

Dear Educators,

Oregon Ballet Theatre opens the 2010-2011 season with a cherished classic, *The Sleeping Beauty*. The story's timeless theme of good over evil is brilliantly characterized by OBT's Artistic Director, Christopher Stowell, in choreography drawn from Marius Petipa's original 1890 production, and infused with fresh new choreography showcasing the skills and nuances of today's dancers. The music, composed specifically for the ballet by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, is one of ballets greatest scores. Mr. Stowell states, "If anyone can conjure up a better sound-scape for a fairytale, I want to hear it." The lavish costumes and décor for OBT's production are based on the opulence of European aristocratic courts from a bygone era. This SPS Study Guide aims to help educators maximize students' enjoyment and understanding of the performance by getting them thinking about *what a ballet is made of*.



Photo by Joni Kabana

## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

#### THE STORY

*The Sleeping Beauty* ballet is based on a tale that has been told in varied ways for over 300 years. In 1697 Charles Perrault published a little book in French entitled, *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (Stories or Tales from Times Past, with Morals; Tales of Mother Goose). It included the story, *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*.) In 1812, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, both scholars in linguistics, folklore, and medieval studies published a book of folktales called *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children and Household Tales*) which included *The Brier Rose*. Both stories can be found today.



Pic credit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleeping\\_Beauty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleeping_Beauty)

#### THE STUDY GUIDE DIVIDES IN TWO:

**Know Before You Go**—information and activities important to consider before you go to the performance

**Connections & Reflections**—information, activities, and questions to explore before and/or after the performance

☺ This symbol points out activities or questions for students

Today, one hundred and twenty years after Russian audiences watched the first Princess Aurora prick her finger and gracefully fall into a century-long sleep, I invite you and your students to join artistic tradition with current education to enjoy the enchantment of Oregon Ballet Theatre's *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Kasandra Gruener, MA  
Director of Education and Outreach



Yuka Iino / Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert

☺ Here are two online versions.

Charles Perrault *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*  
<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault01.html>

Grimms Brothers. #50- *Little Brier Rose*  
<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimmtales.html>

# SYNOPSIS

## For OBT'S *The Sleeping Beauty*

### PROLOGUE: THE CHRISTENING

King Florestan's court gathers for the christening of his daughter, Princess Aurora. As fairy godmothers present gifts which fortell Aurora's elegant attributes, the festivities are interrupted by the arrival of the evil fairy Carabosse, irate that she was not invited. She bears no gift, she informs the Queen, but a curse. On Aurora's sixteenth birthday, she will pierce her finger on a spindle and die. The benevolent Lilac Fairy intervenes with her gift—a reprieve from death. Aurora will not die, but will sleep for 100 years, to be awakened by a Prince's kiss.

### ACT I: THE SPELL

At Princess Aurora's 16th birthday celebration, she accepts a rose from four princes who seek her hand in marriage. A mysterious guest arrives and gives Aurora a bouquet. The guest is Carabosse, who has hidden a spindle among the blossoms. The unsuspecting Aurora pierces her finger and seems to die. As the court is thrown into chaos, the Lilac Fairy fulfills her promise of reprieve. She weaves a spell of sleep over Aurora and everyone at court, and enfolds the palace in a forest of lilacs and vines.

### ACT II: THE VISION

A century later, Prince Florimund and his retinue are hunting, but the Prince is distracted, dreaming of ideal love. The Lilac Fairy appears and shows him a vision of Princess Aurora, the woman of his dreams. The Prince begs to find this beauty, and the Lilac Fairy takes him to the palace where Aurora lies sleeping. Florimund tries in vain to rouse her, until it occurs to him to awaken Aurora with a kiss. The spell is broken.

### ACT III: AURORA'S WEDDING

Fairy tale characters join the court to celebrate the wedding of Princess Aurora and Prince Florimund with dancing. All rejoice that good has prevailed over evil. The marriage of Aurora and Florimund restores the kingdom to balance and hope for a bright future.



