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"Sleeping Beauty" awakens a sell-out crowd

By [Laura Vernaci](#) Tue, May 01, 2012

The Performing Arts Series at Johnson County Community College welcomed the Moscow Festival Ballet as the final act of its season, with charming and cheering results that overshadowed a few missteps.



Moscow Festival Ballet's performance of *Sleeping Beauty* ended the Performing Arts Series at Johnson County Community College's Performing Arts Series season on a high note. The sold-out show on Saturday night was well received, with consistent applause throughout and a roaring standing ovation at the end. The company implemented Marius Petipa's original version from 1890 set to Tchaikovsky's animated score.

The ballet began with a prolonged Prologue, as all the people in the kingdom came to celebrate the birth of King and Queen Florestan's child, Aurora. The main event was when the wicked Carabosse and her beastly minions showed up uninvited—she put a curse on the infant assuring that when she turns sixteen, she will prick her finger and die. The scene is instrumental in the storyline, but the dancing lacked true engagement and excitement. A wonderful highlight was the Lilac Fairy's perfectly placed Italian fouettes.

Fast forward sixteen years as Princess Aurora's birthday celebration commences. The corps de ballet entered with baskets and garlands to the familiar tune of "Once Upon a Dream" from the Disney version of the fairytale. The ensemble's dancing in the first and third acts was clumsy and tedious to watch. Luckily, the execution from the Lilac Fairy, Maria Klyueva, and Sleeping Beauty herself, Ekaterina Egorova, was the complete opposite and pristinely achieved.

Egorova appeared in a befitting pastel pink tutu that showed off her long, lean legs. As she began the infamous Rose Adagio with her four male suitors, Egorova quickly traded in her initial youthful demeanor for one of serious concentration, which she hung onto for the remainder of the ballet. It was evident how well trained Egorova is, as she hit every step assigned to her. She displayed a tremendous amount of control and impeccable placement even as her character unknowingly pricked her finger and continued to dance until finally collapsing at the end of the act.

The ensuing act introduced Prince Desire (Aydos Zakan), who sprung onto the stage in glistening gold garb. Zakan certainly was the most energized person in the company (with the Canary Fairy from the Prologue a distant second) and by far leapt higher than any other male dancer. Happening upon the Lilac Fairy and her nymphs, he was shown visions of Aurora, and the fleeting rendezvous served as a love spell. Journeying further into the kingdom, the prince found the sleeping princess and his magic kiss awakened her.

The final act was a fanfare to celebrate the couple's wedding, with three preceding divertissements. The variations featuring Puss 'n Boots and Red Riding Hood and the Wolf were playful and elicited laughs from the children in the audience. The Bluebird pas de deux typically is a coveted role and is reserved for skilled soloists. Princess Florina presented herself well, but Samat Abdrakhmaleva as the Bluebird was extremely disappointing as he fumbled through the partnering and barely got off the floor during the brises voles section. The crowning moment was the Grand Pas de Deux, which featured a dependable partnership, a grandiose solo from Zakan, a confident, yet understated variation from Egorova, and an equally impressive coda from the pair.

The two-hour-plus classical story ballet was charming, with stately period costumes and sets full of trompe l'oeil, which aided in transporting the audience to the setting of Charles Perrault's romantic tale. The omniscient Lilac Fairy (Klyueva), headstrong Egorova, and boundless Zakan made a fantastic trio whose physical execution was supreme. However, the company overall, especially the leading lady, lacked a true emotional connection to the audience and her fellow dancers. While skill is nothing to be underappreciated, it loses some significance when it's not a holistic approach. In spite of this, the Moscow Festival Ballet was a sight to see, and a commendable hoorah to the season.

REVIEW:**Performing Arts Series at Johnson County Community College
Moscow Festival Ballet presents *Sleeping Beauty***

Saturday, April 28, at 8 p.m.

Yardley Hall, Carlsen Center, JCCC Campus

12345 College Blvd., Overland Park, KS

For more information, visit <http://www.jccc.edu/performing-arts-series>

Dance Contributor

Laura Vernaci is a Kansas City native who has always been passionate about the arts, particularly dance. She began dance lessons at the young age of five and hasn't stopped since. She trained at the Kansas City Ballet where she became a serious dancer and learned about a professional company.

She attended Butler University in Indianapolis, IN where she majored in dance. She transferred to Truman State University in Kirksville, MO in 2006 and received a degree in Journalism in May 2008. Laura spent the 2008-2009 in Duluth, MN dancing professionally for the Minnesota Ballet. She performed in productions such as, "The Nutcracker," "Cinderella" and "Coppelia" as well as world premier ballets created on the company.

She recently moved back to Kansas City and is excited to combine her experience in writing with her passion for dance. In addition to performing and writing, Laura also enjoys teaching dance and choreographing.