

LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE

For the very first time in its history, the Czech National Ballet will perform Sir Frederick Ashton's famous choreography *La Fille mal gardée*. The fascinating masterpiece, whose productions have featured the world's very finest dancers, has to date been staged by more than 35 companies, including the Royal Ballet in London, the Paris Opera, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, the American Ballet, the Boston Ballet and the National Ballet of Canada.



Photo: The Queens - Mário Bakuš, Alexandre Katsapov

La Fille mal gardée (The Wayward Daughter) is a truly unique work, as its original version ranks among the oldest ballets preserved up to the present day. Taking place in a pastoral setting inspired by Ashton's love for the Suffolk countryside, the cartoon-like set design, featuring maypoles and dancing hens, creates a wonderful spring atmosphere full of sunshine. *La Fille mal gardée* is one of Ashton's most virtuoso choreographies, difficult in the series of energetic pas de deux and solos that express the youthful passion of Lise and Colas.

The ballet, originally titled *Le ballet de la paille, ou Il n'est qu'un pas du mal au bien* (The Ballet of the Straw, or There is Only One Step from Bad to Good) was first presented at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux on 1 July 1789, a mere two weeks prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution. It was a creation of Jean Dauberval (1742–1806), one of the greatest choreographers of his time, a pupil of the renowned dance reformer Jean-Georges Noverre. The lead role was portrayed by Théodore Dauberval, the choreographer's wife.

In the ballet d'action, inspired by his teacher, Dauberval enriched the heroic subject with comedic elements. The work does not feature aristocrats, kings and gods, as was conventional in ballets at the time, but ordinary people, and neither does it include supernatural beings, as would become the case of Romantic ballet in the first half of the 19th century.

FILIP BARANKIEWICZ
Artistic Director of Ballet

ballet

The story is set in a village. Widow Simone tries to prevent her pretty daughter Lise from marrying Colas, a smart yet poor fellow, as she would like her to wed the dim-witted, yet extremely rich, Alain, the son of a landowner. Containing both humorous and lyrical scenes, the ballet's story is similar to that of Bedřich Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*. In line with an old tradition, the comic role of Mama Simone is danced by a man.

Dauberval's choreography was an astounding success. Two years after its premiere in Bordeaux, the work was staged in London, and subsequently all over Europe, under the titles *Le Ballet de la paille* and *La Fille mal gardée*. In 1885, its revival, created by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov, premiered as *La Précaution inutile* in Russia.

Sir Frederick Ashton's Royal Ballet production of *La Fille mal gardée* has become a celebrated classic of the ballet repertoire. Since its opening night in 1960, his version, to the original music arranged by John Lanchbery, has been the most popular English-style ballet worldwide. Ashton's feted choreography will now finally be staged at the National Theatre in Prague.

LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE

Music: Louis-Joseph-Ferdinand Hérold

Music arranged by: John Lanchbery

Choreography: Frederick Ashton

Sets and costumes: Osbert Lancaster

Lighting design: Jean-Pierre Gasquet

Performances:

Premiere: 19 April 2018

Second premiere performance: 20 April 2018

22 and April, 6, 17 and 19 May

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