Alison Roper and Lucas Threefoot / Photo by Blaine Truitt Covert

## THE PERFORMANCE

The full-length version of the story-ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* takes nearly 3 hours to perform. Full-length ballets tell a story with stylized and expressive movements—ballet steps and arm gestures—that interplay with original music composed to match the mood and actions of the story. Costumes and scenery add to the telling. We say, “telling,” but full-length ballets don’t have any talking in them—ballet dancers don’t use their voices to tell the story, they use their bodies, often times employing a special type of movement language called mime. The Student Performance Series is designed to engage and inform audiences new to ballet and is only one hour long. Therefore, in order to tell the story, OBT will perform dance and mime excerpts from the full-length version with the inclusion of a narrator.

👍 Go to the educational resources page on the OBT website ([www.obt.org/outreach\\_resources.html](http://www.obt.org/outreach_resources.html)) and download the “[Sleeping Beauty Mime.pdf](#)” to learn some of the movement language in the performance. TRY IT OUT!

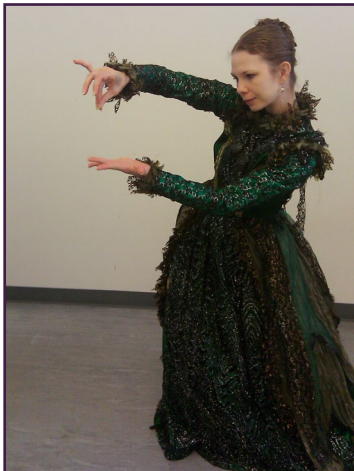
👍 Visit these websites to watch a mime of the evil fairy’s curse:

🖱️ <http://www.abt.org/education/dictionary/index.html>  
click on “Mime” in the left-hand column, then click on “Mime from The Sleeping Beauty Prologue”

🖱️ <http://www.roh.org.uk/video/>  
Look at the left hand column and click on “Highlights” then find “Sleeping Beauty”. There you will see a video of Royal Ballet’s Artistic Director Dame Monica Mason training a dancer in the character role of Carabosse.



Candace Bouchard as The Lilac Fairy (left) and Gavin Larsen as Carabosse (right) performing a mime of the curse from *The Sleeping Beauty*.



**FACT:** Petipa choreographed *The Sleeping Beauty* when he was 70 years old.

## CONNECTIONS & REFLECTIONS

### CHOREOGRAPHY

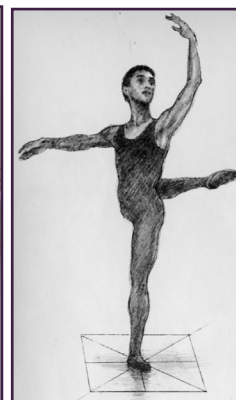
Marius Petipa was the original choreographer for *The Sleeping Beauty*. He was the Ballet Master of the Czar’s Imperial Theatres in Russia. Dance Critic Arlene Croce wrote that the ballet, was “a masterpiece of world theatre.” OBT’s Dance Historian Linda Besant points out that each choreographer must “decide how faithful to remain to Petipa’s definitive original.” In an interview with Besant, Stowell stated, “I’ve actually changed my mind over time about how reverent to be. As I was getting steeped in the tradition, I thought you should never change anything. Now, I think everything is possible, because the ballet needs to live on.” Besant believes that Petipa would have agreed wholeheartedly with Stowell’s approach since Petipa stated, “The talented balletmaster, reviving earlier ballets, will create dances in accordance with his own fantasy, his talent and the tastes of the public of his own time, and not come to expend his time and effort copying what was done by others.”

👍 Think of a fairy tale or other story and imagine how you would move your body if you were one of the characters. Write about the special ways that you would move.

👍 One of the famous poses in the ballet is called attitude. It is a pose that has changed somewhat over the years. The dancer stands on one leg with the other leg lifted toward the back of the body. The lifted leg is bent at a 90° angle.

