No cover image available

Oxford Handbooks Online: Music: Scholarly Research Reviews

Oxford Handbooks Editorial Board

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935321.001.0001

Published: 2012 **Online ISBN:** 9780199935321 **Print ISBN:** 9780199935321

CHAPTER

New Life for Character and Story in *Sleeping Beauty*

Marian Smith

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935321.013.172

Published: 06 March 2017

Abstract

Alexei Ratmansky's production of *Sleeping Beauty* was wrought with careful attention to its music and the manuscripts that preserve Petipa's choreography. This article begins by touching generally on some aspects of the original ballet that Ratmansky has restored: its technique and style, large multi-generational cast, and full embrace of character dancing. Next, it focuses on musical and choreographic characterizations of the felicitous royal family and their servant Catalabutte and their domestic interactions. Then, it considers Ratmansky's effective use of the episodes of tension and release that Petipa and Tchaikovsky created to push the action forward. It ends with a short discussion of seeming conflicts between choreography and music during musical codettas, These few details show in small part how, in this production, Ratmansky has exposed anew the dramaturgical brilliance of Tchaikovsky and Petipa, and restored to the stage a *Beauty* that brings story and character to life with extraordinary vividness.

Keywords: ballet, character dance, Ratmansky, Maryinsky, Kirov, Tchaikovsky, Tatiana Ratmansky, Rose Adagio, Hilarion, Giselle, Sleeping Beauty, Aurora, mime, Nikolai Sergeyev, Vision Scene

Subject: Dance, Music

Series: Oxford Handbooks

If asked to name something memorable about the ballet *Sleeping Beauty*, one is likely to think first of the "Rose Adagio" of act 1; the vision scene of act 2; the *grand pas de deux* of act 3; or perhaps the fairy tale character dances, the solos of the good fairies, the vividly vindictive Carabosse, or the life-saving goodness of the Lilac Fairy.

Thus it is surprising to note that Alexei Ratmansky, in his new production of this canonic ballet, has succeeded at—of all things—making a memorable portrait of the sweet royal family group. And while the contented domestic existence of this little threesome is hardly the main theme of the ballet, Ratmansky's carefully wrought depiction of it indicates how he, following Petipa and Tchaikovsky, has put story and character at the center of everything. In this *Sleeping Beauty,* the principal characters are endowed with surprisingly realistic personalities; the once-peripheral ones have come to life. And they all interact with one another in credible and interesting ways to create a compelling tale. Indeed, this drama is so strong in character and action that it could succeed even without the dancing—though fortunately, it does not have to.

Ratmansky is not the first artist since the Stepanov manuscripts were wrought (around the turn of the twentieth century) to use them in reviving the Petipa/Tchaikovsky/Vsevolozhsky*Sleeping Beauty*. Nikolai Sergeyev, who left Russia after the revolutions of 1917 with the Stepanov manuscripts in hand, consulted them closely when he staged the ballet for Ninette de Valois's young Vic-Wells Ballet in London in 1939 with the nineteen-year-old Margot Fonteyn in the title role. That now-legendary production set the pace for historical sensitivity and strong characterizations in that company, now known as the Royal Ballet. Sergei

Vikharev, with assistance from the dance historian Alisa Sveshnikova, again turned to the manuscripts, this time in 1999, to make a historically informed *Beauty* production for the Kirov/Maryinsky Ballet that was widely admired, though it was later withdrawn and Konstantin Sergeyev's 1952 redaction restored to the company's repertory.[1]

Ratmansky's production, however, is particularly striking not only for its use of the Stepanov manuscripts (more faithfully so than the 1999 Kirov version), but—a bit controversially—for its daring return to an older ballet technique and style.[2] This latter decision caused quite a stir among those accustomed to today's supercharged technique with its high-elevation leaps, near-ubiquitous en pointe dancing, straight-kneed *petit allegro*, gymnastic lifts, and six-o'clock extensions. But as Ratmansky explained in an interview in 2014, going back to an older style is appropriate when performing Petipa's choreography. He cited, for example, the current custom of lifting one's leg so high as to

> [destroy] the correct placement of the hips. It's called "six-o-clock" style of dancing and is very vulgar in my opinion (unless you are wearing a proper costume, like a unitard, or portraying an aggressive character) … It is just unimaginable in classics while wearing a tutu. You can't show your underwear to the Tsar! Just a common sense, you know. You don't need to be an art historian to understand that.[3]

Therefore we find in Ratmansky's production, among other unaccustomed sights, legs in *développé* that remain at hip height instead of shooting to above-head level, greater nuances in the elbows and hands, careful attention paid to positions of the head and the focus point of the eyes, relaxed knees in rapid-footwork passages and in arabesque, and *chaîné* turns on *demi-pointe* (allowing the feet, as the dance historian Sandra Hammond points out, to give "vivid rhythmic accents" that become "just a blur when whirled on full pointe"[4]). This is not to say that virtuosity is lacking. As Ratmansky has said, Petipa "didn't hesitate to make use of the latest technical wonders of the Italian school—hops on point, multiple beats and pirouettes etc.—thus increasing the level of virtuosity." Yet, he continues, the master's choreography "never became acrobatic—it remained elegant, beautifully curved."[5]

The effect of this elegant approach over the course of a full evening is profound. Aside from its inherent allure, it opens a space for more nuance than today's ballet performance customs often allow. In general, the dancers are less concerned technically with high elevations, maximum numbers of beats and turns, and so forth, and more with *épaulement; petit allegro*; inclination of the torso; and inflections and placement of the fingers, hands, and eyes. Moreover, their sweet and personal port de bras in danced numbers (each appropriate to the character) match well with the expressive arm gestures of acting and pantomime, making for an organicism of technique across the boundaries of dance and mime. And one never feels that the characterizations are interrupted by nonsensical acrobatic feats; instead the dancing takes place within the same dramatic space as the mime and action, lending a continuity that is vital to the story.

Another quite notable throwback here is the large cast, featuring (as Petipa's casts did) performers of three generations. This not only provides variety and intrinsic appeal (for it is satisfying to watch both seasoned adult performers and budding middle schoolers and children[6]); it also relieves the principal characters of carrying the full responsibility of holding the story together. How much more interesting to see youthful mandolin players and fiddlers, the little pages who attend the fairies, mature adults of the court, the lavender-clad girls who glide with Lilac in the boat, and so forth.

Furthermore, of great importance to the success of this production is Ratmansky's full embrace of character dancing. Thus does Prince Désiré express himself with stirringly performed mazurka gestures and steps in the *grand pas de deux* coda of act 3.[7] (Aurora's supported lightning-fast torso bends in the same coda also seem to refer to heart-quickening mazurka gestures; after each one, both she and the Prince raise their hands aloft in the manner of the joyous mazurka dancer in a final pose.) Revelling lords and ladies (in heeled shoes) dance a *menuet*, in one of Petipa's nineteenth-century interpretations of baroque dance. Revelling country folk (also in heeled shoes) dance a farandole.[8] Then there are the playful Good Fairies, each sparkling with a distinct personality in a gemlike solo that departs from strictly classical vocabulary as needed. Candide delicately brushes off her arms and hands. Breadcrumb bourrées to the left and to the right across the stage as though blown by a strong wind. Canary constantly oscillates her hands at high speed and darts across the stage like a bird in flight. Violente holds her elbows close to her body and moves her forearms to and fro, fingers pointing.[9] Classical steps alone do not suffice for these fairies. Note, however, that in some productions today, their variations are approached using today's ideas of classicism, with long

extensions of the limbs, an adagio feeling, and languorous poses. The sparkling, individualized "character" movements are de-emphasized; the choreography loses its crispness, its wit, and its particularity. The fairies' value as characters loses out to a bland classicism with no clear raison d'être.

It is characters and story I am concerned with in this article, because far more than even the best of the other current productions of *Sleeping Beauty*, Ratmansky's is clearly about interesting people (some real, some fantastic), whose personalities and actions make for a good story. Even the third act—a wedding celebration that takes place after the troubles of the early acts have been resolved—comes across as eventful and its characters as fully engaging.

The Royal Family

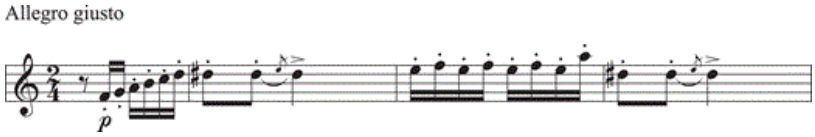
Aurora

Let us begin with the title character herself, Princess Aurora, who has in some productions devolved into decorousness and can seem jaded, womanly, or (worse) like a ballerina concerned mainly with virtuosic steps and balances. Here, by contrast, she is portrayed as a delightful teenager on the verge of womanhood (and looking forward to it wholeheartedly). Ratmansky has clearly coached his Aurora ballerinas to make it so, though (fortunately!) they are not all the same. But in general, one may say that she is happy, she is feminine, and though a little shy, is confident of her own worth and appeal. Moreover, she has a close relationship with her parents. And she has a subversive, teenaged sense of humor.

Upon the occasion of her first appearance in the ballet—a birthday celebration at what amounts to her "debut" as a marriageable princess—she is clearly thrilled at the prospect of meeting the four attractive (and apparently ardent) young princes who have been brought to court to woo her. She likes boys! She likes parties! She is filled with an excitement of fresh possibility of the sort only a teenager can fully possess.

Shortly after she arrives onstage, we can instantly tell that she is playful, too: her choreography is whimsically based on a series of *pas de chats*, and her music begins with a quirky little melody that lands repeatedly on an accented tritone; it sounds harmonically skittish, matching her restless energy, for she is like a filly in constant motion (see example 1).

Example 1



Act One, no. 7, Scène, mm. 34–37.

These are not necessarily the music or steps one would expect from a standard-issue royal princess, and Ratmansky takes full advantage of the characterizing opportunities laid out for him here by Tchaikovsky and Petipa, bringing out a mischievousness usually lacking.

Then, to more tonically stable music, Aurora closes out her introductory "cavatina" with a series of turns that takes her to a spot in front of the King and Queen, who have taken their seats at upstage left. (Earlier, the royal couple had clasped hands and drawn close to each other in anticipation of their daughter's arrival before the court.) As Aurora strikes her final *attitude derrière à terre* pose right in front of her parents, they rise from their seats, and the three seem to be glowing with familial happiness. (It has become conventional for her to strike her final pose apart from her parents instead and receive the applause of the audience before her parents come forward to express their pride.[10])

Soon it is time for the "Rose Adagio" itself, the iconic opening number of the first-act "pas d'action," which is celebrated for the fiendishly difficult balances it demands of the prima ballerina, but which in Ratmansky's production, as Doug Fullington has pointed out, places "the focus on the courtship of Aurora rather than on the technique required to execute the steps."[11] Indeed, in this "Rose Adagio" more than any other I have seen, Aurora is an excited teenager whose dancing in general and balances in particular seem driven most of all by joy. She is happy to take the risk of meeting these young men and is happy to discover

that she has true command of herself in this brand-new, adult social situation. It feels good! She has triumphed!

