Theatre

Bourne's take on Sleeping Beauty

New Adventures at work: Sleeping Beauty goes from classic fairytale to gothic romance

MK THEATRE

By Georgina Butler
editorial@mkcitizen.co.uk

For dance theatre you can really get your teeth into, you need look no further than Matthew Bourne's vamped up Sleeping Beauty.

The classic fairytale we all know and love becomes a gothic romance with a difference in the hands of Mr Bourne – a choreographer with his finger firmly on the zeitgeist.

While the original ballet was a sumptuous 19th Century spectacle by Marius Petipa – one of the most influential figures in classical ballet's history –Bourne's re-interpretation uses compelling contemporary dance to awaken a world full of magic, fairies, vampires, evil curses and the love that conquers all in the end.

Bourne's idiosyncratic style has won him global acclaim and, fittingly, he received a Knighthood for services to dance in the New Year Honours List 2016.

Sleeping Beauty completes a trilogy of Tchaikovsky re-imaginings created by the self-made dance dynamo for his company, New Adventures.

First, he gave us a deliciously witty Nutcracker set in a Dickensian orphanage.

Next came a Swan Lake that initially ruffled a few feathers with its ensemble of powerful male swans – yet became the longest running dance show ever.

'It's light theatre at its very best...' Principal dancer Dominic North

Bourne's clever take on Sleeping Beauty rationalises the tale, acknowledging the passing of time during the 100 year period that Princess Aurora spends slumbering.

For emotional clout, Bourne sets up the blossoming romance between the young royal and her handsome beau before she dozes off – making the famous "true love's kiss" that breaks the curse all the more believable.

The quirky addition of vampires to the storyline then grants Aurora's lover (who is, refreshingly, the game-keeper and not a prince) the immortality required to follow her through the decades so that he can be there to wake her up. Genius!

The production even throws puppetry into the mix as Bourne gives baby Aurora – normally safely ensconced in an elaborately decorated cradle for the christening scene during the first Act of the classical ballet – a starring role. Expect to be amazed (perhaps slightly disconcerted) to see this wilful infant crawling across the stage, scaling the curtains and keeping the dancers on their toes.

Principal Dancer Dominic North plays the role of Leo, the royal gamekeeper who falls head over heels in love with Aurora just before she comes of age and is afflicted by the evil Carabosse's curse.

He said: "This take on the classic fairy tale has so much going for it.

"Like all Matthew Bourne's work there are some really clever twists and the characters are so well developed.

"I love that our Princess Aurora is a real wild child – you see that in the baby puppet and then when the grown-up Aurora is on stage she is still a bit of a rebel!

"The relationship between her and Leo is almost a bit Wuthering Heights or Lady Chatterley's Lover – which is exciting to dance and portray.

"Our Sleeping Beauty definitely has something for everyone whether you are a die-hard dance fan or not.

"It's got a good story, good dancing, good music, good acting and humorous moments too – it's light theatre at its very best."

We last saw Sleeping Beauty at Milton Keynes Theatre three years ago.

Back by popular demand, it returns to the new city after a seasonal stint at Sadler's Wells, London.

Let Matthew Bourne cast his spell over you from Tuesday.

Book via www.atgtickets.com/miltonkeynes or call on 0844 871 7652.

Confuse your senses with a feast of fabulous sounds

THE STABLES

Only a handful of standing tickets remain for this evening's Stables date in the company of Think Floyd, with complete performances of The Dark Side of the Moon and Wish You Were Here.

And if you don't make haste to the box office, wishing you were there is as close as you will get, folks.

Once those last few tickets have gone, that's the end of it.

Oysters3 take control on Friday evening. John Jones, Alan Prosser and Ian Telfer, the three founder members and creative heart of folk-legends Oysterband present something a little out of the norm; a fresh acoustic performance with a splattering of not-so-discreet stories.

Pin back your lugs and get set for an insight into their history, complete with cracking tunes from every era of their quite unique career...

Confuse your senses on Saturday evening, when Jay Rayner presents Songs of Food and Agony.

Jay is a TV familiar, and Masterchef judge and presenter of BBC4's The Kitchen Cabinet.

But that's only the half of it – he's as good a jazz pianist as he it at rustling up a plate of something tasty, and he'll show the latter off by performing tunes from the Great American food and drink songbook, accompanied by some pretty tasty musicians.

'Woven through with anecdotes from his life being paid to eat out on someone else's dime, he also talks about growing up with his mother, the agony aunt Claire Rayner.'

On Stage 2, Zoe Schwarz Blue Commotion will lead the charge with a live set based around rootsy originals, factoring in catchy riffs and exciting grooves.

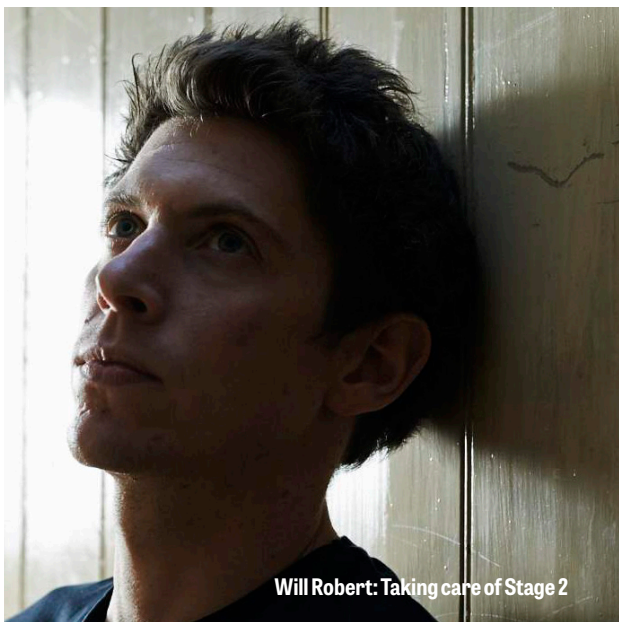
Patty Griffin will give you Monday motivation when the Grammy-award winner treats you to material from her back catalogue, including her most recent opus, the September 2015 release Servant of Love.

Support is coming from alt-country renegade Frankie Lee, who issued his critically acclaimed debut American Dreamer, late last year.

Tickets to see funny chap Ed Byrne at work in his new show Outside Looking In are all sold-out, but we can endorse him; after all his appearance in the Keynes donkeys years ago (in Shenley Church End in case you are reading, Ed) remains a highlight of ours.

While Ed has shifted every last ticket for his two-day stay (on Tuesday and Wednesday), fast-riser and Radio 1 favoured Will Robert will take care of Stage 2 business on Tuesday, while Kimmie Rhodes (whose material has been covered by artists as diverse as Willie Nelson and Mark Knopfler) handles business on Wednesday, and there is availability for both of these shows, so crack on.

Call the box office on 01908 280800 or click to www.stables.org


Will Robert: Taking care of Stage 2