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THE SYMBOLISM OF HISTORICAL DANCES IN THE MUSIC OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S BALLET *SLEEPING BEAUTY* *

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Abstract

The music of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* has long played a significant role in the success of ballet. In addition to spectacular scenes, solos, and duets, the work of the Russian composer also includes historical dances, such as the archaic sarabande, an unusual choice for a 19th century Romantic composer. In the first half of this paper, I will provide a brief historical overview of the role of the suite in Tchaikovsky's compositions before attempting to answer the question of whether his œuvre contains antecedents for the various dances, particularly the Sarabande in *Sleeping Beauty*. For Rudolf Nureyev, one of the greatest ballet artists of all time, *Sleeping Beauty* accompanied him throughout his creative career. He danced many of its characters, with one of his favourite roles being that of Prince Désiré; as a choreographer, he staged the production no less than seven times. Nureyev understood the dramaturgical significance of the Sarabande and, unlike many directors from the 19th through the 21st century, did not omit the dance from his choreographies.

Keywords: Tchaikovsky, *Sleeping Beauty*, Nureyev, suite, sarabande

1. INTRODUCTION

Sleeping beauty, the joint work of Marius Petipa (1818–1910) and Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), has been aptly described by dance historians using terms such as *Ballet à grand spectacle*, (Wiley, 2003, pp. 46–47.), *ballet des nation* (Mahiet, 2016, pp. 121–126.), *ballet–féerie*, (Wiley, 1985, p. 189) *Gesamtkunstwerk*,[1] and even "the ballet of ballets" (Rudolf Nureyev Foundation 2022, November 23). Given the ballet's artistic complexity, unique qualities and the richness of its dance roles, it is no coincidence that it played a key role in the life of Rudolf Nureyev (1938–1993). One of the most important ballet dancers and choreographers of the 20th century, he admired the work

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[1] The phrase was used by several critics following its premiere, including Alexandre Nikolaevich Benois [Benua] (1870–1960), a painter, writer, and critic (Moscow, 1980, p. 606); in the words of another critic, "the [Sleeping Beauty] is a triumph of art in which music, dance and painting are united." N.N., *Syn otechestva*, 4 January 1890, p. 3. Both quoted by Wiley (1985, pp. 47–49, 189).

from his early years as a ballet student until the end of his career (Kavanagh, 2007). He performed the role of Prince Désiré several times, considering it one of his favourites. Beyond this role, he also danced as the Bluebird (Paris, 30 June 1961; Rudolf Nureyev Foundation, 2022, July 19) and as the evil fairy Carabosse a year before his death (Kavanagh, 2007; Rudolf Nureyev Foundation, 2022, Nov. 23). As a choreographer, he staged the ballet numerous times.[2]

A key factor contributing to the uniqueness of Tchaikovsky's music is the inclusion of a number of fashionable and historical dances, often appearing several times in a piece in the form of a dance within a dance. While the waltz, the most popular ballroom dance of the 19th century, is certainly not absent, his scores also include a variety of other dances such as the Provençal farandole, the Polish Polonez, the polka, the minuet, the gavotte and the mazurka (*Table 1*). Tchaikovsky did not indicate a specific dance in Act 2 for dances no. 12.d and no. 12.e.) Rita Széll, associate professor at the Hungarian University of Dance, has suggested the gigue or forlane for no. 12.d and the rigaudon for no. 12.e. The gigue is especially likely, since Tchaikovsky dealt with this dance in his *Mozartiana*, composed prior to *Sleeping Beauty*.

The dances in *Sleeping Beauty* are not only spectacular and entertaining but also serve as an effective means of portraying the characters. The Sarabande in Act 3, an unconventional choice for a 19th-century composer, stands out from the other dances included in the ballet.