This joy is palpable not only after she has executed the balances, but may also be seen in her radiance as she looks up at her four suitors at close range as they rush in to express their admiration for her. It is also communicated in the climactic set of unsupported turns at mm. 48ff. (in which she expressively bends forward, then returns to upright as her turns become faster and faster) and mm. 69ff. (in which her arms open spontaneously as she looks skyward), turns that seem a most natural expression of fullyfelt exhilaration, and with fortissimo, climactic music to match. (Some versions nowadays eliminate the deep forward bends and the opening-arms/skyward look, thereby effacing the sense of youthful joy.[12])

What about the royal parents' presence in the "Rose Adagio"? The choreography calls for them to partake in it four times. And though not intended to draw much attention, their actions *can* effectively demonstrate to the audience Aurora's close bond with them. Over the years, their role here has been minimized in some productions as the Princess's choreography has gained in emphasis, but Ratmansky makes the most of the opportunity to show the connections between parents and daughter.[13]

First, during the introduction Aurora's parents offer her encouragement. (After all, it is the occasion of her debut!) Her mother touches her head, holds her hand, and seems to murmur words of assurance. Then Aurora's father, who tenderly embraces her, tells her that she has grown up to be a beauty ("Don't you agree?" he asks the assembled princes, who nod readily) and informs her that these visitors are all interested in marrying her. What an auspicious occasion! It is as if to say "you will do beautifully in your debut! We are so proud of you." (Loving gestures are made by the King and Queen in other productions, too, though Ratmansky brings out the King's fatherly pride even more by having him seek the princes' agreement about Aurora's pulchritude.[14])

Second, in the midst of the action—after Aurora has carried out a series of poses and joyfully spun about (mm. 69ff., as described above), but before she has received the roses from her four suitors—she approaches her parents, as if to say, "I can scarcely contain myself!," and her father takes both of her hands in his for a few seconds. This sweet father-daughter moment helps to prepare both the Princess and the audience for what is to come: the presentations of the roses to Aurora one at a time from each of her four suitors. (By comparison, in other productions she moves toward her parents at this juncture and greets them from a short distance, but without making physical contact.[15])

Third, after Aurora has received the roses (and executed a series of pirouettes and a penchée with her suitors' support), the Queen, at her husband's urging, rises and walks to center stage to join her daughter; Aurora turns her attention away momentarily from a suitor to give her mother the roses. The Queen is pleased to accept them and tilts her head a bit to the side with pleasure as she looks at them, returning to her seat. (This action is often minimized; in one version, when the Queen comes forward to receive the roses, Aurora keeps her choreography going, managing to maintain her penchée while deftly handing the roses off to her mother.[16])

Finally, toward the end of the "Rose Adagio" and after Aurora has received a new set of roses from the admiring suitors, at the moment of a climactic fortissimo in the side drum and cymbals and a diminished chord—and immediately before she undertakes her last and most difficult set of balances—Aurora joyfully inhales the perfume of the roses and then humbly places them on the floor before her parents. (By contrast, in some productions, without stopping to smell the roses, she flings them toward her parents; the emphasis is on the Princess and her spectacular choreography, excluding the filial respect and tenderness that Ratmansky has chosen to include.[17])

Thus in this new production we have been introduced to a Princess who, in her opening appearance and in the "Rose Adagio," is not only playful and happy, but a part of a felicitous family unit. (And the strong presence of her doting parents helps emphasize her youth.)

This impression is confirmed when we see Aurora two numbers later in her solo variation, a slow-fast number in which she first performs coquettishly (appealingly so) and, with the help of the violin solo that accompanies her actions, commands the rapt attention of the court. Here, as she executes her steps and poses, Aurora frequently looks toward her parents, who are seated upstage left and watching intently. In one particularly engaging passage, Aurora hops backward en pointe fifteen times (each hop a *changement*) and follows up with a double pirouette that ends with her feet in fourth position and her head turned toward her

parents, the final pose being punctuated, humorously, by a fortissimo blast from the horns, cornets, and trumpets. (The hops had been supported by a series of quieter woodwind chords.) The music continues in the same vein, and so does the choreography: three more times, a series of woodwind chords and hops-en-pointe-plus-double-pirouette is followed by a fortissimo blast in the brass as Aurora strikes a post-pirouette pose in fourth position.

In some other productions the wit of this passage is overlooked, and Aurora performs it in the manner of an earnest virtuoso ballerina, without any evident levity. Here, though, the humor that Aurora finds in it is nicely brought out; she almost seems to be saying subtly to her parents, "Don't you think I'm sort of hilarious?" (This is especially resonant when the role is played by Isabella Boylston.)

The more mature Aurora, as a bride in act 3, shows in Ratmansky's production a flash of the same sense of humor and spark in her solo variation, most notably, perhaps, in mm. 209–216 (act 3, no. 28 (d), variation II), in which short bits of melody in the woodwinds are again answered with brass blips (this time, trombones and tuba, playing *piano*). Tchaikovsky continues the dialogue in diminution, reducing it to a set of back-and-forth blips between low brass and strings as Aurora engages in a series of *piqué* steps with *cou de pied devant*, a beautiful port de bras and concise shifts of head position, and ends sweetly looking directly at her parents.

The King and Queen

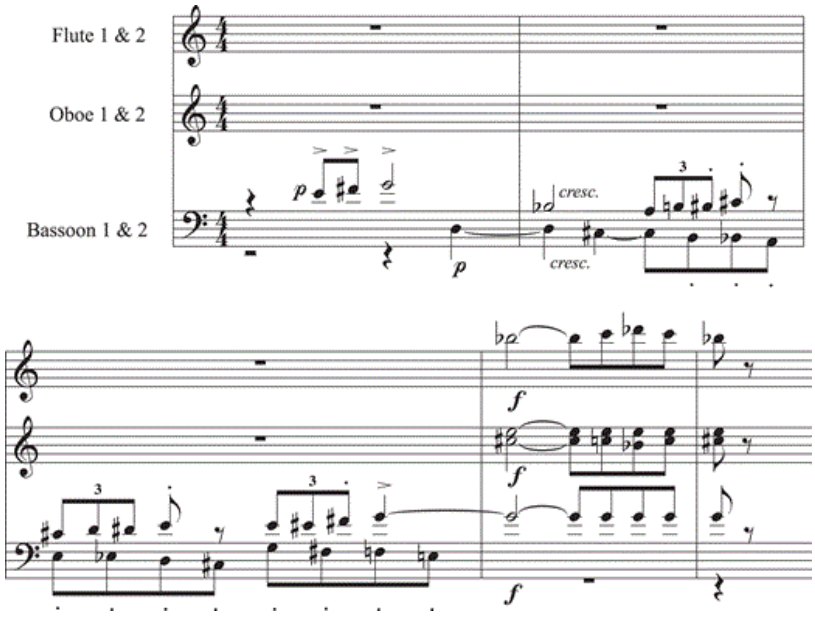
The King and Queen, often perceived and played as thankless and uninteresting characters, are in this production honored as a real couple whose presence is utterly vital to the setting, atmosphere, mood, and story. The Queen in this *Beauty* is best inhabited (among the other fine interpreters) by Tatiana Ratmansky, a reader of Stepanov notation who assisted in the making of this production. Ms. Ratmansky makes the character not only queenly, but wifely and motherly, too, and with a personality all her own.

Clearly a woman accustomed to court ceremony, this Queen always exudes majesty and aplomb, and her first appearance commands the audience's attention, not only because of her outrageous two-foot-high, bride-of-Frankenstein hairdo and her attire (her gown is the only one with panniers, which extend it laterally to huge dimensions), but because of her subtly captivating personality and stage presence. Her arrival in the prologue, downstage center with the King, caused a palpable stir in the performances I attended; some audiences broke into applause.

Yet though unfailingly regal, this Queen is also a woman with emotions and opinions. Moreover, she is not always in agreement with her husband, and it is perhaps this independence, subtly but surely presented, that helps us see that she is far more than the usual cardboard cutout Queen. In the prologue, for example, after the unexpected arrival of the unwelcome Wicked Fairy, this Queen politely overrules her husband's admonition to hang back and let him handle the situation. Later in the scene, after the fearsome Carabosse has put a curse on the baby princess, the Queen rushes forward, drops to her knees, and begs for clemency. But her husband gently takes her aside and tells in her no uncertain terms: "Do not beg."

Her opinion also differs from her husband's in the opening scene of act 1, in which some village women have been caught with knitting needles. Herein lies the only moment in the ballet in which the Queen gets a dedicated music of her own, a woodwind passage that helps her use her wifely persuasion to convince her husband to pardon the klatch of knitters (see example 2). First, though, with a clashing of cymbals and dissonant blasts from the brass section (act 1, no. 5, "Scène," mm. 153ff.), we find a confrontation between the King and Catalabutte on one side and the knitting women and their Queen on the other. Catalabutte is in one of his dudgeons and urging capital punishment; the King is of the same mind. But the Queen waits for the commotion to simmer down and then approaches her spouse tenderly and kindly.

Example 2



Act One, no. 5, Scène, mm. 202–206.

She touches his arm and then gently rests her head on his left shoulder. (Is this a foretelling of the sweet moment in the vision scene of act 2 when Aurora rests her head so sweetly on Prince Desiré's arm?) Ms. Ratmansky's Queen does so with sincerity and respect and with the air of a woman who has persuaded her husband of other things in the past, knowing well his moods and soft spots. She passes behind him, takes his right hand in hers, and touches it to her cheek. He relents.

Their occasional disagreements serve well to show that they are a real couple. Most of the time, though, this married couple is in accord, and their interactions offer a charming and compelling glimpse into a happy marriage that is alive and seems to have its own backstory. Their felicitous partnership is demonstrated plainly from the outset by their tendency to hold hands (albeit at arm's length, owing to court protocol and the great width of her gown) and walk together from wherever on stage the action has taken them back to their post at downstage left. Indeed, this action—handclasp and stately walk together—takes place no fewer than eight times in the prologue, nicely establishing for the audience the genial state of their relationship.

We also watch them engage in normal domestic activities: shortly after their first entrance, for example, the King kisses his wife's hand, and she goes upstage to check on the baby. A few moments later she comes back downstage to join in a conversation between her husband and Catalabutte about the invitation list. In act 1, as they enter the scene, she is hanging on the King's left arm with both of her hands; they are having a conversation, heads close together. And shortly before their teenaged daughter arrives (in the much-anticipated entrance described below in more detail), the King and Queen touch hands with excitement, leaning forward eagerly, as real people would do, instead of giving us the frozen-smile nods and stylized hand movements we have come to expect from ballet sideline-sitters.

Though never at the center of attention when these actions take place, the royal couple nonetheless make a strong impression. For example, we watch them react, early in the prologue finale, as the Footman in a panic-stricken state announces Carabosse's impending arrival. The Queen looks at the scroll, looks at her husband, and touches her right hand to her right temple (as if to say "oh, no"). None of it is done melodramatically. She is like any mom worried about offending a distant relative capable of staging a meltdown at a family party. Therefore, one can easily read her actions sympathetically and bear them in mind as the story unfolds. Later, when the couple disagree about how best to handle the crisis, it is touching to watch as the King embraces his wife comfortingly.

These small touches add up to an effective portrait of a marriage that is all too often overlooked; it is in keeping with Ratmansky's apparent determination, following the lead of Petipa and Tchaikovsky, to animate every character onstage in a believable way instead of giving them mere token ceremonial parts that fill the time between danced numbers.

Catalabutte

Though not a member of the royal family, Catalabutte, their loyal servant, deserves mention as a key member of the household, for he adds depth to the warm glow of domesticity. He also adds a distinctive personality to the mix. Most Catalabuttes, it is true, are distinctive—he might be flamboyant or supercilious, for instance—but in Ratmansky's production he is a man with a lot of personality and certain notable and particular tendencies, and we get to know him well because he is made the central focus of the action for far longer stretches than we usually see.[18] In the prologue and first act he is a follower and instigator of events large and small, haughty enforcer of court etiquette, the butt of Carabosse's fury, chider-in-chief, enjoyer of court entertainment, semi-addled but utterly zealous servant to the royal family, and for the audience, an ever-present focal point whose every deed and reaction helps explain what is going on. In his most active moments, he runs upstage and down and from side to side, dithering and getting flustered, preparing for the arrival of the King and Queen, rushing forward when he finds out that Carabosse is on her way, catching village women in act 1in the act of knitting and recommending the death penalty for their transgression, and so forth.

From a dramaturgical standpoint, indeed, Catalabutte is a narrating, action-pushing character whose deeds and reactions early in the ballet are vital to launching the overall narrative. He is no less useful as narrator, however, when he stands to the side during the fairies' variations in the prologue. Here he is found downstage left, lit by a spotlight, watching intently and reacting to each fairy—to this one with an ingratiating bow, to that one with a quizzical look; he even subtly imitates their gestures from time to time, bringing energy to their performances and, as an onstage stand-in for the spectators in the audience, helping them appreciate the fairies' quirky dances, just as he himself is doing.

