

SLEEPING BEAUTY

The premier performance of *Sleeping Beauty* was held at Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia on January 15, 1890. The music of *Sleeping Beauty* was a collaboration between composer Pyotr (Peter) Tchaikovsky and choreographer Marius Petipa. This would be Tchaikovsky's second ballet, after *Swan Lake*.

The original story inspiration came from Charles Perrault's *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*. A lot of his fairy tale characters were used in the ballet such as Cinderella, Puss in Boots, and Little Red Riding Hood. Tchaikovsky also took inspiration from the Brothers Grimm version of the story, particularly the ending, where the entire kingdom falls asleep with her after she pricks her finger.

The story begins on a festive day. The King and Queen have welcomed their first child, Princess Aurora, and are holding a magnificent christening ceremony to honor her. Along with the most of the kingdom, the king and queen have invited six fairies who will bestow gifts unto the baby Aurora. Each fairy gives her a gift of a virtue or a positive trait. The gifts are sweetness, beauty, courage, musical talent and mischief. The most powerful fairy, the Lilac Fairy, is last to give her gift but before she can there is an interruption.

The evil fairy, Carabosse, arrives and she is furious. She was not invited to the christening and as punishment she curses the baby. Her curse is this: Aurora will grow up with all of the gifts that have been given her but on her sixteenth birthday she will prick her finger on a spindle and die. The Lilac Fairy tries to lift the curse but it is too powerful. She is able to soften it and instead when Aurora pricks her finger she and the rest of the kingdom will fall into a deep sleep that will last 100 years. Despite the king trying to get rid of all of the spindles in the kingdom, Aurora pricks her finger on one that was given to her as a present for her sixteenth birthday. The entire kingdom falls asleep and they are awoken 100 years later when a Prince finds the castle and kisses the Princess Aurora. The Prince and Princess are married.



Original cast members in costume for ACT I. In the center is Carlotta Brianza as Aurora. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia