Cinderella

Sydney Dolan with Pau Pujol and Russell Ducker | Photographer: Alexander Iziliaev

PHILADELPHIA Ballet

ANGEL CORELLA • ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

2026/27 SEASON

Curriculum Guide

SYNOPSIS

Fall in love again with one of the most enduring princess fairytales of all time in this rags-to-riches story of a young girl whose strength of spirit helps her to overcome mistreatment by her wicked stepmother and stepsisters, and ultimately win the heart of a handsome prince. This lavish combination of music and dance will enchant dance and theater lovers of all ages.

Act I - A room in Cinderella's father's house

Cinderella's step-sisters are highly excited; they have been invited to a ball at the palace, but Cinderella must stay at home. Alone for a moment, Cinderella recalls the happy days when her mother was still alive. Her father misses those times too, but is afraid of his bad-tempered step-daughters, who scold him angrily when he tries to comfort Cinderella.

An old beggar woman comes asking for alms. The Step-Sisters drive her away, but Cinderella offers her some bread. The old woman casts a gentle look at the kind girl and disappears.

Dressmakers, a hairdresser, and a jeweler arrive to help the step-sisters to prepare for the ball. With their dancing-master, they practice the gavotte. Cinderella's father and step-sisters set out for the ball, and she is left sad and alone.

The beggar woman reappears and reveals herself as Cinderella's Fairy Godmother. She takes Cinderella far away from her grey, everyday existence to an enchanted realm of beauty and fantasy high up among the stars, where the fairies of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter come, and each offers her their season's gift.

The Fairy Godmother tells Cinderella that, as a reward for her kindness, she shall go to the ball in the most beautiful dress of all. But she also warns her that she must leave before the clock strikes midnight, or all the magic charms will fade away and Cinderella will be a scullery maid once more. Cinderella is sent to fetch the silvery pumpkin that she grew in her little kitchen-garden, and it is instantly transformed into a luxurious carriage. Dressed in shimmering white, Cinderella rides away to the ball.

Sydney Dolan | Photographer: Alexander Iziliaev

Act II - The ballroom at the palace

The court jester is waiting for the ball to begin. The guests arrive, including Cinderella's father and step-sisters. A fanfare heralds the Prince. Then mysterious music accompanies the arrival of Cinderella in her magical pumpkin coach. She is so beautiful that everyone takes her for a princess; even her step-sisters fail to recognize her. The Prince is charmed by her beauty, and offers her oranges, the rarest fruit in his realm. The guests disperse and the Prince and Cinderella, left alone, declare their love for each other. The waltz resumes and, caught up in the dance, Cinderella forgets the Fairy Godmother's warning.

Suddenly the clock strikes 12 and Cinderella rushes from the palace, losing one of her slippers on the stairs. Dismayed, the Prince picks up the slipper and vows he will find the girl he loves.

Act III - After the ball

Cinderella finds herself once again at the kitchen fireside. Was it all a dream? Then one of her elegant slippers falls from her apron and she knows she really was at the ball and danced with the Prince. The step-sisters arrive home and brag to Cinderella about their conquests at the ball.

Father announces that the Prince has come, searching for the girl who lost the slipper. When the Prince enters, both the step-sisters try to cram their large feet into the little slipper, hoping to convince him that it is theirs. Cinderella kneels to help – and again the slipper falls out of her pocket. The Prince immediately recognizes in the modest Cinderella the beautiful princess from the ball.

The Fairy Godmother appears. The lovers are united and walk away into the golden light of happiness.

The End.

Pau Pujol | Photographer: Alexander Iziliaev

Source: http://paballet.org/cinderella
http://www.abt.org/education/archive/ballets/cinderella_ashton.html

HISTORY

Cinderella

PERRAULT

Perrault's popular fairy tale has been the subject of many ballets, starting with a version by Duport in Vienna in 1813. In 1822, François Decombe, or Monsieur Albert, as he was known, choreographed *Cendrillon* with music by Fernando Sor for the King's Theatre in London and re-staged it for the Paris opera the following year. In 1893 the Maryinsky Theatre staged a version with choreography by Ivanov, Cecchetti, and M. Petipa to music by Boris Schell, which featured Legnani making her Maryinsky debut; she stunned the Russian audience with her celebrated feat of 32 consecutive fouettés. Fokine staged *Cendrillon* for the Original Ballet Russe (de Basil) at Covent Garden on July 19, 1938. Andrée Howard choreographed a version for Ballet Rambert in 1935, with Pearl Argyle in the title role and Frederick Ashton as the Prince. But it was not until Prokofiev completed his famous score in 1944 that the ballet was able to achieve its greatest success.