Tchaikovsky: *Sleeping Beauty* – dances		
Retrieved from	Scene from	Dances and dance–allusions
Prologue	No. 2 – dance scene: the entry of the fairies	Tempo di Valse
	No. 3 – Organ Fairy	Tempo di Valse
Act 1	No. 6	Circular
	No. 8b – Dances of the court ladies	[nincs táncjelzés – polka]
Act 2	No. 12b – Dance of the princesses	Tempo di Menuetto
	No. 12c – Dance of the Baronesses	Tempo di Gavotte
	No. 12d – Dance of the Countesses	[no dance indication – gigue? forlane?]
	No. 12e – Dance of the Marquises	[no dance indication –rigaudon?]
	No. 13b	Farandole Tempo di Mazurka
Act 3	No. 22	Polacca [Polonaise]
	No. 23a – Var. I. Gems: Golden Fairy	Tempo di Valse
	No. 23b – Var. II. Jewels: silver fairy	[no dance indication – polka]
	No. 25b – Cinderella and Prince Fortune	Tempo di Valse
	No. 26a – Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf	[no dance indication – polka]
	No. 29	Sarabande
	No. 30 – Finale	Tempo di Mazurka

Table 1. Sleeping Beauty's stylised dances

[2] One of the greatest successes of Nureyev's career was his collaboration with the National Ballet of Canada in Toronto, where he not only choreographed *Sleeping Beauty* but also danced the role of the Prince (Booth, 2014. Apr. 21). He choreographed in 1989 in Paris at the Opera national de Paris–Opera Bastille, achieved similar success (Nera, 2018. May 3).

As a music historian, my study seeks to determine whether there are antecedents for archaic dances in Tchaikovsky's œuvre, whether there are parallels between *Sleeping Beauty* and his other works, and what dramaturgical role the Sarabande plays in the work.

2. GENESIS

Regarding the genesis of *Sleeping Beauty*, it is important to first highlight that Russian political events in the 19th century played a critical role in the choice of the ballet's subject. In 1881, Ivan Vsevolozhsky (1835–1909) was appointed head of the Tsarist Theatres in St. Petersburg. He possessed a keen awareness of the desire of the frightened Tsarist family and the Russian nobility for artistic entertainment, which proved to be an significant factor in the cultural policy of the time. In general, Romanticism was took audiences back in time and into the world of fairy tales, a tendency that Vsevolozhsky fully understood. Having previously served as Russia's ambassador in Paris, he was well acquainted with French culture and had a particular admiration for the era of Louis XIV. This is evident in the increasing number of fairy-tale ballet performances showcasing Versailles-like pomp under his administration. It was Vsevolozhsky's idea to adapt the fairy tale *La Belle au bois dormant* by Charles Perrault (1628–1703) to the stage, for which he also wrote the libretto and designed the set and costumes. Marius Petipa, who authored over a hundred choreographies in his career and is credited with formalizing the structure of the classical *pas de deux* (Machalis–Forney, 1995, p. 331), choreographed the ballet, while Pyotr Tchaikovsky was responsible for the music.[3] Vsevolozhsky's choice was no coincidence: he had worked with Petipa on several successful ballets[4] and recognized his close attention to detail (Wiley, 2003, p. 47).

A key question arises: beyond Vsevolozhsky's personal interest, why did the creators of *Sleeping Beauty* look to French art as a model, and why did they evoke the splendour of Louis XIV in 19th-century Tsarist Russia? One possible explanation is that the Sun King provided an excellent model for his Russian successors. From 1661, once he had consolidated his sovereign rule, the king's main aim was to establish France as a dominate power. To achieve his goal, he used all available means – including the arts, directing religious, social, and cultural events to enhance his personal authority and thereby bring glory to France (Isherwood, 1973). He used the arts to demonstrate his political power and authority, a strategy that resonated with 19th-century Russia. Both ballroom dancing and ballet played important social roles in the court of Louis XIV (Little, 1975, p. 331), roles which are reflected in *Sleeping Beauty*. At its premiere, the creators made no effort to conceal the French inspiration, instead incorporating clear references to it throughout the work. Two prominent examples illustrate this: first, the *Rose Waltz* in Act 1 was performed in