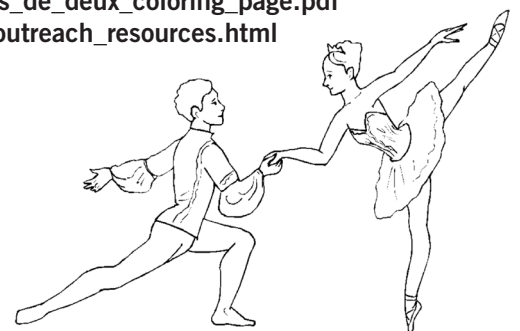


Gavin Larsen



dancers en attitude

👍 The ballet includes special dances for a man and a woman called *Pas De Deux*. Download a line drawing to color called “[pas\\_de\\_deux\\_coloring\\_page.pdf](#)” at [www.obt.org/outreach\\_resources.html](http://www.obt.org/outreach_resources.html)





**MUSIC**

Peter Illych Tchaikovsky composed over 3 hours of music for *The Sleeping Beauty*. As was standard procedure at that time, the choreographer, Petipa, supplied Tchaikovsky with detailed instructions for the score. For example, at the point in Act I where Princess Aurora pricks her finger, Petipa requested “a gay and very songful motive. When **counting in 3/4** begins, Aurora seizes the spindle, which she waves like a scepter—32 **bars**. Suddenly (a pause) pain! Blood! 8 **bars** of **4/4, largo**.”

Tchaikovsky immediately warmed to the assignment. “The subject is so poetic, so grateful for music,” he said, “that I have worked on it with delight, and written it with the warmth and enthusiasm upon which the worth of a composition so much depends.” His music sometimes overran Petipa’s instructions—for the “Garland Waltz,” where Petipa requested 16 **bars** of introduction and 150 **bars** of waltz, Tchaikovsky wrote 36 **bars** of introduction and 261 for waltzing.

👍 Discover music terms: **Counting in 3/4**-- groups of 3 quarter notes to each measure—a waltz is counted 1-2-3, 1-2-3...

**Bars**—another word for a measure; each group of 3 beats equals one bar in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time

**4/4**—4 quarter notes to the bar. This would be counted 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4.... **largo**—done slowly

👍 Do the math! How many total counts is “8 bars of 4/4”? (answer  $4 \times 8 = 32$ ) How about “150 bars of waltz” (3/4)? (answer  $150 \times 3 = 450$ )

Most choreographers eliminate some parts of the score, shortening it for the tastes of today’s audiences. Stowell worked with OBT’s Music Director Niel DePonte to reduce the score in a way that eliminates repetition yet intensifies the overall impact.

👍 Try to cut a section of music from a song you know, like “Sing a Song of Sixpence” or the “Star Spangled Banner,” and then sing it the shorter way. It works to cut out some parts better than other parts.

👍 Modern day animated films of fairy stories like *Shrek* have music in them. In fact most films and video games have music in them. Does it help convey the story? Is music used in the same way for a ballet?

**BALLET VS. DISNEY**

Though the tale is old, “Sleeping Beauty” continues to be explored in literature and film—for many, it is best known from Walt Disney’s hallmark 1959 animated film. OBT’s ballet and the Disney film have similarities (both use the Tchaikovsky score) and differences (words were added to some of the melodies for the Disney film). There are differences in the characters, too: in the ballet the evil fairy is named Carabosse after the old French tale, not Maleficent; the ballet does not have a dragon; in the ballet The Lilac Fairy replaces Disney’s Flora, Fauna and Merryweather as the good fairy who adjusts the curse; and Aurora does not prick her finger at a spinning wheel in the ballet version—you will have to see the performance to find out what happens.

👍 At the performance: Notice how Princess Aurora falls under the evil spell. If you were the choreographer, how might you do it?

👍 Students might watch the Disney movie before the OBT performance and then talk about what was the same or different.