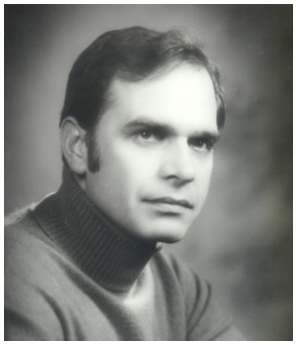
PROKOFIEV

The first Prokofiev staging was at the Bolshoi Theatre on November 21, 1945, its Russian title was *Zolushka*, with choreography by *Zakharov*, designs by Pyotr Williams, and featuring Olga Lepeshinskaya as Cinderella. On April 8, 1946 Sergeyev staged Zolushka for the Kirov with Natalia Dudinskaya as Cinderella and himself as the Prince. Ashton's historic version for Sadler's Wells Ballet, again using the Prokofiev score, although eliminating the extended Act III divertissement, was unveiled at the Royal Opera House on December 23, 1948, the first full-length British Ballet. Scenery and costumes were by Jean-Denis Malclès; the cast included Shearer, Somes, Ashton, and Helpmann.

The Royal Ballet revived it on December 23, 1965 with new sets and costumes by Henry Bardon and David Walker, with Fonteyn, Blair, Ashton, and Helpmann. It entered the repertoire of the Australian Ballet in 1972. Celia Franca choreographed a new version for the National Ballet of Canada, Toronto 1968 and Ben Stevenson staged it for the National Ballet of Washington in 1970. Rudolf Nureyev enjoyed one of his greatest successes when he staged an updated Cendrillon, staring Sylvie Guillem, for the Paris Opera Ballet in 1986 which set the story in Hollywood. Vasiliev did a new version for the Ballet Theatre of the Kremlin in 1991. In 1996 Michael Corder choreographed an award-winning new version for English National Ballet, which also went to the Boston Ballet. In 1997 Matthew Bourne's West End production set Prokofiev's ballet in the British capital during the Second World War. Other stagings include de Warren for Northern Ballet Theatre and Darrell for Scottish Ballet.

Source: Oxford Dictionary of Dance

CHOREOGRAPHER



STEVENSON

Ben Stevenson

Ben Stevenson, a native of Portsmouth, England, received his dance training at the Arts Educational School in London. Upon his graduation, Mr. Stevenson was awarded the prestigious Adeline Genee Gold Medal, the highest award given to a dancer by the Royal Academy of Dancing. At the age of eighteen, Mr. Stevenson performed with Alicia Markova in *Where the Rainbow Ends*, and soon after was invited to join the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet by Dame Ninette de Valois, where he worked with Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, and John Cranko. A few years later, Sir Anton Dolin invited him to dance with the London Festival Ballet, where, as a principal dancer, he performed leading roles in all the classics.

Mr. Stevenson also veered to London's West End where he performed the juvenile lead in *The Music Man*, and appeared in the original casts of *Half a Sixpence* and *The Boys From Syracuse*. For British television's "Sunday Night at the Palladium," he danced in musical numbers 52 weeks a year with such stars as Judy Garland, Ella Fitzgerald, Shirley Bassey, and Cleo Laine.

In 1967, the London Festival Ballet asked him to stage his first, and highly successful, production of *The Sleeping Beauty* which starred Margot Fonteyn. In 1968, Rebekah Harkness invited him to New York to direct the newly-formed Harkness Youth Dancers. After choreographing *Cinderella* in 1970 for the National Ballet in Washington, D.C., he joined the company in 1971 as co-director with Frederick Franklin. That same year, he staged a new production of *The Sleeping Beauty* in observance of the inaugural season of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

In 1976, Mr. Stevenson was appointed Artistic Director of the Houston Ballet, and since that time, he has built the Houston Ballet into one of America's leading ballet companies. During his tenure, he has developed the company's repertory by acquiring the works of the world's most respected choreographers, commissioning new works, staging the classics and choreographing original works. At the Mr. Stevenson's invitation, Sir Kenneth MacMillan and Christopher Bruce joined the Houston Ballet in 1989 as Artistic Associate and Resident Choreographer respectively, thereby establishing a permanent core of choreographers whose works contribute to the diversity of the Houston Ballet's repertory.

