

Sleeping Beauty reawakens



A SUMPTUOUS production of The Sleeping Beauty comes to MK Theatre from Wednesday when English National Ballet return with their reliably distinctive, dazzling showcase of classical ballet, writes **Georgina Butler**.

Combining grand sets and costumes, Tchaikovsky's stunning score and displays of virtuosic dancing, The Sleeping Beauty is both the perfect introduction to ballet novices and a timeless classic for seasoned fans.

MK Theatre marks the first stop of the new season tour – and provides the first chance for audiences to see internationally-renowned Spanish prima ballerina Tamara Rojo dancing with the company, while simultaneously launching into her new role as artistic director.

ENB comprises 67 dancers and the company's objective is to travel around the country taking affordable ballet to the masses, presenting the same scale and excellence on tour as in London.

Tamara's new appointment is a fitting acknowledgement of just how far she has come.

She returns to the company, where she first became a principal dancer, after a decade dancing as a principal with The Royal Ballet.

So what can dancers expect from their new artistic director, as she takes control of the creative output?

Speaking to GO! Tamara said: "Total commitment is what I am focused on."

"I am so close to this company as I have such fond memories of ENB from when I was young and dancing there."

"I want to help it grow and develop, bring the best new artists to the company and the best classical artists to collaborate with us."

While previous ENB directors have been

choreographers as well, Tamara is keen to focus on bringing in choreographers with experience who have the right skills and best knowledge.

She will focus on nurturing talent. Rising star Yonah Acosta, the 22-year-old nephew of male dancer Carlos Acosta, is one artist making the most of his talent.

Asked about Yonah, who will alternate performing as both lead principal and as Bluebird, Tamara said: "Yonah is a very virtuoso dancer – and charismatic."

"Yonah is cheeky, technically brilliant and very strong – you will see how virtuoso and charming he is."

The Sleeping Beauty is the standard by which classical ballet companies are judged – as it is one of the biggest and most difficult ballets to stage – and also the ballerina's ballet, allowing the very best ballerina to encapsulate the roles of both young girl and unattainable ideal.

How does Tamara feel about being both artistic director and the ballerina when she takes to the stage as Princess Aurora for this demanding production?

"I think the importance of the traditional classical ballets is huge for the audience, and for new audiences, so it is an important ballet in our repertoire and very exciting to be staging."

"And yes, classical roles make the dancer – this is true for both men and women."

"It is a great opportunity for me to have both these roles and responsibility."

"We begin our tour in Milton Keynes – where I have never performed before – so I am excited to be able to visit Milton Keynes Theatre in the position I am in now."

> The Sleeping Beauty runs until Saturday, October 20. Call 0844 871 7652 to book.

PERFECT POISE, STUNNING COSTUMES, DELICIOUS DRAMA: It must be English National Ballet

Brassy brilliance

HOPEFULLY you'll want more from your Saturday evening than buying into that X-Factor nonsense.

So how about leaving the snug of home for the equally snug and relaxing Stantonbury Campus Theatre?

This week, Secklow Brass & Friends will be delivering a programme of music spanning pop and rock to film and beyond, and they are bringing along the equally note-happy Music Makers of Milton

Keynes for the show.

Together, they will entertain from 7.30pm.

Tickets are on sale at £10, with concessions at £8, and we should make special mention of their generosity: All profits from this date will be given to a charity supported by MK Citizen – The Food Bank.

Last year, this bash was a total sell-out. Don't risk disappointment, call and book now on MK 324422.



Exodus, movement to see Experience

THE irresistible essence of Jamaican singer-songwriter Bob Marley will flood The Stables stage tonight as the venue welcomes the fantastic tribute act, Legend.

The seven great musicians and singers – who are dedicated to the life and music of the acknowledged king of reggae – cover the very best of Bob Marley and The Wailers' timeless classics.

The Experience begins at 8pm.

Natural funny-man Paul Chowdhry will bring a different groove to the Jim Marshall auditorium on Friday at 8pm with his brand new show What's Happening, White People?

Seen by many as the UK's number one Asian comic, the star of Channel 4's Stand Up For The Week taps into the multicultural diversity of contemporary Britain.

Tickets are somewhat scant though, as in, call for returns only!

Meanwhile, over on Stage 2 Albany Down will be seeing in the weekend by serving up their own blend of infectious contemporary blues-rock.

Saturday night brings a real treat for all music lovers when the

Nearly Dan: Reelin' In The Years Anniversary Tour stops by for a couple of hours of meticulously crafted grooves and spirited performance in honour of Steely Dan.

Unwind and discuss all things jazz on Sunday with an informal Jazz Matters gathering in Stage 2 from 11.30am until 1pm before the Back To Basie show opens at 8pm.

Featuring London session musicians and jazz soloists who capture the

sound and spirit of Basie perfectly.

If like us, you suffer from Monday blues, add some drama to the start of your week with Ben Waters – one of the most exciting piano players in Europe today.

Follow his 'fab boogie-woogie' on Tuesday with guitarists John Williams and John Etheridge.

Finally, Bollywood meets Brass meets Bhangra – the Bollywood Brass Band and Razaqat Ali Khan will offer The Stables audience the chance to experience their colourful, joyful, exhilarating act on Wednesday.

This Indian-style wedding band plays the great tunes and compulsively danceable rhythms of the most popular music in the world – and for an additional £13 per person you can enjoy a dinner of curry too.

Beats cooking up a mid-week culinary storm at home. Call to book on MK 280800.

CHOWDRY: Talking to YOU!



Have courage: Book a seat!

MOTHER Courage and her Children is brought to Stantonbury Campus this coming week, when Bertolt Brecht's lauded play is given the stage treatment by Blackeyed Theatre Company.

"Mother Courage is a powerful play to stage at a time when we are questioning our own culture of commerce and material gain," said director Tom Neil.

"We're taking an up-to-date, comic and energetic approach to it – the translation by Lee Hall is terrifically witty, the cast is very versatile, and our composer Ron McAllister has scored some beautiful new songs for us."

"Like all good drama, we're aiming to create an entertaining mix of lightness

and depth," he added.

Take a seat and watch as two ideologies collide in a conflict that stretches across a continent and threatens the balance of world power.

In its midst, one woman, her three children by her side, sees an opportunity to survive – a way to profit from the slaughter by selling goods on both sides.

But in her quest for material gain, the time is fast approaching when she must make the ultimate sacrifice...

Performances are at 7.30pm on Monday and Tuesday evening and tickets are on sale at £14 – falling to £12.50 for concessions.

Want to make a booking? Call MK 324422.