As narrator, Catalabutte is carrying on a long-standing French (and then Russian) ballet tradition as the first major character to be seen and the one who bears the responsibility of guiding the audience through the early stages of the ballet as the characters and conflicts of the story are introduced.

One of Catalabutte's best-known predecessors in this regard is Hilarion in *Giselle* (1841), who appears shortly after curtain-up to explain who Giselle and Albrecht are, what cottages they live in, and how determined he is to break up their love affair. He partakes in the action of act 1 even as he keeps explaining, through his solo mime scenes and in other ways, what is going on. The explainer/narrator role is a very useful one in a "story ballet," of course, and reasonably enough, he is likely to fade from view, or steps fully back into the story, once his narrating job is finished. This is the case with Hilarion, who appears only briefly in the second act before being killed by the Wilis. And it is true of Catalabutte, too, whose narrating duties are finished by the end of act 1; who in act 2 is seen only in the background when the action returns to the newly awakened court at the end; and who loses both his spotlight and his prominent downstage-left position in act 3 as he watches the court entertainment, which takes place after all of the conflicts have been happily resolved.

Taking the opportunities provided by the narrator/explainer role is a good idea for any director interested in telling the story well. And in this *Sleeping Beauty*, Ratmansky uses Catalabutte to maximum effect.

If asked to name something memorable about the ballet *Sleeping Beauty*, one is likely to think first of the "Rose Adagio" of act 1; the vision scene of act 2; the *grand pas de deux* of act 3; or perhaps the fairy tale character dances, the solos of the good fairies, the vividly vindictive Carabosse, or the life-saving goodness of the Lilac Fairy.

Thus it is surprising to note that Alexei Ratmansky, in his new production of this canonic ballet, has succeeded at—of all things—making a memorable portrait of the sweet royal family group. And while the contented domestic existence of this little threesome is hardly the main theme of the ballet, Ratmansky's carefully wrought depiction of it indicates how he, following Petipa and Tchaikovsky, has put story and character at the center of everything. In this *Sleeping Beauty,* the principal characters are endowed with surprisingly realistic personalities; the once-peripheral ones have come to life. And they all interact with one another in credible and interesting ways to create a compelling tale. Indeed, this drama is so strong in character and action that it could succeed even without the dancing—though fortunately, it does not have to.

Ratmansky is not the first artist since the Stepanov manuscripts were wrought (around the turn of the twentieth century) to use them in reviving the Petipa/Tchaikovsky/Vsevolozhsky*Sleeping Beauty*. Nikolai

Sergeyev, who left Russia after the revolutions of 1917 with the Stepanov manuscripts in hand, consulted them closely when he staged the ballet for Ninette de Valois's young Vic-Wells Ballet in London in 1939 with the nineteen-year-old Margot Fonteyn in the title role. That now-legendary production set the pace for historical sensitivity and strong characterizations in that company, now known as the Royal Ballet. Sergei Vikharev, with assistance from the dance historian Alisa Sveshnikova, again turned to the manuscripts, this time in 1999, to make a historically informed *Beauty* production for the Kirov/Maryinsky Ballet that was widely admired, though it was later withdrawn and Konstantin Sergeyev's 1952 redaction restored to the company's repertory.[1]

Ratmansky's production, however, is particularly striking not only for its use of the Stepanov manuscripts (more faithfully so than the 1999 Kirov version), but—a bit controversially—for its daring return to an older ballet technique and style.[2] This latter decision caused quite a stir among those accustomed to today's supercharged technique with its high-elevation leaps, near-ubiquitous en pointe dancing, straight-kneed *petit allegro*, gymnastic lifts, and six-o'clock extensions. But as Ratmansky explained in an interview in 2014, going back to an older style is appropriate when performing Petipa's choreography. He cited, for example, the current custom of lifting one's leg so high as to

> [destroy] the correct placement of the hips. It's called "six-o-clock" style of dancing and is very vulgar in my opinion (unless you are wearing a proper costume, like a unitard, or portraying an aggressive character) ... It is just unimaginable in classics while wearing a tutu. You can't show your underwear to the Tsar! Just a common sense, you know. You don't need to be an art historian to understand that.[3]

Therefore we find in Ratmansky's production, among other unaccustomed sights, legs in *développé* that remain at hip height instead of shooting to above-head level, greater nuances in the elbows and hands, careful attention paid to positions of the head and the focus point of the eyes, relaxed knees in rapid-footwork passages and in arabesque, and *chaîné* turns on *demi-pointe* (allowing the feet, as the dance historian Sandra Hammond points out, to give "vivid rhythmic accents" that become "just a blur when whirled on full pointe"[4]). This is not to say that virtuosity is lacking. As Ratmansky has said, Petipa "didn't hesitate to make use of the latest technical wonders of the Italian school—hops on point, multiple beats and pirouettes etc.—thus increasing the level of virtuosity." Yet, he continues, the master's choreography "never became acrobatic—it remained elegant, beautifully curved."[5]

The effect of this elegant approach over the course of a full evening is profound. Aside from its inherent allure, it opens a space for more nuance than today's ballet performance customs often allow. In general, the dancers are less concerned technically with high elevations, maximum numbers of beats and turns, and so forth, and more with *épaulement; petit allegro*; inclination of the torso; and inflections and placement of the fingers, hands, and eyes. Moreover, their sweet and personal port de bras in danced numbers (each appropriate to the character) match well with the expressive arm gestures of acting and pantomime, making for an organicism of technique across the boundaries of dance and mime. And one never feels that the characterizations are interrupted by nonsensical acrobatic feats; instead the dancing takes place within the same dramatic space as the mime and action, lending a continuity that is vital to the story.

Another quite notable throwback here is the large cast, featuring (as Petipa's casts did) performers of three generations. This not only provides variety and intrinsic appeal (for it is satisfying to watch both seasoned adult performers and budding middle schoolers and children[6]); it also relieves the principal characters of carrying the full responsibility of holding the story together. How much more interesting to see youthful mandolin players and fiddlers, the little pages who attend the fairies, mature adults of the court, the lavender-clad girls who glide with Lilac in the boat, and so forth.

Furthermore, of great importance to the success of this production is Ratmansky's full embrace of character dancing. Thus does Prince Désiré express himself with stirringly performed mazurka gestures and steps in the *grand pas de deux* coda of act 3.[7] (Aurora's supported lightning-fast torso bends in the same coda also seem to refer to heart-quickening mazurka gestures; after each one, both she and the Prince raise their hands aloft in the manner of the joyous mazurka dancer in a final pose.) Revelling lords and ladies (in heeled shoes) dance a *menuet*, in one of Petipa's nineteenth-century interpretations of baroque dance. Revelling country folk (also in heeled shoes) dance a farandole.[8] Then there are the playful Good Fairies, each sparkling with a distinct personality in a gemlike solo that departs from strictly classical vocabulary as needed. Candide delicately brushes off her arms and hands. Breadcrumb bourrées to the left and to the right

across the stage as though blown by a strong wind. Canary constantly oscillates her hands at high speed and darts across the stage like a bird in flight. Violente holds her elbows close to her body and moves her forearms to and fro, fingers pointing.[9] Classical steps alone do not suffice for these fairies. Note, however, that in some productions today, their variations are approached using today's ideas of classicism, with long extensions of the limbs, an adagio feeling, and languorous poses. The sparkling, individualized "character" movements are de-emphasized; the choreography loses its crispness, its wit, and its particularity. The fairies' value as characters loses out to a bland classicism with no clear raison d'être.

It is characters and story I am concerned with in this article, because far more than even the best of the other current productions of *Sleeping Beauty*, Ratmansky's is clearly about interesting people (some real, some fantastic), whose personalities and actions make for a good story. Even the third act—a wedding celebration that takes place after the troubles of the early acts have been resolved—comes across as eventful and its characters as fully engaging.

Tension and Release

Let us now turn to another matter. Ratmansky takes great advantage of something that has too often gotten lost: the episodes of tension and release that Petipa and Tchaikovsky so carefully built into this ballet. That is, the original creators of *Sleeping Beauty* made sure to provide a series of buildups and climaxes (great and small), which could help move the action along by providing forward propulsion. And forward propulsion is indeed useful at certain junctures in both mime and dance scenes, which otherwise might run the risk of becoming meaningless by allowing the narrative thread to be lost. Though some latter-day ballet directors have chosen not to make use of this built-in rolling surf of swelling and breaking waves, Ratmansky has profited maximally from it.

An examination of the opening scene of the prologue—in which Petipa has placed Catalabutte at the center of the action—furnishes the first example in the ballet of how these spurts of forward motion work. I describe it in some detail, noting how Ratmansky has reproduced the intended effects.

First of all, Tchaikovsky is a master of tension-building anticipatory music, relying on such devices as dominant prolongations giving way to more dominant prolongations, rising sequences, drum rolls, melodic diminutions, and crescendos. And his anticipatory musical passages are complemented to full advantage by stage actions that focus the audience's attention on the anticipation of the soon-to-occur event.

The curtain opens as a musical *marche* is already in progress. Catalabutte appears, instantly becomes the focal point of the action, and begins ushering in the guests for the baby's christening party. With each shift of key and mood in the march (which is in this form: AA'BAACDD'AA'), Ratmansky's Catalabutte does something new: he welcomes the guests, directs them to admire the little princess in her cradle, speaks grandiloquently (through the voices of the trombones and tubas, m. 32ff.) and then more serenely through the violins (mm. 79ff.), consults the invitation-list scroll, upbraids his assistant, and so forth (see table 1). (In other productions, much of this opening bit may be cut, depriving Catalabutte of some key character-establishing moments and even running the risk of making this scene seem more static than kinetic.[19])

Table 1 Comparison of Two Productions of the Opening Scene of the Prologue*

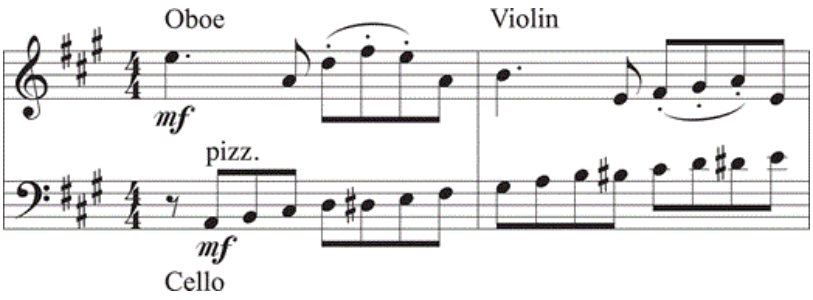
	ABT and La Scala, Ratmansky, 2015	Kirov/Maryinsky, 1989 DVD
A m. 1 [curtain up m. 17]	Upstage, Catalabutte descends the stairs; comes downstage; and says that the King and Queen, "the parents of the baby," are on their way. Catalabutte is excited.	
A' m. 24	Catalabutte dashes upstage toward the cradle, says that the baby will grow up to be beautiful, and wipes sentimental tears from his eyes.	
B m. 32 F#minor inflection, with severe brass.	The Footman comes in with a scroll. Catalabutte consults the list, tells him he's not thinking, and upbraids him.	
A m. 48	[mm. 40–62 are cut]	The action begins at m. 48. Downstage, Catalabutte and his assistant discuss the invitation list.
A m. 63	Sixteen lords and ladies enter; Catalabutte checks them against his list.	Nurses enter with the baby; Catalabutte kisses the baby.
C m. 79	Catalabutte invites them to come see the baby; as they draw in toward the cradle, Catalabutte consults his invitation list.	Catalabutte tells everyone to be quiet because the baby is sleeping.
D m. 95 8:02	The footman says that the King and Queen are coming. Catalabutte ditheringly sends the baby admirers back to their places, generates excitement among them, and tries to put everything in order.	The courtiers likewise say "hush; the baby is sleeping." Catalabutte goes upstage.
D' m. 104 French horns play ascending F#minor arpeggios; cymbal clashes.	Little footmen enter, preceded by the assistant emcee, who strikes the floor with his staff as the cymbal clashes.	Catalabutte comes back downstage and announces that the King and Queen are soon to arrive.
D' cont. m. 109 8:27	Behind the columns, the King enters upstage, followed by the Queen.	Footmen enter.

