



# THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

TCHAIKOVSKY

NARRATOR: JOHN FLINDERS

**SATURDAY 2 DECEMBER 2023 7:30pm**

**All Saints West Dulwich  
Lovlace Road, SE21 8JY**

**Conductor: Chris Stark  
Leader: Paula Tysall**

[www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk](http://www.dulwichsymphonyorchestra.org.uk)

**PROLOGUE: A  
Christening and a Curse**

Introduction

Scène dansante

Pas de six: the fairies' gifts

Finale

**ACT 1: The Spinning  
Wheel**

Scène

Valse

Scène

Dance of the maids of  
honour; Aurora's variation I

Finale

**Interval**

**ACT 2: The Spell is  
Broken**

Entr'acte

Scène

Aurora and the Prince

Aurora's variation II

Scène

Panorama

Entr'acte symphonique

Finale

**ACT 3: Celebration**

Polacca

Valse: the gold and sapphire  
fairies

Finale

Apotheosis

**THE SLEEPING BEAUTY**

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

Despite his reputation as the greatest of ballet composers, Tchaikovsky wrote only three ballets. In 1888, he was commissioned to write *The Sleeping Beauty* by the director of St Petersburg's Imperial Marinsky Theatre, Ivan Vsevolozhsky. Vsevolozhsky wanted to commission a ballet which could be set in the era of Louis XIV to capture the courtly spirit of Lully and Rameau, and Tchaikovsky was regarded as the most classical of contemporary Russian composers, in contrast to composers in the nationalist style such as Rimsky Korsakov, Mussorgsky and Borodin.

Vsevolozhsky's libretto was based on a fairy tale, *La belle au bois dormant* ('The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods'), in the version published by Charles Perrault in 1697 in a collection which also included what became the standard versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Bluebeard*, *Puss in Boots* and *Cinderella*. *The Sleeping Beauty* was the second of Tchaikovsky's ballet scores, composed between *Swan Lake* (1876) and *The Nutcracker* (1892). Tchaikovsky was evidently very happy with the libretto. On receiving it, he wrote to Vsevolozhsky 'I am delighted and enchanted beyond all description. It suits me perfectly and I ask nothing more than to make music for it. This delicious subject could not possibly have been better adapted for the stage.'



Tchaikovsky's score admirably met Vsevolozhsky's wish for a courtly spectacle, and in its full version, which is nearly three hours long, there is more courtly dancing than Gothic horror. The libretto completely omits the dark second part of Perrault's story, in which the prince's mother turns out to be an ogre and suffers a dreadful fate. The conflict of good and evil is subtly represented in Tchaikovsky's score, and the triumph of good celebrated enthusiastically.

Tchaikovsky worked closely on the score with the French choreographer Marius Petipa, whose daughter, Marie, danced the role of the Lilac Fairy in the first production. By 1888, Tchaikovsky's fame as a composer meant that he was travelling extensively in Europe. While much of the ballet was composed at his summer house near Moscow, some of it was written in Marseilles and Constantinople – and some on the boat journey between the two cities. The composition was completed between that of the 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony (1888) and the opera *The Queen of Spades* (1890).

After the first performance in 1890, *Sleeping Beauty* became a favourite of the St Petersburg audience but it only achieved the status of a standard in the west in the 1920s. Excerpts were staged in London in 1911 by Diaghilev's company with Nijinsky as the Prince and Anna Pavlova toured the Americas with a 48-minute version between 1914 and 1920. The first full production in England was given at the Alhambra Theatre, Leicester Square in 1921, by the Ballet Russe with Diaghilev's choreography and the score reorchestrated by Stravinsky.

For Stravinsky, in exile after the Russian Revolution, the music of the ballet recalled the cultural life of the old St Petersburg. He wrote a letter to Diaghilev which was published in *The Times* about *Sleeping Beauty*, praising it as ‘the most authentic expression of the epoch in our Russian life that we call the “Petersburg period”’. In Stravinsky’s view, the *Sleeping Beauty* was a convincing example of Tchaikovsky’s creative power, demonstrating his ability to summon up the spirit of the age of Louis XIV without resorting to pastiche.



*Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky*

Stravinsky was not the only major Russian composer to be involved with *Sleeping Beauty*. In 1890, the 18-year-old Rachmaninov was commissioned to arrange the ballet for piano (four hands). Tchaikovsky was disappointed and found that Rachmaninov’s work was “absolutely lacking in courage, initiative and *creativity!!!*”. Nevertheless, Rachmaninov’s arrangement remains in print and on record to this day.

The legend of the sleeping princess has attracted authors – and critics – since the Middle Ages. For the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Austrian psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim the myth was an exploration of a girl’s emergence from childhood. Another critical tradition interprets the story in terms of archetypal forces with Aurora as the earth goddess, her sleep as winter and the awakening as the coming of spring. Feminist critics have deplored the passive role of Aurora and her lack of agency - even the wilfulness which leads to her pricking her finger is in fulfilment of Carabosse’s curse. Or as Simone de Beauvoir puts it,

“Woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, she who receives and submits. In song and story the young man is seen departing adventurously in search of a woman; he slays the dragons and giants; she is locked in a tower, a palace, a garden, a cave, she is chained to a rock, a captive, sound asleep: she waits.”