**SLEEPING BEAUTY IN LITERATURE**

Current literature for children and young adults still makes reference to this ancient story. The reference can be straight forward, such as the book written and illustrated by third grader Bonnie Alise Leggat, *Punt, Pass, Point!*, about a little girl who loves to play football but ends up dancing in a production of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Or the reference can be complex and thought provoking such as in the 1992 award winning, young adult book by Jane Yolen entitled *Brier Rose*, which explores the Holocaust through subtle connections to the Grimm Brothers’ Germanic fairytale of the same name. There are writings for educators, too, that suggest that stories like *Sleeping Beauty* undermine children’s understanding of what it is to become an adult in our time. *The Sleeping Beauty* remains a thing to discover, to think and wonder about—whether it be about the meaning of the story or the beauty of its portrayal.

Lord Alfred Tennyson wrote a poem inspired by one part of the story—Aurora’s long sleep.

🌐 <http://www.online-literature.com/tennyson/4077/>

**THE SLEEPING BEAUTY**

By Lord Alfred Tennyson

Year after year unto her feet, She lying on her couch alone,  
Across the purpled coverlet,  
The maiden’s jet-black hair has grown,  
On either side her tranced form  
Forth streaming from a braid of pearl:  
The slumbrous light is rich and warm,  
And moves not on the rounded curl.

The silk star-broider’d coverlid  
Unto her limbs itself doth mould  
Languidly ever; and, amid  
Her full black ringlets downward roll’d,  
Gloweth forth each softly-shadow’d arm,  
With bracelets of the diamond bright:  
Her constant beauty doth inform  
Stillness with love, and day with light.

She sleeps: her breathings are not heard  
In palace chambers far apart.  
The fragrant tresses are not stirr’d  
That lie upon her charmed heart.  
She sleeps: on either hand upswells  
The gold-fringed pillow lightly prest:  
She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells  
A perfect form in perfect rest.

👍 Think about the story. Imagine if it were to occur in another time or place, with different characters. For example, how would the story go if it occurred during the Civil War, or in weightless outer space, or if the players were all butterflies or banana slugs! (Don't hesitate to send OBT a copy of the story!)

👍 Write a poem after seeing the ballet!



Borrowed costumes awaiting altering in the hallway at OBT Studios.

## SCENERY AND COSTUMES

The scenery and costumes for OBT's production are borrowed from Ballet West in Salt Lake City, Utah. *The Sleeping Beauty* uses a lot of costumes. There are so many costumes that OBT needed to store them all over their studio and office building! At the theater, the dancers need to change their costumes very fast, in fact they almost need to choreograph how they change their clothes, trying to figure out the quickest way to do it. They can not be late to go onstage!

*The Sleeping Beauty* costumes on racks in the lobby at OBT Studios.



👍 Time yourself changing your costume! Over you clothes, put on a coat, socks, shoes, gloves, scarf, and hat. Set out another coat, socks, shoes, gloves, scarf, and hat. Time yourself taking off one "costume" and putting another "costume" on—be sure to button, tie, or zip everything and get it on perfectly. See if you can get faster at it—what can be done to make it faster? Think about how the "costume" is preset. Have a great time!

**FACT:** *Sleeping Beauty* was first performed in St. Petersburg in 1890. Around that time period Van Gogh painted *Starry Night*, the Eiffel Tower was designed and built, rubber gloves were used for the first time in surgery, Idaho and Wyoming were admitted as the 43rd and 44th states, Yosemite became a national park, Wounded Knee Massacre occurred in South Dakota, and the first gasoline-powered car made its debut in Springfield, Massachusetts.

## AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

### Reflection Activity – A B A Compositional form

Tell students that they are going to remember the ballet with their bodies—no words—and eventually share with the class. Divide the students into groups of 5 or 6 individuals.

**Part A:** Ask students to think about what they saw on their field trip to the ballet. Ask them to think about one pose that they remembered seeing. Each student will create their own pose. On the clap of teacher's hand – everyone makes their pose and freezes it. Ask them to arrange themselves into a pleasing composition or choose one person in each group to be the "choreographer." That person will now arrange everyone's pose into an interesting composition.

**Part B:** Have students think up a traveling movement from the ballet, this time it can actually move around the group (not a pose). On the clap, everyone does it. On the next clap they all stop. (Due to laughter, sometimes it is easier to use a drum or a bell or woodblocks to be the signal.)