D' cont. m. 113 Trumpets play ascending F#minor arpeggios.	As the King stands aside, the Queen is now fully visible.	Catalabutte receives the invitation-list scroll from his assistant and bows in anticipation of the arrival of the King and Queen.
A m. 115 (fff, full orchestra, and melody embellished with turns) 8:37	The King and Queen come downstage together to center.	The King and Queen enter together.
A (cont.) m. 119 The melody is played a third higher, still fff.	The King kisses the Queen's hand; she goes upstage to check on the baby while the King goes downstage right to talk to courtiers.	The ladies file past the King and Queen, bowing to them.
A (cont.) m. 123 (hemiolas mm. 125–126 **[climactic]**	The King says of the baby, "she will grow up to be beautiful," as Catalabutte swells with pride and joy, stage left.	The courtiers, moving faster than the ladies, file past the King and Queen, removing their hats and bowing.
A' m. 127	The King discusses the invitation list with Catalabutte; the King tells him "you weren't thinking."The Queen comes back downstage to see what they are talking about and seems to tell them not to worry.	Seigneurs are still bowing; the King requests the invitation list from Catalabutte, who gives it to him ceremoniously. 5:09
A m. 140	The King and Queen take their places downstage left; all feels auspicious despite the troubling discussions about the invitation list. [end 9:38]	The King and Queen take their places, standing upstage left. [end 5:44]
End, m. 147	total 3:04	total 2:50

* In Ratmansky's production, (a) there are far more mimed conversations and solo statements; (b) Catalabutte's discussions about the invitation list, with his underling as well as the royal couple, foreshadow the unfortunate events to come, while no such foreshadowing is given in the Kirov/Maryinsky production; (c) far more action takes place during mm. 79–104 of the Ratmansky version; (d) the Queen's independence as a character is established by her engaging in activities, such as checking on the baby and then returning to talk with her husband about the invitation list, whereas the Queen in the Kirov/Maryinsky version minimizes these actions.

Next, to help show the audience that the impending arrival of the King and Queen is an important event, Tchaikovsky mounts his first major anticipatory campaign, starting in m. 95 with a little dialogue between winds and strings, accompanied by an ascending pizzicato scale (see example 3).

Example 3

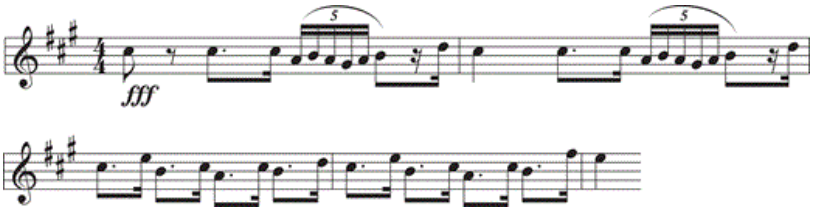


Prologue, Marche, mm. 95–96.

Then A major gives way to tonal instability, and tension begins to build with a rising F# minor scale (with a sharp 4 thrown in), played pizzicato in the lower strings, and followed by a marcato blast from the brass in f# minor. Minor-mode inflection in this ballet means that a royal personage is soon to arrive; it summons a deep sense of magnificence in rich jewel tones. And indeed, the King and Queen *do* soon make their appearance (at m. 109), the excitement of which causes the eighth-note figures in the strings to quicken to triplets (m. 111) and then to sixteenth notes (m. 113) and causes the modal hue to switch back to a major key.

Now that the royal couple has appeared, the auspicious-sounding A major returns (m. 115). But no sooner has the audience felt the satisfaction of a goal accomplished than Tchaikovsky starts setting up the next wave of anticipation by giving the dominant pitch, an E, to the double basses. The dominant pedal, thus established, lasts a full ten bars as Tchaikovsky builds tension in the upper voices with the insistent repetition, at *fff*, of the *marche*'s main motif (see example 4).

Example 4

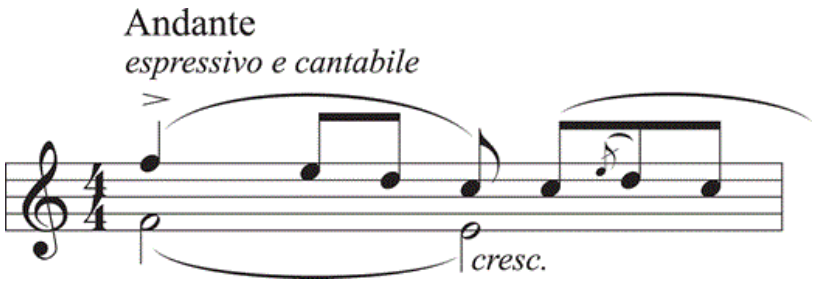


Prologue, Marche, mm. 115–119.

This leads to the next climactic moment, marked by a dramatic series of hemiolas in the brass and winds given special emphasis by the entire percussion section (mm. 125–126). And what is the event that Tchaikovsky so carefully set up here? It is the King's happy description of his baby daughter—"she is beautiful—will grow up to be beautiful." He is proud. He is happy. Though his joyful utterance is not the climax of the ballet, it is carefully built up to and presented, for it does constitute a moment of signal importance in the setup of the action and the establishment of the happy state of the royal family that will soon come under threat. (In some cases, however, the hemiola passage and the climax that it creates are eliminated altogether, denying the audience not only the full measure of the King's pride and joy, but also the chance to ride up and down on the surf of emotions that Petipa and Tchaikovsky have set up.[20])

Tchaikovsky and Petipa collaborate on many more such buildups created together by music and action. One of them occurs in the thirty measures before Aurora's appearance at the top of a staircase upstage in act 1, her first appearance as an adult (and thus, of course, the prima ballerina's first appearance in the ballet). The eager four princes in the Ratmansky production ask "where is the beautiful one?" to a pleasant conversational motif in F (see example 5).

Example 5



Act One, no. 7, Scène, m. 7.

This motif is immediately echoed four times in a rising sequence to denote increasing urgency: F major (oboes), A major (flutes), V/Bb major (horns), V/Cb major (flutes), Gb major (violins), and Eb major (flutes, oboes, clarinets), the last two iterations being accompanied by a tremolo in the lower strings. In the Ratmansky production, Catalabutte rushes from downstage to upstage and back again, telling everyone that the Princess is soon to arrive. As he points upstage to the staircase on which the Princess will presumably appear, the conversational motif quoted in example 5 (which by dint of its repetition in rising keys has already ratcheted up tension) now breaks down to simple descending arpeggio, which is heard, in rapid succession, in E major, C major, E dim. 7th, and then at the *fff* level for three measures in C minor, with a dominant pedal in the lower registers, including low brass and timpani. This increases the anticipation even more, and everyone gathered on stage is turned toward the staircase and watching expectantly. But the only characters to have appeared are eight red-and-green-clad fiddlers and eight ladies in pink—Aurora's entourage—who have rushed down the staircase and lined up in a diagonal formation that points directly toward the spot where Aurora herself will emerge. No Princess has yet appeared. (In some other productions, Catalabutte does not take an active role in setting up Aurora's arrival, nor does her entourage precede her in a way that seems to enticingly postpone it.)

Not for seven more measures, in which Tchaikovsky gives us an unstable back and forth between bassoons on the beat and horns on the offbeat, does Aurora finally—finally!—arrive (act 1, no. 7, "Scène," m. 30).

One may find in the opening scene of act 2 (set outdoors in the countryside) another extended scene of anticipation. The music is telling us clearly that something is about to happen: we hear an eight-bar timpani roll on the tonic pitch of Bb, as a short melody appears in f minor and then rises through the keys of G minor and A minor, its melody foreshortened (act 2, no. 10, "Entr'acte et Scène," mm. 33–34). As the local country folk emerge from the wings stage right, a few at a time, their actions confirm that there is something to anticipate: they point excitedly toward stage left; one summons another; and they all consult with Désiré's tutor Galifron, an elderly man in a tricorn hat, who is telling them what to do and where to wait for the upcoming event. It leads to this payoff moment: the arrival, from stage left, of a party of noblemen and ladies. This action, devised by Ratmansky in the absence of any notations in the Stepanov score, fits the music well and provides interest that, in this scene, can sometimes flag. (In some productions, a party of noblemen and ladies fills the time with their arrival; they are not anticipated by country folk.)

But again—as in the opening of the prologue—no sooner has the audience felt the sense of arrival and satisfaction than another matter comes up. The Countess asks Galifron "where?"; nobody has an answer. A *paysanne* upstage seems to say, "I wore my nice dress, but for what?" The music departs from its tonic key of Bb major to hint at an unsettling A minor as the characters look around, making it clear that they are expecting something to happen. Many of them line up on a diagonal that points to upstage left; soon Galifron sees that a character is about to arrive. Galifron makes a courteous bow toward upstage left; sure enough, on a triumphant fortissimo in Bb major (act 2, no. 10, "Entr'acte et Scène," m. 61), Prince Désiré does indeed appear there. All eyes turn to him as he makes his way to center stage. (In some other productions, however, pleasantries and stage business fill this music, without much in the way of anticipation to match the music or draw the audience in. In one case, Galifron arrives, followed by hunters carrying a dead deer from whose corpse Galifron plucks the fatal arrow, offering it to one of the ladies. The only anticipatory action comes late in the scene, as Galifron explains that the Prince is soon to arrive; enter the Prince.[21])

Not long after his arrival, however, there comes yet another anticipatory segment followed by a climactic payoff. This time, we are in the key of C major, and the newly fast pace (*allegro vivo*), the opening fortissimo timpani strike on G, the dominant prolongation (with a series of rising scales in the strings and winds

starting on G, then G#, then D, then D#) all tell us to expect something. What could it be? The Countess is asking the Prince to wear a blindfold; the Prince declines and proposes that Galifron wear it instead. Galifron agrees and hands his hat to the Prince, and the Countess puts the blindfold on Galifron. As we find ourselves comfortably in the tonic key of C (act 2, no. 11, "Colin-Maillard," m. 13), we find our payoff, and the tension is over: it is a game of blind-man's bluff. (The Paris Opéra complements the highly anticipatory music not with a similarly anticipatory dramatic scene but with an impressive classical solo for the Prince; neither the hopeful Countess nor the tippling Galifron figures significantly here, so characteristic touches and atmosphere are lost as the classical danseur's virtuosity is emphasized.)

The buildup to the blind-man's-bluff scene not only keeps the action moving nicely forward, it also brings focus to the scene itself, which, aside from being a pleasant diversion for both the participants and the audience, helps to show that the Prince is not willing to participate, nor does he reciprocate the Countess's amorous interest. His lack of enthusiasm, and the open discussion of the fact that he seems so downcast, make his eagerness during the soon-to-be-seen vision scene all the more powerful by contrast. (In the Paris Opéra version, the Prince does agree, without reluctance, to be blindfolded in the game, which is mostly danced instead of acted; it makes for a pleasant divertissement but not a scene in which the Countess and Galifron can shine, nor one in which the Prince's ennui is demonstrated.)

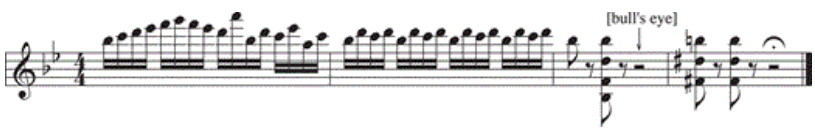
The Codetta

A tension/release effect of another sort is to be found in the seeming conflict between choreography and music during musical codettas. This artful incongruity, achieved collaboratively by composer and choreographer, depends on the fact that, upon reaching the codetta (a closing cadential extension at the end of a number), the audience can hear that the music of a given number is nearly finished. But at the same time, the action or choreography appears to be ongoing. This inherent conflict makes for a pleasant frisson as the viewer wonders if the dancers will finish on time.

