fredrikson passed away soon after the premiere, but his designs remain an unforgettable testament to his genius.

Did you know?

- *The Sleeping Beauty* ballet first appeared in 1890 at the Maryinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, and was an exemplary collaboration between choreographer Marius Petipa and composer Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.
- The score for *The Sleeping Beauty* is considered to be one of the greatest ever written for ballet.
- *The Sleeping Beauty* has had many incarnations since its 1890 premiere, including productions by Sergei Diaghilev, Kenneth MacMillan and Rudolf Nureyev.
- The Australian Ballet has previously performed two versions of *The Sleeping Beauty* – Dame Peggy van Praagh and Sir Robert Helpmann's in 1973 and Maina Gielgud's in 1984.

Credits

Choreography Stanton Welch, after Marius Petipa
Music Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Set and costume design Kristian Fredrikson
Design associate Fiona Reilly
Lighting design John Rayment

Steven McRae's visit to Australia is funded by the Joan & Peter Clemenger Trust.

What the critics said

"... thoroughly enchanting ... Beautiful to look at but also beautifully danced." *The Daily Telegraph*

"Stylish and stunning. The stagecraft is first rate; the costumes are simply amazing; Stanton Welch's direction is assured." *Herald Sun*

"... a dazzling Aurora australis" *The Sunday Age*

"There is a great deal to like about this production." *The Age*

"A stunning production from a company at its peak." *Sunday Herald Sun*

- ends -

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