Mr. Stevenson has received numerous awards for his choreography, including three gold medals at the International Ballet Competitions of 1972, 1982, and 1986. In addition, he has staged his ballets for the English National Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, the Paris Opera Ballet, La Scala in Milan, the Munich State Opera Ballet, The Joffrey Ballet, London City Ballet, Ballet de Santiago, and for many companies in the United States.

In 1978, Mr. Stevenson travelled to China on behalf of the United States government as part of a cultural exchange program. At the invitation of the Chinese government, he has returned almost every year since to teach at the Beijing Dance Academy. To expose the Chinese students to Western dance forms, Mr. Stevenson has brought with him teachers of jazz and modern dance, including Gwen Verdon. In 1985, he was instrumental in the creation of the Choreographic Department at the Beijing Dance Academy. He is the only foreigner to have been made an Honorary Faculty Member of the Beijing Dance Academy and the Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Mr. Stevenson

has also taught for American Ballet Theatre, The Joffrey Ballet, and the English National Ballet. In addition, Mr. Stevenson oversees the development of the Houston Ballet Academy as its director.

Mr. Stevenson's friends and colleagues know him as a world-class wit and raconteur, a lavish and generous host who delights in cooking and entertaining. He is married to Joan Tostavine, a former classmate, who teaches at her own ballet school in England.

During the 1995-96 season, Ben Stevenson celebrated twenty years as the head of the Houston Ballet. Over the past decades, Mr. Stevenson has nurtured Houston Ballet from a small provincial ensemble to one of the nation's largest dance companies, one which has performed to critical acclaim throughout the world. In July, 1995, Mr. Stevenson led the Houston Ballet on a two-week tour of the People's Republic of China with performances in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. The Houston Ballet is the first full American ballet company to be invited by the Chinese government to tour the People's Republic. The company's invitation to perform in China is a direct result of the Mr. Stevenson's international reputation as a choreographer and teacher. Over 500 million Chinese witnessed Mr. Stevenson's production of *Romeo and Juliet* when the Houston Ballet's opening night performance in Beijing was telecast live on Chinese television.

Source: http://www.abt.org/education/archive/choreographers/stevenson_b.html

COMPOSER

Sergei Prokofiev

Prokofiev, a Ukrainian-Soviet composer was born in Sontsovka, Ukraine on May 5, 1891 and died in Moscow on March 5, 1953. He wrote much ballet music, including the full-length *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, two of the best-known ballet scores in the world. His first ballet, *Ala and Lolly*, was written in 1914, a commission from Diaghilev, although it was never performed (it had to wait until 1927 when Terpis staged it at the Berlin State Opera). A list of his ballets includes *Chout*, Ballet Russes de Diaghilev, Paris 1921, choreography by Slavinsky and Larionov; *Trapeze*, Russian Romantic Ballet, Berlin 1925, choreography by Romanov; *Le Pas d'acier*, Ballet Russes de Diaghilev, Paris 1927, choreography by Massine; *The Prodigal Son*, Ballet Russes de Diaghilev, Paris 1929, choreography by Balanchine; *Sur le Borsythène*, Paris Opera 1932, choreography by Lifar, and *The Stone Flower*, Bolshoi Ballet, Moscow 1954, choreography by Lavrovsky.

His concert music has also been used by many choreographers; examples include Tudor's *Gala Performance*, London Ballet 1938; Bolm's *Peter and the Wolf*, Ballet Theatre, New York 1940; MacMillan's *Triad*, Royal Ballet 1972; Robbin's *Opus 19*, New York City Ballet 1979; Grigorovich's *Ivan the Terrible*, Bolshoi Ballet, Moscow 1975; and Kudelka's *The Heart of the Matter* and *Désir*. He and Stravinsky are the two most important ballet composers of the 20th century.