I cite three examples of this device from act 2. The first is the short archery contest, which gives the impression of being a little *lagniappe* at the end of the long scene in which Prince Désiré has finally arrived and then greeted the Countess. We can tell by the onset of the codetta that the scene is nearly over, for the tonic key has been safely reached, and all that is left to do is finish it up.

Indeed, as it turns out, there are only seven bars left—about thirteen seconds. Within that short span of time, one of the noblemen, and then another, shoots an arrow at the target with his bow. Neither of them hits the target. But then Prince Desiré steps forward to take a turn at it, and—during the rest on the penultimate measure (see example 6)—he shoots a perfect bull's-eye. (In the performances I saw, the audience unfailingly responded with surprise and a bit of delighted laughter as the arrow hit the target.) This mini-drama takes place in a few short moments during a seeming lull in the action, at a time when the music has led us to expect nothing more visually than an uneventful finishing up. Instead, we see for ourselves Désiré's deftness and special worthiness, and perhaps a foretelling of the happy outcome of his quest for true love.

Example 6



Act Two, Entr'acte et scène, mm. 76–79.

The second example of the visual-versus-aural codetta is found in the *menuet* performed by the nobles (see table 2). The music consists of two eight-bar phrases followed by a little codetta. The choreography nicely plays against the music by bringing back the "B" section during the codetta, causing a slight sense of disruption for the viewer. That is, just as the music is telling us that the number is nearly over, the dancing couples are launching into a new repetition of a choreography that, as the audience knows, will require them to separate from one another and then come back together. The subtle anxiety resulting from this seeming incongruity—will they come back together before the music ends, or will they be stranded in place?—is alleviated as the dancers arrive in place just as the music finishes. This bit of uncertainty engages the viewer well. (In the Paris Opéra version, this codetta is used for a scene in which, at the end of the *menuet*,

several of the nobles, one after the other, pay court to the Countess; it is also an appealing scene, but one without its own inherent conflict and resolution.)

Table 2 Act 2, No. 12 (b), "Danse des duchesses" (*Menuet*)

Choreography	**A**	**B**	**B**
Music	**A (8 bars)**	**A' (8 bars)**	**codetta (7 bars)**
	Couples of seigneurs and ladies remain together.	Seigneurs and ladies move apart from one another and then reunite.	Seigneurs and ladies move apart from one another and then reunite; the music causes us to wonder if they'll make it to the end of the choreography before the music ends.

A third example may be found at the end of the vision scene, a long and effective *pas d'action* in which the now-galvanized Prince Desiré has pursued the vision of Princess Aurora ardently. (On the vision scene, see Doug Fullington's chapter in this volume.) Now, in the last segment of this scene complex—a 2/4 *presto* in G minor with music reminiscent of a Mendelssohn scherzo—it appears (and sounds like) Désiré's wishes will be fulfilled; that he will actually catch up with Aurora and that the young couple will end the scene together in a tableau of happy unity, framed by naiads, with the Lilac Fairy looking on protectively from upstage.[22]

How have Tchaikovsky and Petipa colluded to create this expectation?

Tchaikovsky has begun a codetta, indicating clearly that the music will soon end. And Petipa has given us choreography typical for the closing moments of a number: as Aurora is pirouetting, supported by Desiré, Petipa flanks them to the left and right with naiads. That is, Prince and Princess are united at the center, and the music is coming to a close. It looks like a happy ending is in store.

But as the Lilac Fairy enters upstage, and the naiads draw closer to the couple and kneel, forming what appears to be the final tableau, Aurora—quite unexpectedly—slips from Desiré's hands and flits upstage, then disappears into the wings. Shortly thereafter all of the naiads also disperse, leaving Desiré alone with the Lilac Fairy instead of his beloved. The music ends quietly and sparsely, instead of grandly, and Desiré finds himself in a most unexpected predicament. In a matter of mere seconds, the stage has been nearly emptied, and there is no tableau at all. The visual effect thus created, entirely unlike the one that seemed inevitable, gives the audience the same feeling of disappointment, emptiness, and lack of fulfillment that Prince Désiré feels. (In the Paris Opéra version, the Prince follows Aurora off the stage at the end of this scene, so the ending creates a less empty, unresolved feeling.)

With this article I hope to have provided insight into two features of Ratmansky's *Sleeping Beauty* that make it effective: the characterizations of the royal family and Catalabutte (meant to be read easily by audiences) and the episodes of tension and release (working in the background to move the action along). These features are, of course, only two among many more. Clearly Ratmansky has lavished meticulous attention on all of the details of the staging and choreography of this piece, no matter how tiny, in order to assemble, mosaic-like, a big picture that pleases and satisfies. In so doing, he has not only put on a great ballet that works well for today's audiences, but has also allowed us to experience at the deepest level the genius of Petipa and Tchaikovsky, two of the great dramatists of the nineteenth century. It is perhaps not inappropriate then to liken Ratmansky's efforts to those of Petipa himself, of whom the critic Konstantin Salkovsky wrote shortly after the premiere of *Sleeping Beauty*:

> To compose and work out in the minutest details such a huge work, yes and to teach it to a hundred people, requires much intelligence, immense taste, great knowledge, and an unusual patience and love of work.[23]

Notes

Musical examples are from *The Sleeping Beauty*, ed. Carl Simpson (Edwardsville, IL: Serenissima Music, 2015). I refer in this article to the Paris Opéra production (by Rudolph Nureyev, released by Telmondis France in 2000); the Bolshoi production (by Yuri Grigorovich; performed in 1989, released on DVD by Arthaus Musik in 2005); the Kirov/Maryinsky version (by Konstantin Sergeyev; released in 1989); the La Scala production (by Rudolph Nureyev; broadcast on RAI5 in 2002), and the Royal Ballet production (by Monica Mason and Christopher Newton after Ninette de Valois and Nikolai Sergeyev [following Petipa], with additional choreography by Frederick Ashton, Anthony Dowell, and Christopher Wheeldon; recorded in 2006, released by Opus Arte in 2008).

1 See Doug Fullington, "*The Sleeping Beauty* Reconstructed," *Ballet Review* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 79–89.

2 After Vikharev's reconstruction of 1999, Fullington wrote that "[d]espite the magnificence of the Kirov's new *Sleeping Beauty*, the door remains open for a more thorough reconstruction of the ballet's choreography." "*Sleeping Beauty* Reconstructed,"89.For a closer understanding of technique and style of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ratmansky consulted photographs from that period. See Doug Fullington's chapter in this volume, "Finding the Balance: Pantomime and Dance in Ratmansky's New/Old *Sleeping Beauty*."

3 Alexei Ratmansky, "No One Knows Better Than Petipa," interview by Wiebke Hüster, *Paquita* program, English version (Bavarian State Ballet in the National Theatre, Munich, December 13, 2014).

4 Sandra Hammond, personal communication, March 15, 2015.

5 Ratmansky, interview by Hüster.

6 For ABT's Detroit performances, about ninety young dancers from thirty-four local studios in Detroit appeared in small roles or as extras. Emiliana Sandoval, "Misty Copeland Breaks Dance World Barrier," *Detroit Free Press*, March 30, 2016, http://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/arts/2016/03/29/misty-copeland-detroit-american-ballet-theatre/82396870/.

7 Mazurka steps are also performed by Cinderella and her prince during the act 3 fairy tale *divertissement* and by the entire cast toward the end of act 3.

8 Regarding problems in the manuscript sources for the courtly dances of act 2, see Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 152–153 and 179.

9 Following the Stepanov manuscript, Ratmansky makes sure Violente begins her solo standing stock still for the first eight bars; she is leaning in. (All that is moving is the set of springy antennae that she wears on her head; this headpiece was inspired by the one worn by Bronislava Nijinska, who portrayed Violente in the 1921 Ballets russes' *The Sleeping Princess*.) She is the only fairy to keep us waiting.

10 Such is the case in, for example, the La Scala production and the Royal Ballet production.

11 See Doug Fullington's description thereof in "Finding the Balance".

12 See, for example, the Kirov/Maryinsky and Paris Opéra versions.

13 The Royal Ballet version of 2006 (cited above) bears marks of the 1939 production set with the company (then called the Vic-Wells company) by Nikolai Sergeyev, who was consulting the same Stepanov manuscripts that Ratmansky did, as noted above. The four encounters of Aurora with her parents adhere to the instructions given in the manuscripts and are similar to those staged by Ratmansky.

14 See, for example, the Royal Ballet and Paris Opéra versions.

15 See, for example, the Paris Opéra and the Kirov/Maryinsky versions.

16 This is seen in the Kirov/Maryinsky version (1989) cited above. In the Bolshoi production version, she hands off the flowers to a page, who delivers them to the Queen.

17 See the Paris Opéra, Kirov/Maryinsky, and Bolshoi productions.

18 Some productions of the Royal Ballet's *Sleeping Beauty* through the years constitute an exception to the practice of downplaying Catalabutte's role. Leslie Edwards, who learned the part when Nickolai Sergeyev set *Beauty* on that company (then known as Vic-Wells) in 1939 with the use of the Stepanov manuscripts, set the pace for Catalabutte in that company and played the role to great effect for decades.

19 See, for example, the Paris Opéra and Maryinsky/Kirov versions.

20 I refer here to the Paris Opéra production.

21 I refer here to the Paris Opéra production.

22 According to Stanley Hall, who as a teenager appeared in the 1939 Vic-Wells production of *Sleeping Beauty*, the corps de ballet girls wore costumes suggestive of greenery, and Désiré ran among them as if among trees in a forest. Stanley Hall, interview by Marian Smith, May 1994.

23 Skalkovsky, in *Novoevremya*, January 5, 1890, trans. and quoted in Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, 178.

The Royal Family

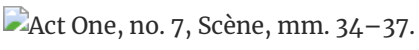
Aurora

Let us begin with the title character herself, Princess Aurora, who has in some productions devolved into decorousness and can seem jaded, womanly, or (worse) like a ballerina concerned mainly with virtuosic steps and balances. Here, by contrast, she is portrayed as a delightful teenager on the verge of womanhood (and looking forward to it wholeheartedly). Ratmansky has clearly coached his Aurora ballerinas to make it so, though (fortunately!) they are not all the same. But in general, one may say that she is happy, she is feminine, and though a little shy, is confident of her own worth and appeal. Moreover, she has a close relationship with her parents. And she has a subversive, teenaged sense of humor.

Upon the occasion of her first appearance in the ballet—a birthday celebration at what amounts to her "debut" as a marriageable princess—she is clearly thrilled at the prospect of meeting the four attractive (and apparently ardent) young princes who have been brought to court to woo her. She likes boys! She likes parties! She is filled with an excitement of fresh possibility of the sort only a teenager can fully possess.

Shortly after she arrives onstage, we can instantly tell that she is playful, too: her choreography is whimsically based on a series of *pas de chats*, and her music begins with a quirky little melody that lands repeatedly on an accented tritone; it sounds harmonically skittish, matching her restless energy, for she is like a filly in constant motion (see example 1).

Example 1



Act One, no. 7, Scène, mm. 34–37.

These are not necessarily the music or steps one would expect from a standard-issue royal princess, and Ratmansky takes full advantage of the characterizing opportunities laid out for him here by Tchaikovsky and Petipa, bringing out a mischievousness usually lacking.

Then, to more tonically stable music, Aurora closes out her introductory "cavatina" with a series of turns that takes her to a spot in front of the King and Queen, who have taken their seats at upstage left. (Earlier, the royal couple had clasped hands and drawn close to each other in anticipation of their daughter's arrival before the court.) As Aurora strikes her final *attitude derrière à terre* pose right in front of her parents, they rise from their seats, and the three seem to be glowing with familial happiness. (It has become conventional for her to strike her final pose apart from her parents instead and receive the applause of the audience before her parents come forward to express their pride.[10])

Soon it is time for the "Rose Adagio" itself, the iconic opening number of the first-act "pas d'action," which is celebrated for the fiendishly difficult balances it demands of the prima ballerina, but which in Ratmansky's production, as Doug Fullington has pointed out, places "the focus on the courtship of Aurora rather than on the technique required to execute the steps."[11] Indeed, in this "Rose Adagio" more than any other I have seen, Aurora is an excited teenager whose dancing in general and balances in particular seem driven most of all by joy. She is happy to take the risk of meeting these young men and is happy to discover that she has true command of herself in this brand-new, adult social situation. It feels good! She has triumphed!