Even so, *Sleeping Beauty* has strong female characters in Carabosse, the disruptor of the courtly order, and her foil, the Lilac Fairy, who leads the prince through the forest of thorns to restore order and renew life in the castle. In some interpretations she is taken to be the embodiment of wisdom. In her translations of Perrault, Angela Carter describes his fairies as having less the air of supernatural beings than that of ‘women of independent means who’ve done quite well for themselves, one way and another, and are prepared to help along a little sister who finds herself in difficulties.’ They are ‘personages as worldly-wise and self-confident as Mae West’.

The awakening of Aurora by a non-consensual kiss from a complete stranger has offended contemporary sensibilities. In his 2012 production at Sadler’s Wells, Matthew Bourne addressed this issue by giving the role of the awakener to a young gardener who had been Aurora’s sweetheart before she fell asleep. This would of course have meant that the gardener would have been some 120 years old at the time of the reawakening. Bourne overcame the difficulty which this presented for the plot by casting the fairies as vampires who, having taken possession of the gardener, and so making him one of the undead, duly capture the princess as well.



*Illustrations: Arthur Rackham*

We will be playing a selection which constitutes about half of the whole score. There are no vampires, nor any Mae West, in the narration spoken by John Flinders in our concert performance. Our text is largely taken from a nineteenth-century translation of Perrault and the retelling of the Brothers Grimm version by Charles Evans (1920) which was illustrated by Arthur Rackham. There is also a line from the Disney version (1959), but you will need to see if you can spot it. We have interpolated stanzas from Emma Lazarus’s *Chopin* (1880) and Tennyson’s *The Daydream* (1842) which he wrote for family amateur dramatics, the poet playing the part of the prince.

*Jeremy Crump*

**First Violins**

Paula Tysall (leader)  
 Helen Bartholomew  
 Chris Burns  
 Tessa Crilly  
 Janet Davies  
 Emma Owen  
 Piers Patten  
 Kate Vineall  
 Sappho Xenakis

**Second violins**

Jane Howard  
 Alex Britton  
 Rebecca Collen  
 Virginia Kennedy  
 Andrew McGregor  
 Julia Milne  
 Jessica Smith  
 Miranda Townsend

**Violas**

David Lawes  
 Sally Aiko  
 Joe Berry  
 Liz Cleary  
 Sophia Swanepoel  
 Imogen Tedbury  
 Sally Winter

**Cellos**

Nicky Jackson  
 Russell Ashley-Smith  
 Sarah Bort  
 Karen Bowman  
 Laura Bradley  
 Emma Geoghegan  
 Matt Heard  
 Catherine Johnson  
 Celia Kent

**Double basses**

Sam Wise  
 Chris Bond  
 Sylvain Letall

**Flutes**

Alison Gill  
 Sam Purser

**Piccolo**

Linda Penn

**Oboes**

Nicholas Mitchell  
 Louise Simon

**Cor anglais**

Ian Finn

**Clarinets**

Alex Fleming  
 Claire Richards

**Bassoons**

Jeremy Crump  
 Hilary Dodd

**Horns**

Mary Cowlett  
 Jerome Gaskell  
 Alec Johns  
 Henry Osmond

**Trumpets**

Susan Emmons  
 Christina Perrin

**Cornets**

John Paul de Soissons  
 Robin White

**Trombones**

Frances Barrett  
 Richard Buck

**Tuba**

Martin Oxenham

**Harp**

Olivia Jageurs

**Percussion**

Jon French  
 Daniel Gonzalez Estevez  
 Donal O'Neill

**Chris Stark** is based in South East London. He began as a cellist, turning to conducting whilst a choral scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge. As co-founder of the RPS Award Winning Multi-Story Orchestra, he has conducted all of the Orchestra's car park performances since their inception with The Rite of Spring in 2011, including celebrated performances at the BBC Proms. Away from Multi-Story, he works mostly in opera, for organisations that include Glyndebourne, Oper Köln, Garsington, ETO, OAE and Gurzenich Orchestra. Committed to community music, he is principal conductor of Ernest Read and Blackheath Halls Symphony Orchestras. He has recorded for NMC and broadcast with both Multi-Story and Aurora.

**John Flinders** studied at the University of York and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and has a wide-ranging career as soloist, accompanist, coach and teacher. In November 2022 he was the soloist in the world première of Piano Concerto No. 1 by Leigh O'Hara. Other solo performances have included Constant Lambert's The Rio Grande and piano concertos by Grieg (which he performed with DSO in 2018), Mozart and Rachmaninoff. Another of John's enthusiasms is the spoken word: in 2021 he narrated the DSO performance of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, and amongst other works he has also portrayed the Voice of God in Britten's Noye's Fludde. John is a coach and accompanist for the Guildhall School; he is a piano teacher, chamber music coach and accompanist at St Paul's Girls' School and is the accompanist for JAGS Choral Society, Allyn's Community Choir and the Pink Singers, Europe's longest-running LGBTQI+ chorus.

**Paula Tysall** studied violin at the Centre for Young Musicians, where she was awarded the Associated Board's Silver Medal, the Royal College of Music and the National Centre for Orchestral Studies. As a member of the New London Orchestra she has recorded for Hyperion Records, made broadcasts for the BBC and Classic FM, appeared at the Proms and in Matthew Bourne's award winning Swan Lake. She has played with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philharmonia and English National Ballet. She teaches at Westminster School and is a member of the Ashington, Beaufort and Allenby String Quartets.



## William Grant Still

Threnody: In memory of  
Jan Sibelius

## Ravel

Piano Concerto in G

## Sibelius

Symphony No. 1

**Saturday 23 March 2024**

**7:30 pm**

All Saints, West Dulwich

Lovelace Road

London SE21 8JY