



Educating, Elevating, and Enriching
St. Louis through the Magic of Dance!

The Sleeping Beauty Offers St. Louis Top Production Standards

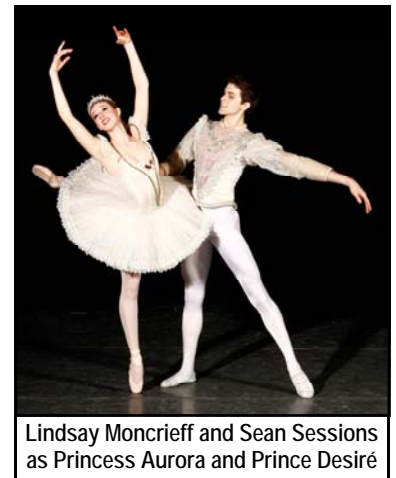
November 14, 2011: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From top to bottom, everything about Alexandra Ballet's upcoming production of *The Sleeping Beauty* promises to be spectacular! This season marks the first time in eight years that the award-winning dance company has brought the classical tale to the stage, and only the third time in the company's storied twenty-eight year history.

To do justice to this legendary full-length ballet, a company must have a large cadre of well-trained dancers, a stage large enough to accommodate them, another entire cast of actors and children, and the artistic and production staff able to handle them all. Oh, and it helps to have an incredibly gifted choreographer to work his magic with the dancers, and an artistic director with the vision and the ability to see it through to fruition.

Luckily for St. Louis, Alexandra Ballet has all that it needs and more to do it right in its 2012 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Of course, it all starts at the top, and at the top of Alexandra Ballet is the inimitable founder and artistic director, Alexandra Zaharias. Ms. Zaharias' bio is rife with honors and awards garnered in over fifty years of teaching and directing. Most notable among them are the Hellenic American Achievement Award for work in the arts in 1991, the Saint Louis Arts & Education Council Excellence in the Arts Award in 1991, and the Ageless-Remarkable St. Louisan Award in 2009.



Lindsay Moncrieff and Sean Sessions
as Princess Aurora and Prince Desiré

It didn't take long after creating her ballet company in 1984 for it to gain a reputation for excellence in dance performance. It's an Honor Company in Regional Dance America - MidStates Region, and has commissioned and premiered numerous award-winning works by renowned choreographers. Never one to rest on her laurels, Ms. Zaharias has continued to build her company and its affiliate school's reputations. In October, 2011, *Pointe Magazine* named Alexandra School of Ballet one of the seven most outstanding schools in the nation. Her dancers have routinely won awards and scholarships to continue training at prestigious summer programs. They've been honored at the Youth American Grand Prix Competitions, and have gone on to professional careers with such esteemed companies as Royal Birmingham Ballet (UK), American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Ballet Hispanico, and Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, to name a few.

It's easy to see that Alexandra Ballet dancers are prepared to show their training and preparation for this production.

Excellence attracts excellence. When it came to selecting a choreographer for this production, Artistic Director Alexandra Zaharias knew who she wanted. Marek Cholewa, Professor of Dance at the prestigious Butler University Dance Department and a 2001 Fulbright Scholar, is also a graduate of the legendary Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatoire in St. Petersburg, Russia, and former soloist with the National Ballet of Poland. His area of expertise is the full Vaganova syllabus (Russian ballet technique), and with a collaboration spanning over two decades with Alexandra Ballet, he was the natural choice to stage this classical fairy tale. Mr. Cholewa arrived in June to set the choreography on the company and the guest artists.

The difficult job of Stage Manager could only be given to longtime friend of Alexandra Ballet, Tim Hubbard. Mr. Hubbard is a former dancer and founding member of the Indianapolis Ballet Theatre, where he danced many featured and principal roles. In addition, he has been a national trainer for teachers at the Grammy Foundation, and now serves as adjunct professor in Arts Integration in the College of Education at Butler University. An educator, author, technician, and artist, Mr. Hubbard also coordinates the interactive presentation for Alexandra Ballet's free Young People's Performances called "What's Going On Back There?" which teaches students about the magic that happens backstage during a live fine arts performance.

What about the stage, itself? The performances will take place on the expansive and luxurious stage of one of the best venues in the entire St. Louis area, the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center on the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Alexandra

Ballet is proud to boast that it was the first ballet company to appear onstage at the Touhill in 2004. Since then, many companies have followed suit, including Moscow Ballet, Houston Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, and The Joffrey Ballet.



Alumna Andrea Lucas as
Lilac Fairy in AB's
2004 *The Sleeping Beauty*

Talented guest artists will join the company of dancers, and they bring with them experience, artistry, and a performance quality that will inspire the pre-professional dancers of Alexandra Ballet. The roles of Princess Aurora and Prince Desiré will be danced by Lindsay Moncrieff and Sean Sessions, courtesy Butler Ballet at Butler University. Joining them will be Garrett Glassman in the dynamic role of Bluebird. Mr. Glassman also appears courtesy of Butler Ballet.

A special guest artist this season will be Andrea Lucas in the role of the vengeful fairy, Carabosse. Ms. Lucas graduated from *Alexandra Ballet* in 2005, and subsequently earned a B.A. in Dance Pedagogy With Honors from Butler University in 2009, which she attended on Talent Award Scholarship. Ms. Lucas began her professional career with Portland Ballet in Maine in 2009, dancing principal roles in *The Nutcracker*, *Pas de Quatre*, and *Mozart's Requiem*, among others. In 2011, Andrea accepted a contract with The Georgia Ballet and appears in this production courtesy of The Georgia Ballet. In an interesting twist, Ms. Lucas performed the role of Lilac Fairy, the delicate epitome of love, for Alexandra Ballet's 2004 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, and returns to her alma mater this season to show her versatility as the cold-hearted, powerfully indignant Carabosse.

Of course, any top notch full-length ballet needs breathtaking scenery and costumes, and *The Sleeping Beauty* is no exception. How about opulent, hand-painted historic sets on loan from the George Verdak Trust, designed and produced by George Verdak, of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo fame? And would you like to see the dancers dressed in exquisite original costumes designed and produced by award-winning costume designer, Jude Bonnot? You've got it. Combined with the breathtaking and enchanting musical score by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the atmosphere at the Touhill is sure to be charged with an aura of magic and beauty.

Yes, the stage is set for a stunning production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, presented by Alexandra Ballet. Only one thing is missing... you! Tickets are on sale now, so get yours today. This ballet is the stunning tale of a party gone awry, a battle between good and evil, and the triumphant power of a single kiss. You don't want to miss it!

MainStage Public Performances

Touhill Performing Arts Center, UMSL Campus
Saturday, February 25, 2012, 7:30 pm
Sunday, February 26, 2012, 2:00 pm

Tickets:

Touhill Box Office at Touhill.org or 314-516-4949
Child: \$10 or Free with purchase of Adult Ticket
Adult: \$20 - \$30

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CONTACT:

Lisa Howe
alexandraballet@msn.com
314.469.6222

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visit alexandraballet.com or call 314-469-6222**

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