This joy is palpable not only after she has executed the balances, but may also be seen in her radiance as she looks up at her four suitors at close range as they rush in to express their admiration for her. It is also communicated in the climactic set of unsupported turns at mm. 48ff. (in which she expressively bends

forward, then returns to upright as her turns become faster and faster) and mm. 69ff. (in which her arms open spontaneously as she looks skyward), turns that seem a most natural expression of fullyfelt exhilaration, and with fortissimo, climactic music to match. (Some versions nowadays eliminate the deep forward bends and the opening-arms/skyward look, thereby effacing the sense of youthful joy.[12])

What about the royal parents' presence in the "Rose Adagio"? The choreography calls for them to partake in it four times. And though not intended to draw much attention, their actions *can* effectively demonstrate to the audience Aurora's close bond with them. Over the years, their role here has been minimized in some productions as the Princess's choreography has gained in emphasis, but Ratmansky makes the most of the opportunity to show the connections between parents and daughter.[13]

First, during the introduction Aurora's parents offer her encouragement. (After all, it is the occasion of her debut!) Her mother touches her head, holds her hand, and seems to murmur words of assurance. Then Aurora's father, who tenderly embraces her, tells her that she has grown up to be a beauty ("Don't you agree?" he asks the assembled princes, who nod readily) and informs her that these visitors are all interested in marrying her. What an auspicious occasion! It is as if to say "you will do beautifully in your debut! We are so proud of you." (Loving gestures are made by the King and Queen in other productions, too, though Ratmansky brings out the King's fatherly pride even more by having him seek the princes' agreement about Aurora's pulchritude.[14])

Second, in the midst of the action—after Aurora has carried out a series of poses and joyfully spun about (mm. 69ff., as described above), but before she has received the roses from her four suitors—she approaches her parents, as if to say, "I can scarcely contain myself!," and her father takes both of her hands in his for a few seconds. This sweet father-daughter moment helps to prepare both the Princess and the audience for what is to come: the presentations of the roses to Aurora one at a time from each of her four suitors. (By comparison, in other productions she moves toward her parents at this juncture and greets them from a short distance, but without making physical contact.[15])

Third, after Aurora has received the roses (and executed a series of pirouettes and a penchée with her suitors' support), the Queen, at her husband's urging, rises and walks to center stage to join her daughter; Aurora turns her attention away momentarily from a suitor to give her mother the roses. The Queen is pleased to accept them and tilts her head a bit to the side with pleasure as she looks at them, returning to her seat. (This action is often minimized; in one version, when the Queen comes forward to receive the roses, Aurora keeps her choreography going, managing to maintain her penchée while deftly handing the roses off to her mother.[16])

Finally, toward the end of the "Rose Adagio" and after Aurora has received a new set of roses from the admiring suitors, at the moment of a climactic fortissimo in the side drum and cymbals and a diminished chord—and immediately before she undertakes her last and most difficult set of balances—Aurora joyfully inhales the perfume of the roses and then humbly places them on the floor before her parents. (By contrast, in some productions, without stopping to smell the roses, she flings them toward her parents; the emphasis is on the Princess and her spectacular choreography, excluding the filial respect and tenderness that Ratmansky has chosen to include.[17])

Thus in this new production we have been introduced to a Princess who, in her opening appearance and in the "Rose Adagio," is not only playful and happy, but a part of a felicitous family unit. (And the strong presence of her doting parents helps emphasize her youth.)

This impression is confirmed when we see Aurora two numbers later in her solo variation, a slow-fast number in which she first performs coquettishly (appealingly so) and, with the help of the violin solo that accompanies her actions, commands the rapt attention of the court. Here, as she executes her steps and poses, Aurora frequently looks toward her parents, who are seated upstage left and watching intently. In one particularly engaging passage, Aurora hops backward en pointe fifteen times (each hop a *changement*) and follows up with a double pirouette that ends with her feet in fourth position and her head turned toward her parents, the final pose being punctuated, humorously, by a fortissimo blast from the horns, cornets, and trumpets. (The hops had been supported by a series of quieter woodwind chords.) The music continues in the same vein, and so does the choreography: three more times, a series of woodwind chords and hops-en-pointe-plus-double-pirouette is followed by a fortissimo blast in the brass as Aurora strikes a post-pirouette pose in fourth position.

In some other productions the wit of this passage is overlooked, and Aurora performs it in the manner of an earnest virtuoso ballerina, without any evident levity. Here, though, the humor that Aurora finds in it is nicely brought out; she almost seems to be saying subtly to her parents, "Don't you think I'm sort of hilarious?" (This is especially resonant when the role is played by Isabella Boylston.)

The more mature Aurora, as a bride in act 3, shows in Ratmansky's production a flash of the same sense of humor and spark in her solo variation, most notably, perhaps, in mm. 209–216 (act 3, no. 28 (d), variation II), in which short bits of melody in the woodwinds are again answered with brass blips (this time, trombones and tuba, playing *piano*). Tchaikovsky continues the dialogue in diminution, reducing it to a set of back-and-forth blips between low brass and strings as Aurora engages in a series of *piqué* steps with *cou de pied devant*, a beautiful port de bras and concise shifts of head position, and ends sweetly looking directly at her parents.

The King and Queen

The King and Queen, often perceived and played as thankless and uninteresting characters, are in this production honored as a real couple whose presence is utterly vital to the setting, atmosphere, mood, and story. The Queen in this *Beauty* is best inhabited (among the other fine interpreters) by Tatiana Ratmansky, a reader of Stepanov notation who assisted in the making of this production. Ms. Ratmansky makes the character not only queenly, but wifely and motherly, too, and with a personality all her own.

Clearly a woman accustomed to court ceremony, this Queen always exudes majesty and aplomb, and her first appearance commands the audience's attention, not only because of her outrageous two-foot-high, bride-of-Frankenstein hairdo and her attire (her gown is the only one with panniers, which extend it laterally to huge dimensions), but because of her subtly captivating personality and stage presence. Her arrival in the prologue, downstage center with the King, caused a palpable stir in the performances I attended; some audiences broke into applause.

Yet though unfailingly regal, this Queen is also a woman with emotions and opinions. Moreover, she is not always in agreement with her husband, and it is perhaps this independence, subtly but surely presented, that helps us see that she is far more than the usual cardboard cutout Queen. In the prologue, for example, after the unexpected arrival of the unwelcome Wicked Fairy, this Queen politely overrules her husband's admonition to hang back and let him handle the situation. Later in the scene, after the fearsome Carabosse has put a curse on the baby princess, the Queen rushes forward, drops to her knees, and begs for clemency. But her husband gently takes her aside and tells in her no uncertain terms: "Do not beg."

Her opinion also differs from her husband's in the opening scene of act 1, in which some village women have been caught with knitting needles. Herein lies the only moment in the ballet in which the Queen gets a dedicated music of her own, a woodwind passage that helps her use her wifely persuasion to convince her husband to pardon the klatch of knitters (see example 2). First, though, with a clashing of cymbals and dissonant blasts from the brass section (act 1, no. 5, "Scène," mm. 153ff.), we find a confrontation between the King and Catalabutte on one side and the knitting women and their Queen on the other. Catalabutte is in one of his dudgeons and urging capital punishment; the King is of the same mind. But the Queen waits for the commotion to simmer down and then approaches her spouse tenderly and kindly.

Example 2

Act One, no. 5, Scène, mm. 202–206.

She touches his arm and then gently rests her head on his left shoulder. (Is this a foretelling of the sweet moment in the vision scene of act 2 when Aurora rests her head so sweetly on Prince Desiré's arm?) Ms. Ratmansky's Queen does so with sincerity and respect and with the air of a woman who has persuaded her husband of other things in the past, knowing well his moods and soft spots. She passes behind him, takes his right hand in hers, and touches it to her cheek. He relents.

Their occasional disagreements serve well to show that they are a real couple. Most of the time, though, this married couple is in accord, and their interactions offer a charming and compelling glimpse into a happy marriage that is alive and seems to have its own backstory. Their felicitous partnership is demonstrated

plainly from the outset by their tendency to hold hands (albeit at arm's length, owing to court protocol and the great width of her gown) and walk together from wherever on stage the action has taken them back to their post at downstage left. Indeed, this action—handclasp and stately walk together—takes place no fewer than eight times in the prologue, nicely establishing for the audience the genial state of their relationship.

We also watch them engage in normal domestic activities: shortly after their first entrance, for example, the King kisses his wife's hand, and she goes upstage to check on the baby. A few moments later she comes back downstage to join in a conversation between her husband and Catalabutte about the invitation list. In act 1, as they enter the scene, she is hanging on the King's left arm with both of her hands; they are having a conversation, heads close together. And shortly before their teenaged daughter arrives (in the much-anticipated entrance described below in more detail), the King and Queen touch hands with excitement, leaning forward eagerly, as real people would do, instead of giving us the frozen-smile nods and stylized hand movements we have come to expect from ballet sideline-sitters.

Though never at the center of attention when these actions take place, the royal couple nonetheless make a strong impression. For example, we watch them react, early in the prologue finale, as the Footman in a panic-stricken state announces Carabosse's impending arrival. The Queen looks at the scroll, looks at her husband, and touches her right hand to her right temple (as if to say "oh, no"). None of it is done melodramatically. She is like any mom worried about offending a distant relative capable of staging a meltdown at a family party. Therefore, one can easily read her actions sympathetically and bear them in mind as the story unfolds. Later, when the couple disagree about how best to handle the crisis, it is touching to watch as the King embraces his wife comfortingly.

These small touches add up to an effective portrait of a marriage that is all too often overlooked; it is in keeping with Ratmansky's apparent determination, following the lead of Petipa and Tchaikovsky, to animate every character onstage in a believable way instead of giving them mere token ceremonial parts that fill the time between danced numbers.

Catalabutte

Though not a member of the royal family, Catalabutte, their loyal servant, deserves mention as a key member of the household, for he adds depth to the warm glow of domesticity. He also adds a distinctive personality to the mix. Most Catalabuttes, it is true, are distinctive—he might be flamboyant or supercilious, for instance—but in Ratmansky's production he is a man with a lot of personality and certain notable and particular tendencies, and we get to know him well because he is made the central focus of the action for far longer stretches than we usually see.[18] In the prologue and first act he is a follower and instigator of events large and small, haughty enforcer of court etiquette, the butt of Carabosse's fury, chider-in-chief, enjoyer of court entertainment, semi-addled but utterly zealous servant to the royal family, and for the audience, an ever-present focal point whose every deed and reaction helps explain what is going on. In his most active moments, he runs upstage and down and from side to side, dithering and getting flustered, preparing for the arrival of the King and Queen, rushing forward when he finds out that Carabosse is on her way, catching village women in act 1in the act of knitting and recommending the death penalty for their transgression, and so forth.

From a dramaturgical standpoint, indeed, Catalabutte is a narrating, action-pushing character whose deeds and reactions early in the ballet are vital to launching the overall narrative. He is no less useful as narrator, however, when he stands to the side during the fairies' variations in the prologue. Here he is found downstage left, lit by a spotlight, watching intently and reacting to each fairy—to this one with an ingratiating bow, to that one with a quizzical look; he even subtly imitates their gestures from time to time, bringing energy to their performances and, as an onstage stand-in for the spectators in the audience, helping them appreciate the fairies' quirky dances, just as he himself is doing.

As narrator, Catalabutte is carrying on a long-standing French (and then Russian) ballet tradition as the first major character to be seen and the one who bears the responsibility of guiding the audience through the early stages of the ballet as the characters and conflicts of the story are introduced.