Source: Oxford Dictionary of Dance

MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6–8)

LESSON PLAN

Activity 1: The Language of Pantomime (**Fine Arts / Theater**)

- **Objective:** Understand how dancers communicate complex plot points without speaking.
- **Task:** Have students practice standard ballet mime gestures (e.g., "pleading," "dancing," "marrying," "time").
- **Prompt:** In pairs, students must create a 30-second silent scene demonstrating a conflict between two siblings using only physical expression and posture.

Activity 2: Modern Character Monologues (**ELA**)

- Can love and money mix?
- Why do people hide their true feelings?
- How does humor help tell serious stories?

HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9–12)

LESSON PLAN

Activity 1: Prokofiev and Political Art (**History / Social Studies**)

- **Objective:** Contextualize the ballet within 20th-century history.
- **Context:** Sergei Prokofiev composed Cinderella during World War II in the Soviet Union (between 1940 and 1944).
- **Task:** Research how Soviet censorship and wartime hardships influenced classical artists during this era.
- **Prompt:** Write an argumentative essay on whether *Cinderella* served as escapist entertainment or a political statement on resilience for the Soviet public.

Activity 2: Critical Performance Review (**ELA / Media Literacy**)

- **Objective:** Evaluate a live performance using objective critique frameworks.
- **Task:** Attend the Philadelphia Ballet performance and write a formal 500-word production review.
- **Criteria:** Students must evaluate three specific elements: scenic/lighting design, technical execution of the principal dancers, and how well the choreography matched Prokofiev's score.

Activity 3: Contrast and Compare

Read or assign the following versions of Cinderella. Compare and contrast the various versions. What are the common themes that arise? Perform the versions for classmates or invite an audience.

- The Princess and The Golden Shoes – A Scottish Tale
- Yeh-hsien – A Chinese Cinderella Story
- The Hidden One – A Native American Legend
- Tattercoats – An English Tale
- Chinye – A West-African Tale

HIGH SCHOOL *(continued)*

- Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters – Zimbabwe
- The Korean Cinderella
- The Egyptian Cinderella
- Cinderella – Italy
- The Cinder Maid – Reconstructed from various European sources
- Pepelyouga – Serbia

Creative Writing

- Write your own fairy tale.
- Discuss the characteristics of a fairy tale.
- Who is the audience?
- What imaginary land is your fairy tale set in?
- Who are the characters?
- Is there a lesson to be learned?
- Draw a picture for the cover of your fairy tale book.
- Find a piece of music that would either begin or end your story.
- Create one movement or gesture that a character in your story would perform.

Fractured Fairy Tales

- Discuss various fairy tales that the students are familiar with. Collect characters, themes, settings, etc. and write them down.
- Allow students to pick and choose different characters from fairy tales. For example, what would happen if Little Red Riding Hood met Snow White?
- Encourage students to be as creative and explorative as possible.
- Students should articulate the significance of these various characters/themes/settings and how or why they would be different with the additional changes.

Production Elements to Watch For

When attending the performance at the Academy of Music, instruct students to observe the following technical details:

- **The Corps de Ballet:** Notice how the ensemble dancers create geometric patterns on stage during the Ball scene to represent the rigid structure of court life.
- **Scenic Transitions:** Watch how the stage design shifts rapidly from a dark, cramped kitchen to an expansive, magical forest.
- **The Slipper Fit:** Observe the physical comedy integrated into the choreography when the Step-sisters attempt to force their feet into the slipper.

FUN FACTS

- The very first tale of Cinderella was recorded in China at around AD 350. That Cinderella is Yeh-hsien. She wears a dress made of kingfisher feathers and her shoes are made of gold.
- The earliest appearance of the Cinderella story in print was in 1634.
- In the 19th century, the Brothers Grimm created a darker version of the story; the stepsisters' eyes are pecked out by birds to punish the sisters for their cruelty towards their siblings.
- The original versions of fairy tales can be gruesome, so they are often rewritten and toned down to appeal to the masses.
- Disney released an animated version of Cinderella in 1950 and then a real-life version in 2015.