

Pacific Northwest Ballet presents:

The Sleeping Beauty

Thanks for joining Princess Aurora, Prince Florimund and the rest of the kingdom for this three-part look at one of our beloved ballets. We hope you enjoyed the show.

Reviews

Reviews are important to the arts as they can influence the public's decision to attend a performance. A review can be done formally (published in a newspaper or an online post) or informally (spoken to friends). Reviews describe the performance (look and feel) and attempt to give the reader (listener) the feeling of having been in attendance.

Spotlight on Moira Macdonald

Moira Macdonald is a reviewer at The Seattle Times who frequently reviews Pacific Northwest Ballet performances. You can find Moira's reviews each week in The Seattle Times.

Q: What made you want to be an entertainment reporter/reviewer?

Moira Macdonald: *I've always loved words and loved the performing arts, so to combine them felt like a natural fit. The first thing I ever reviewed in print was the classic ballet movie, "The Red Shoes," for which I wrote a little paragraph for Seattle Weekly when it was showing in a special screening at the Seattle Art Museum. (It's one of my favorite movies.) I went to the screening and saw that some people were holding pages they'd torn from the paper, with my review. It thrilled me to see that I could influence readers that way, encouraging them to see something they might not otherwise know about.*

Q: What is your favorite type of performance to review?

MM: *Any great performance! (Though it's much harder to review a brilliant performance than a mediocre one; the words aren't as easy to find.) But I especially love to review ballet, as I studied it for a very long time and it's one of the great passions in my life.*

Q: What types of things do you look at when you are doing a review?

MM: *Well, when reviewing a dance performance, you have to describe what*

the work looks like, evaluate how well it was done, provide some historical perspective, examine both the specifics of the choreography and the individual performances, and with any luck find a little poetry (it's important to remember that every live performance is utterly unique, and it's part of the reviewer's job to capture that magical quality). And you have to do it on deadline, and usually in about 12 inches! Not easy. But I try to capture the feeling of the performance, to give people a sense of what it felt like to be there watching.

Q: How do you decide if the performance gets a good review?

MM: *It's not so much a good review/bad review decision — there are so many different factors when watching dance. For example, a beautiful piece of choreography may be poorly danced, or*

a mediocre piece performed with great skill and feeling. I watch as carefully as I can, and report what I saw; readers can determine from there whether they want to attend.

Q: If you didn't like a performance, how do you break the bad news?

MM: *Honestly. But only part of the review is saying whether or not I liked it; much of it is trying to convey the overall look and feel of the performance.*

Q: What advice do you have for someone writing their first review?

MM: *I like the advice Agnes de Mille gives to aspiring dance critics in her book, "To a Young Dancer": Always arrive at the theater rested, well fed, and hopeful. Otherwise: be honest, do your research, and don't be afraid to dance with words.*



PNB Company dancers in Ronald Hynd's "The Sleeping Beauty." (Photo © Angela Sterling)



PNB principal dancer Mara Vinson as Aurora in Ronald Hynd's "The Sleeping Beauty." (Photo © Angela Sterling)

Create your own review

Use the prompts below to write your own review of "The Sleeping Beauty."

Movement:

Did the choreography fit the mood of each scene?

Were parts of the choreography confusing to you? Why?

Would you have made any changes?

Costumes:

How were the costume designs and colors different in each act?

What kinds of costumes did you see?

Which costumes were your favorites?

Music:

How was the music different in each act? The same?

Do you think the music was effective?

Set:

What did the sets look like?

How were the sets and lights different for each act and why?

Did the set design coordinate with the costume design?

Considering the entire performance:

Did all of the elements work together to create a successful performance?

If you were the choreographer or artistic director, what would you do?

What elements would you keep the same? What would you change?

How did the performance affect your mood? Did it make you happy? Sad? Neither?



Inspiring Students To Learn

You can find "The Sleeping Beauty's" latest chapter location in the newspaper at seattletimes.com/nie.

Newspapers In Education (NIE) provides teachers and students in the Pacific Northwest with electronic access to the newspaper, lesson plans and curricula. To register for NIE, e-mail nie@seattletimes.com or call 206/652-6290.



Pacific Northwest Ballet will be performing "The Sleeping Beauty" starting February 4. To learn more about these performances and the EYES ON DANCE student matinee on February 12, visit pnb.org. Teachers, you can find more resources and activities at pnb.org/Community/Teacher/ or pnb.org.

This is the final episode. Thanks for reading.