One of Catalabutte's best-known predecessors in this regard is Hilarion in *Giselle* (1841), who appears shortly after curtain-up to explain who Giselle and Albrecht are, what cottages they live in, and how determined he is to break up their love affair. He partakes in the action of act 1 even as he keeps explaining,

through his solo mime scenes and in other ways, what is going on. The explainer/narrator role is a very useful one in a "story ballet," of course, and reasonably enough, he is likely to fade from view, or steps fully back into the story, once his narrating job is finished. This is the case with Hilarion, who appears only briefly in the second act before being killed by the Wilis. And it is true of Catalabutte, too, whose narrating duties are finished by the end of act 1; who in act 2 is seen only in the background when the action returns to the newly awakened court at the end; and who loses both his spotlight and his prominent downstage-left position in act 3 as he watches the court entertainment, which takes place after all of the conflicts have been happily resolved.

Taking the opportunities provided by the narrator/explainer role is a good idea for any director interested in telling the story well. And in this *Sleeping Beauty*, Ratmansky uses Catalabutte to maximum effect.

Tension and Release

Let us now turn to another matter. Ratmansky takes great advantage of something that has too often gotten lost: the episodes of tension and release that Petipa and Tchaikovsky so carefully built into this ballet. That is, the original creators of *Sleeping Beauty* made sure to provide a series of buildups and climaxes (great and small), which could help move the action along by providing forward propulsion. And forward propulsion is indeed useful at certain junctures in both mime and dance scenes, which otherwise might run the risk of becoming meaningless by allowing the narrative thread to be lost. Though some latter-day ballet directors have chosen not to make use of this built-in rolling surf of swelling and breaking waves, Ratmansky has profited maximally from it.

An examination of the opening scene of the prologue—in which Petipa has placed Catalabutte at the center of the action—furnishes the first example in the ballet of how these spurts of forward motion work. I describe it in some detail, noting how Ratmansky has reproduced the intended effects.

First of all, Tchaikovsky is a master of tension-building anticipatory music, relying on such devices as dominant prolongations giving way to more dominant prolongations, rising sequences, drum rolls, melodic diminutions, and crescendos. And his anticipatory musical passages are complemented to full advantage by stage actions that focus the audience's attention on the anticipation of the soon-to-occur event.

The curtain opens as a musical *marche* is already in progress. Catalabutte appears, instantly becomes the focal point of the action, and begins ushering in the guests for the baby's christening party. With each shift of key and mood in the march (which is in this form: AA'BAACDD'AA'), Ratmansky's Catalabutte does something new: he welcomes the guests, directs them to admire the little princess in her cradle, speaks grandiloquently (through the voices of the trombones and tubas, m. 32ff.) and then more serenely through the violins (mm. 79ff.), consults the invitation-list scroll, upbraids his assistant, and so forth (see table 1). (In other productions, much of this opening bit may be cut, depriving Catalabutte of some key character-establishing moments and even running the risk of making this scene seem more static than kinetic.[19])

Table 1 Comparison of Two Productions of the Opening Scene of the Prologue*

	ABT and La Scala, Ratmansky, 2015	Kirov/Maryinsky, 1989 DVD
A m. 1 [curtain up m. 17]	Upstage, Catalabutte descends the stairs; comes downstage; and says that the King and Queen, "the parents of the baby," are on their way. Catalabutte is excited.	
A' m. 24	Catalabutte dashes upstage toward the cradle, says that the baby will grow up to be beautiful, and wipes sentimental tears from his eyes.	
B m. 32 F#minor inflection, with severe brass.	The Footman comes in with a scroll. Catalabutte consults the list, tells him he's not thinking, and upbraids him.	
A m. 48	[mm. 40–62 are cut]	The action begins at m. 48. Downstage, Catalabutte and his assistant discuss the invitation list.
A m. 63	Sixteen lords and ladies enter; Catalabutte checks them against his list.	Nurses enter with the baby; Catalabutte kisses the baby.
C m. 79	Catalabutte invites them to come see the baby; as they draw in toward the cradle, Catalabutte consults his invitation list.	Catalabutte tells everyone to be quiet because the baby is sleeping.
D m. 95 8:02	The footman says that the King and Queen are coming. Catalabutte ditheringly sends the baby admirers back to their places, generates excitement among them, and tries to put everything in order.	The courtiers likewise say "hush; the baby is sleeping." Catalabutte goes upstage.
D' m. 104 French horns play ascending F#minor arpeggios; cymbal clashes.	Little footmen enter, preceded by the assistant emcee, who strikes the floor with his staff as the cymbal clashes.	Catalabutte comes back downstage and announces that the King and Queen are soon to arrive.
D' cont. m. 109 8:27	Behind the columns, the King enters upstage, followed by the Queen.	Footmen enter.

D' cont. m. 113 Trumpets play ascending F#minor arpeggios.	As the King stands aside, the Queen is now fully visible.	Catalabutte receives the invitation-list scroll from his assistant and bows in anticipation of the arrival of the King and Queen.
A m. 115 (fff, full orchestra, and melody embellished with turns) 8:37	The King and Queen come downstage together to center.	The King and Queen enter together.
A (cont.) m. 119 The melody is played a third higher, still fff.	The King kisses the Queen's hand; she goes upstage to check on the baby while the King goes downstage right to talk to courtiers.	The ladies file past the King and Queen, bowing to them.
A (cont.) m. 123 (hemiolas mm. 125–126 **[climactic]**	The King says of the baby, "she will grow up to be beautiful," as Catalabutte swells with pride and joy, stage left.	The courtiers, moving faster than the ladies, file past the King and Queen, removing their hats and bowing.
A' m. 127	The King discusses the invitation list with Catalabutte; the King tells him "you weren't thinking."The Queen comes back downstage to see what they are talking about and seems to tell them not to worry.	Seigneurs are still bowing; the King requests the invitation list from Catalabutte, who gives it to him ceremoniously. 5:09
A m. 140	The King and Queen take their places downstage left; all feels auspicious despite the troubling discussions about the invitation list. [end 9:38]	The King and Queen take their places, standing upstage left. [end 5:44]
End, m. 147	total 3:04	total 2:50

* In Ratmansky's production, (a) there are far more mimed conversations and solo statements; (b) Catalabutte's discussions about the invitation list, with his underling as well as the royal couple, foreshadow the unfortunate events to come, while no such foreshadowing is given in the Kirov/Maryinsky production; (c) far more action takes place during mm. 79–104 of the Ratmansky version; (d) the Queen's independence as a character is established by her engaging in activities, such as checking on the baby and then returning to talk with her husband about the invitation list, whereas the Queen in the Kirov/Maryinsky version minimizes these actions.

Next, to help show the audience that the impending arrival of the King and Queen is an important event, Tchaikovsky mounts his first major anticipatory campaign, starting in m. 95 with a little dialogue between winds and strings, accompanied by an ascending pizzicato scale (see example 3).

Example 3

Prologue, Marche, mm. 95–96.

Then A major gives way to tonal instability, and tension begins to build with a rising F# minor scale (with a sharp 4 thrown in), played pizzicato in the lower strings, and followed by a marcato blast from the brass in f# minor. Minor-mode inflection in this ballet means that a royal personage is soon to arrive; it summons a deep sense of magnificence in rich jewel tones. And indeed, the King and Queen *do* soon make their appearance (at m. 109), the excitement of which causes the eighth-note figures in the strings to quicken to triplets (m. 111) and then to sixteenth notes (m. 113) and causes the modal hue to switch back to a major key.

Now that the royal couple has appeared, the auspicious-sounding A major returns (m. 115). But no sooner has the audience felt the satisfaction of a goal accomplished than Tchaikovsky starts setting up the next wave of anticipation by giving the dominant pitch, an E, to the double basses. The dominant pedal, thus established, lasts a full ten bars as Tchaikovsky builds tension in the upper voices with the insistent repetition, at *fff*, of the *marche*'s main motif (see example 4).

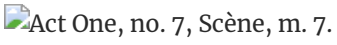
Example 4

Prologue, Marche, mm. 115–119.

This leads to the next climactic moment, marked by a dramatic series of hemiolas in the brass and winds given special emphasis by the entire percussion section (mm. 125–126). And what is the event that Tchaikovsky so carefully set up here? It is the King's happy description of his baby daughter—"she is beautiful—will grow up to be beautiful." He is proud. He is happy. Though his joyful utterance is not the climax of the ballet, it is carefully built up to and presented, for it does constitute a moment of signal importance in the setup of the action and the establishment of the happy state of the royal family that will soon come under threat. (In some cases, however, the hemiola passage and the climax that it creates are eliminated altogether, denying the audience not only the full measure of the King's pride and joy, but also the chance to ride up and down on the surf of emotions that Petipa and Tchaikovsky have set up.[20])

Tchaikovsky and Petipa collaborate on many more such buildups created together by music and action. One of them occurs in the thirty measures before Aurora's appearance at the top of a staircase upstage in act 1, her first appearance as an adult (and thus, of course, the prima ballerina's first appearance in the ballet). The eager four princes in the Ratmansky production ask "where is the beautiful one?" to a pleasant conversational motif in F (see example 5).

Example 5



Act One, no. 7, Scène, m. 7.

This motif is immediately echoed four times in a rising sequence to denote increasing urgency: F major (oboes), A major (flutes), V/Bb major (horns), V/Cb major (flutes), Gb major (violins), and Eb major (flutes, oboes, clarinets), the last two iterations being accompanied by a tremolo in the lower strings. In the Ratmansky production, Catalabutte rushes from downstage to upstage and back again, telling everyone that the Princess is soon to arrive. As he points upstage to the staircase on which the Princess will presumably appear, the conversational motif quoted in example 5 (which by dint of its repetition in rising keys has already ratcheted up tension) now breaks down to simple descending arpeggio, which is heard, in rapid succession, in E major, C major, E dim. 7th, and then at the *fff* level for three measures in C minor, with a dominant pedal in the lower registers, including low brass and timpani. This increases the anticipation even more, and everyone gathered on stage is turned toward the staircase and watching expectantly. But the only characters to have appeared are eight red-and-green-clad fiddlers and eight ladies in pink—Aurora's entourage—who have rushed down the staircase and lined up in a diagonal formation that points directly toward the spot where Aurora herself will emerge. No Princess has yet appeared. (In some other productions, Catalabutte does not take an active role in setting up Aurora's arrival, nor does her entourage precede her in a way that seems to enticingly postpone it.)

Not for seven more measures, in which Tchaikovsky gives us an unstable back and forth between bassoons on the beat and horns on the offbeat, does Aurora finally—finally!—arrive (act 1, no. 7, "Scène," m. 30).

One may find in the opening scene of act 2 (set outdoors in the countryside) another extended scene of anticipation. The music is telling us clearly that something is about to happen: we hear an eight-bar timpani roll on the tonic pitch of Bb, as a short melody appears in f minor and then rises through the keys of G minor and A minor, its melody foreshortened (act 2, no. 10, "Entr'acte et Scène," mm. 33–34). As the local country folk emerge from the wings stage right, a few at a time, their actions confirm that there is something to anticipate: they point excitedly toward stage left; one summons another; and they all consult with Désiré's tutor Galifron, an elderly man in a tricorn hat, who is telling them what to do and where to wait for the upcoming event. It leads to this payoff moment: the arrival, from stage left, of a party of noblemen and ladies. This action, devised by Ratmansky in the absence of any notations in the Stepanov score, fits the music well and provides interest that, in this scene, can sometimes flag. (In some productions, a party of noblemen and ladies fills the time with their arrival; they are not anticipated by country folk.)

