

Giselle

Giselle is a romantic ballet that was first performed by a French ballet company called Ballet du Theatre de l'Academie Royale de Musique. They premiered the ballet at the Salle Le Peletier in Paris, France on June 28, 1841. *Giselle* became very popular and was soon being performed all over Europe and in the United States.

The composer of *Giselle* was Adolphe Adam who is also famous for writing the popular Christmas carol *O Holy Night*. The libretto or text of the ballet was written by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges and Theophile Gautier. They took their inspiration from a passage in Heinrich Heine's *De l'Allemagne*.

Jules Perrot and Jean Coralli were the original choreographers of the ballet. The role of Giselle was performed by Italian ballerina Carlotta Grisi. Most of the traditional choreography that is used today comes from Marius Petipa. He staged a new version of *Giselle* in St. Petersburg in 1903 for the popular ballerina Anna Pavlova.

Giselle is a story about a young peasant girl named, Giselle. She is a great beauty and despite having a weak heart, she loves to dance. At the village wine festival she meets a handsome peasant boy and the two get to know each other. The peasant boy pledges his love to Giselle who, in return, has also fallen in love with him. Giselle later learns that the peasant boy is actually a nobleman named Count Albrecht in disguise and that he is engaged to be married to someone else. Upon hearing the news, Giselle becomes mad with grief and ultimately dies from her broken heart.

Giselle is buried deep in the forest. Also in the forest are the Wilis. These are spirits of girls who haunt the forest. They have been betrayed by their faithless lovers and have died. Wilis like to lure men to dance with them until they die from exhaustion. Albrecht comes to mourn at Giselle's grave. The Queen of the Wilis, Myrtha, commands Giselle to come up from her grave to help the Wilis entice Albrecht to dance. Although she has been betrayed by him, Giselle still loves him and helps to keep him alive until dawn, when the Wilis lose their power.



Carlotta Grisi (photo from Wikipedia)