**Part A:** Repeat of the original "A" so, at the end, each person must return to the opening shape.

Quickly have each group take turns performing their ABA *Sleeping Beauty* "dance" for the class. Be sure to set it up by reminding students about what it means to be a respectful audience. Students might discuss what they saw in each other's dances.

## ARTS EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Article 27 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

**Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.**

For full text go to  <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

## CONTENT STANDARDS

This *Student Performance Series* and Study Guide provide opportunity for engaging in Oregon Content Standards for the Arts, especially:

**Historical and Cultural Perspective:** Understand relationships of works of art to their social, historical, and cultural context, and the influence of arts on individuals, communities and cultures.

**Aesthetics and Criticism:** Respond to and analyze works of art, based on essential elements, organizational principles and aesthetic criteria.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BALLET

### Why do the guys wear tights?

Almost every activity requires a special uniform of some kind. Just as football players, wrestlers, and baseball players wear stretchy material to help them move with flexibility and speed, ballet dancers often wear stretchy tights so they are able to leap, kick, and stretch as they dance. Another reason tights are worn is so the audience can see the incredible leg muscles that allow them to jump so high.

### How do the ballet dancers stand on their toes?

Female ballet dancers wear special shoes called "pointe shoes" to help them achieve dancing on the tips of their toes. Pointe shoes are hard at the ends, and are handmade with layers of satin, glue and leather. Dancers must take several years of ballet lessons before they are allowed to wear pointe shoes. With hard work and good training to develop strong ankles and feet, most young ballet students begin working *en pointe* at age 11 or 12.

### This ballet has no plot! Or does it?

Some do, and some don't. Ballets with plots, like *The Nutcracker*, are called story ballets. There are also abstract ballets, with a focus on movement instead of a specific story. Abstract ballets are meant to evoke ideas or emotions, and the audience can interpret them many different ways.

### How old are the dancers?

Oregon Ballet Theatre's professional company members range in age from 18 to 34, but most are in their early-to-mid-20s. A few of the apprentices, however, are still in high school. All of the dancers began studying ballet when they were children, as it takes many years of dedication to become a professional ballet dancer.

### How often do they practice?

Ballet dancers take class every morning for 1.5 hours, and then they rehearse all day. They have Sundays and sometimes Saturdays off, and they have a lunch break. Dancing is their full-time job.

### Where are the dancers from?

Oregon Ballet Theatre dancers come from all around the world: Japan, Moldova, and different areas within the United States. There are dancers from California, Texas, Massachusetts, South Carolina, New York, and several who grew up right here in Portland.

### APPLAUSE

**DO** clap after a really spectacular movement. Laugh if the situation onstage is funny. Applaud and say "Bravo!" at the end.

**DON'T** boo, whistle, hiss or make noise during the performance. It is distracting and disrespectful of the performers and to your neighbors in the audience.

### FOOD

**DO** eat before you get to the theater if you think you might get hungry before the performance is over.

**DON'T** bring food or gum into the seating area. It makes noise, trash, and distractions.

### TALKING

**DO** wait. Make a note on your program or a piece of paper if you want to remember something. Tell your friend after the ballet is over.

**DON'T** whisper or discuss things with other people during the performance. Your friends may want to listen to the music or pay attention to the dancers' movement or the story.

### DRESS & BACKPACKS

**DO** dress neatly as a sign of respect to the artists and the theater.

**DON'T** wear over-powering perfume, big hats, or jingly bracelets. Leave backpacks at school. If you must bring one, you'll be asked to leave it in the lobby.

### CELL PHONES, CAMERAS, IPODS, MP3 PLAYERS, ETC.

**DO** relax when the lights in the house (seating area) get dark. Sit back and enjoy the live performance with your eyes, ears, and imagination.

**DON'T** bring electronic devices into the theater. The noise and clicking can be distracting to your neighbors, and camera flashes can be dangerous to the dancers.