But again—as in the opening of the prologue—no sooner has the audience felt the sense of arrival and satisfaction than another matter comes up. The Countess asks Galifron "where?"; nobody has an answer. A *paysanne* upstage seems to say, "I wore my nice dress, but for what?" The music departs from its tonic key of Bb major to hint at an unsettling A minor as the characters look around, making it clear that they are expecting something to happen. Many of them line up on a diagonal that points to upstage left; soon Galifron sees that a character is about to arrive. Galifron makes a courteous bow toward upstage left; sure enough, on a triumphant fortissimo in Bb major (act 2, no. 10, "Entr'acte et Scène," m. 61), Prince Désiré does indeed appear there. All eyes turn to him as he makes his way to center stage. (In some other productions, however, pleasantries and stage business fill this music, without much in the way of anticipation to match the music or draw the audience in. In one case, Galifron arrives, followed by hunters carrying a dead deer from whose corpse Galifron plucks the fatal arrow, offering it to one of the ladies. The only anticipatory action comes late in the scene, as Galifron explains that the Prince is soon to arrive; enter the Prince.[21])

Not long after his arrival, however, there comes yet another anticipatory segment followed by a climactic payoff. This time, we are in the key of C major, and the newly fast pace (*allegro vivo*), the opening fortissimo timpani strike on G, the dominant prolongation (with a series of rising scales in the strings and winds starting on G, then G#, then D, then D#) all tell us to expect something. What could it be? The Countess is asking the Prince to wear a blindfold; the Prince declines and proposes that Galifron wear it instead. Galifron agrees and hands his hat to the Prince, and the Countess puts the blindfold on Galifron. As we find ourselves comfortably in the tonic key of C (act 2, no. 11, "Colin-Maillard," m. 13), we find our payoff, and the tension is over: it is a game of blind-man's bluff. (The Paris Opéra complements the highly anticipatory music not with a similarly anticipatory dramatic scene but with an impressive classical solo for the Prince; neither the hopeful Countess nor the tippling Galifron figures significantly here, so characteristic touches and atmosphere are lost as the classical danseur's virtuosity is emphasized.)

The buildup to the blind-man's-bluff scene not only keeps the action moving nicely forward, it also brings focus to the scene itself, which, aside from being a pleasant diversion for both the participants and the audience, helps to show that the Prince is not willing to participate, nor does he reciprocate the Countess's amorous interest. His lack of enthusiasm, and the open discussion of the fact that he seems so downcast, make his eagerness during the soon-to-be-seen vision scene all the more powerful by contrast. (In the Paris Opéra version, the Prince does agree, without reluctance, to be blindfolded in the game, which is mostly danced instead of acted; it makes for a pleasant divertissement but not a scene in which the Countess and Galifron can shine, nor one in which the Prince's ennui is demonstrated.)

The Codetta

A tension/release effect of another sort is to be found in the seeming conflict between choreography and music during musical codettas. This artful incongruity, achieved collaboratively by composer and choreographer, depends on the fact that, upon reaching the codetta (a closing cadential extension at the end of a number), the audience can hear that the music of a given number is nearly finished. But at the same time, the action or choreography appears to be ongoing. This inherent conflict makes for a pleasant frisson as the viewer wonders if the dancers will finish on time.

I cite three examples of this device from act 2. The first is the short archery contest, which gives the impression of being a little *lagniappe* at the end of the long scene in which Prince Désiré has finally arrived

and then greeted the Countess. We can tell by the onset of the codetta that the scene is nearly over, for the tonic key has been safely reached, and all that is left to do is finish it up.

Indeed, as it turns out, there are only seven bars left—about thirteen seconds. Within that short span of time, one of the noblemen, and then another, shoots an arrow at the target with his bow. Neither of them hits the target. But then Prince Desiré steps forward to take a turn at it, and—during the rest on the penultimate measure (see example 6)—he shoots a perfect bull's-eye. (In the performances I saw, the audience unfailingly responded with surprise and a bit of delighted laughter as the arrow hit the target.) This mini-drama takes place in a few short moments during a seeming lull in the action, at a time when the music has led us to expect nothing more visually than an uneventful finishing up. Instead, we see for ourselves Désiré's deftness and special worthiness, and perhaps a foretelling of the happy outcome of his quest for true love.

Example 6

Act Two, Entr'acte et scène, mm. 76–79.

The second example of the visual-versus-aural codetta is found in the *menuet* performed by the nobles (see table 2). The music consists of two eight-bar phrases followed by a little codetta. The choreography nicely plays against the music by bringing back the "B" section during the codetta, causing a slight sense of disruption for the viewer. That is, just as the music is telling us that the number is nearly over, the dancing couples are launching into a new repetition of a choreography that, as the audience knows, will require them to separate from one another and then come back together. The subtle anxiety resulting from this seeming incongruity—will they come back together before the music ends, or will they be stranded in place?—is alleviated as the dancers arrive in place just as the music finishes. This bit of uncertainty engages the viewer well. (In the Paris Opéra version, this codetta is used for a scene in which, at the end of the *menuet*, several of the nobles, one after the other, pay court to the Countess; it is also an appealing scene, but one without its own inherent conflict and resolution.)

Table 2 Act 2, No. 12 (b), "Danse des duchesses" (*Menuet*)

Choreography	**A**	**B**	**B**
Music	**A (8 bars)**	**A' (8 bars)**	**codetta (7 bars)**
	Couples of seigneurs and ladies remain together.	Seigneurs and ladies move apart from one another and then reunite.	Seigneurs and ladies move apart from one another and then reunite; the music causes us to wonder if they'll make it to the end of the choreography before the music ends.

A third example may be found at the end of the vision scene, a long and effective *pas d'action* in which the now-galvanized Prince Desiré has pursued the vision of Princess Aurora ardently. (On the vision scene, see Doug Fullington's chapter in this volume.) Now, in the last segment of this scene complex—a 2/4 *presto* in G minor with music reminiscent of a Mendelssohn scherzo—it appears (and sounds like) Désiré's wishes will be fulfilled; that he will actually catch up with Aurora and that the young couple will end the scene together in a tableau of happy unity, framed by naiads, with the Lilac Fairy looking on protectively from upstage.[22]

How have Tchaikovsky and Petipa colluded to create this expectation?

Tchaikovsky has begun a codetta, indicating clearly that the music will soon end. And Petipa has given us choreography typical for the closing moments of a number: as Aurora is pirouetting, supported by Desiré, Petipa flanks them to the left and right with naiads. That is, Prince and Princess are united at the center, and the music is coming to a close. It looks like a happy ending is in store.

But as the Lilac Fairy enters upstage, and the naiads draw closer to the couple and kneel, forming what appears to be the final tableau, Aurora—quite unexpectedly—slips from Desiré's hands and flits upstage, then disappears into the wings. Shortly thereafter all of the naiads also disperse, leaving Desiré alone with

the Lilac Fairy instead of his beloved. The music ends quietly and sparsely, instead of grandly, and Desiré finds himself in a most unexpected predicament. In a matter of mere seconds, the stage has been nearly emptied, and there is no tableau at all. The visual effect thus created, entirely unlike the one that seemed inevitable, gives the audience the same feeling of disappointment, emptiness, and lack of fulfillment that Prince Désiré feels. (In the Paris Opéra version, the Prince follows Aurora off the stage at the end of this scene, so the ending creates a less empty, unresolved feeling.)

With this article I hope to have provided insight into two features of Ratmansky's *Sleeping Beauty* that make it effective: the characterizations of the royal family and Catalabutte (meant to be read easily by audiences) and the episodes of tension and release (working in the background to move the action along). These features are, of course, only two among many more. Clearly Ratmansky has lavished meticulous attention on all of the details of the staging and choreography of this piece, no matter how tiny, in order to assemble, mosaic-like, a big picture that pleases and satisfies. In so doing, he has not only put on a great ballet that works well for today's audiences, but has also allowed us to experience at the deepest level the genius of Petipa and Tchaikovsky, two of the great dramatists of the nineteenth century. It is perhaps not inappropriate then to liken Ratmansky's efforts to those of Petipa himself, of whom the critic Konstantin Salkovsky wrote shortly after the premiere of *Sleeping Beauty*:

> To compose and work out in the minutest details such a huge work, yes and to teach it to a hundred people, requires much intelligence, immense taste, great knowledge, and an unusual patience and love of work.[23]

Notes

Musical examples are from *The Sleeping Beauty*, ed. Carl Simpson (Edwardsville, IL: Serenissima Music, 2015). I refer in this article to the Paris Opéra production (by Rudolph Nureyev, released by Telmondis France in 2000); the Bolshoi production (by Yuri Grigorovich; performed in 1989, released on DVD by Arthaus Musik in 2005); the Kirov/Maryinsky version (by Konstantin Sergeyev; released in 1989); the La Scala production (by Rudolph Nureyev; broadcast on RAI5 in 2002), and the Royal Ballet production (by Monica Mason and Christopher Newton after Ninette de Valois and Nikolai Sergeyev [following Petipa], with additional choreography by Frederick Ashton, Anthony Dowell, and Christopher Wheeldon; recorded in 2006, released by Opus Arte in 2008).

1 See Doug Fullington, "*The Sleeping Beauty* Reconstructed," *Ballet Review* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 79–89.

2 After Vikharev's reconstruction of 1999, Fullington wrote that "[d]espite the magnificence of the Kirov's new *Sleeping Beauty*, the door remains open for a more thorough reconstruction of the ballet's choreography." "*Sleeping Beauty* Reconstructed,"89.For a closer understanding of technique and style of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ratmansky consulted photographs from that period. See Doug Fullington's chapter in this volume, "Finding the Balance: Pantomime and Dance in Ratmansky's New/Old *Sleeping Beauty*."

3 Alexei Ratmansky, "No One Knows Better Than Petipa," interview by Wiebke Hüster, *Paquita* program, English version (Bavarian State Ballet in the National Theatre, Munich, December 13, 2014).

4 Sandra Hammond, personal communication, March 15, 2015.

5 Ratmansky, interview by Hüster.

6 For ABT's Detroit performances, about ninety young dancers from thirty-four local studios in Detroit appeared in small roles or as extras. Emiliana Sandoval, "Misty Copeland Breaks Dance World Barrier," *Detroit Free Press*, March 30, 2016, http://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/arts/2016/03/29/misty-copeland-detroit-american-ballet-theatre/82396870/.

7 Mazurka steps are also performed by Cinderella and her prince during the act 3 fairy tale *divertissement* and by the entire cast toward the end of act 3.

8 Regarding problems in the manuscript sources for the courtly dances of act 2, see Roland John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 152–153 and 179.

9 Following the Stepanov manuscript, Ratmansky makes sure Violente begins her solo standing stock still for the first eight bars; she is leaning in. (All that is moving is the set of springy antennae that she wears on her head; this headpiece was inspired by the one worn by Bronislava Nijinska, who portrayed Violente in the 1921 Ballets russes' *The Sleeping Princess*.) She is the only fairy to keep us waiting.

10 Such is the case in, for example, the La Scala production and the Royal Ballet production.

11 See Doug Fullington's description thereof in "Finding the Balance".

12 See, for example, the Kirov/Maryinsky and Paris Opéra versions.

13 The Royal Ballet version of 2006 (cited above) bears marks of the 1939 production set with the company (then called the Vic-Wells company) by Nikolai Sergeyev, who was consulting the same Stepanov manuscripts that Ratmansky did, as noted above. The four encounters of Aurora with her parents adhere to the instructions given in the manuscripts and are similar to those staged by Ratmansky.

14 See, for example, the Royal Ballet and Paris Opéra versions.

15 See, for example, the Paris Opéra and the Kirov/Maryinsky versions.

16 This is seen in the Kirov/Maryinsky version (1989) cited above. In the Bolshoi production version, she hands off the flowers to a page, who delivers them to the Queen.

17 See the Paris Opéra, Kirov/Maryinsky, and Bolshoi productions.

18 Some productions of the Royal Ballet's *Sleeping Beauty* through the years constitute an exception to the practice of downplaying Catalabutte's role. Leslie Edwards, who learned the part when Nickolai Sergeyev set *Beauty* on that company (then known as Vic-Wells) in 1939 with the use of the Stepanov manuscripts, set the pace for Catalabutte in that company and played the role to great effect for decades.

19 See, for example, the Paris Opéra and Maryinsky/Kirov versions.

20 I refer here to the Paris Opéra production.

21 I refer here to the Paris Opéra production.

22 According to Stanley Hall, who as a teenager appeared in the 1939 Vic-Wells production of *Sleeping Beauty*, the corps de ballet girls wore costumes suggestive of greenery, and Désiré ran among them as if among trees in a forest. Stanley Hall, interview by Marian Smith, May 1994.

23 Skalkovsky, in *Novoevremya*, January 5, 1890, trans. and quoted in Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's Ballets*, 178.