[3] Among Tchaikovsky's stage works, his ballets – *Swan Lake* (1875–1876), *Sleeping Beauty* (1888–1889), and *The Nutcracker* (1891–1892) – were undoubtedly his most successful, surpassing his operas in popularity. Despite their nuanced characterisation, orchestral beauty, and lyricism, only two of his operas based on Pushkin's story, *Eugene Onegin* (1877–1878) and *Queen of Spades* (1890), are still performed today (Griffel, 1982, pp. 714–715).

[4] Before *Sleeping Beauty,* they had memorable success together in ballets such as *L'Ordre du roi* (1886), and later *The Nutcracker* (1892) and *Les Ruses d'amour* (1900).

blue, white, and red costumes, a reference to the colours of the French monarchy and the French national flag. While the tricolor became a symbol during the French Revolution, combining the royal white with the blue and red of Paris, it was not a reference to the time of Louis XIV, but rather an evocation of the broader French milieu (Scholl, 2004, p. 220, fn. 15; Mahiet, 2016, p. 120). A second French allusion appears in the final scene of the ballet – the *Apotheosis* – where the composer included the celebratory cheer "*Vive Henri IV!*" in reference to French King Henry the IV. This element, however, is often omitted in modern performances (Wiley, 1985, p. 150; p. 292, fn. 18.) A scholarly debate has emerged regarding the extent of *Sleeping Beauty*'s diplomatic role. While the French affinities of Vsevolozhsky, the French-born Marius Petipa, and Tchaikovsky (who had French ancestry), are evident in many scenes of the ballet, it would be an exaggeration, in my view, to interpret the figure of Carabosse as a representation of 16th-century France or, more specifically, as an allusion to Catherine de Medici (Hammond, 2017, pp. 38–39; Hammond, 2007, pp. 32–35). This is particularly unlikely given that *Sleeping Beauty* is set later in time than the Renaissance. As research by Tchaikovsky ballet expert Roland John Wiley has shown, both Vsevolozhsky and Petipa gave Tchaikovsky free rein in selecting musical styles for the ballet (Wiley, 1985, p. 130; p. 291 fns. 9–10). Nonetheless, Pepita offered numerous musical suggestions and requests to the composer throughout the creative process.[5] With the exception of the aforementioned waltz, Tchaikovsky's music, often in collaboration with other composers, evoked a period ranging from the mid–17th to the mid–18th century. Act I represents the mid-17th century, while the melodies of the ballet from Act II onwards are unmistakably 18th century. This logical progression is maintained through Act III. Here, however, the sarabande appears as a nostalgic and reminiscent evocation of the past reaching back a hundred years earlier. In Nureyev's choreographies, the costumes of the Sarabande dancers further reinforce this retrospection.

3. PAST AND PRESENT – VISUALISED THROUGH DANCE

3.1 The 19th Century: Waltz

The counterpoint of the past is also present in the ballet, as Tchaikovsky incorporates elements of his own time through the music. This not only is reflected in the waltz of Act I, but also in the *Tempo di Valse* performance instructions throughout the scenes, a clear anachronism within the story (*Table 1*). However, the inclusion of a dance inconsistent with the period depicted is outweighed by the popularity of the waltz in the 19th century, a cultural phenomenon from which the composer could not have distanced himself (though the enduing success of all three ballets has vindicated this decision). The *Tempo di Valse* passages in *Sleeping Beauty*, such as the entrance of the fairies in the prologue (No. 2), the dances of the Organ Fairy (No. 3.h), and the Golden Jewel Fairy (No. 23.a), as well as the scene featuring Cinderella and Prince Fortune (No. 24.b) are always linked to the fairy world, typical of *ballet–fairy* music.

[5] On 5 July 1889, Petipa had already completed the draft composition of the five–act ballet and immediately forwarded the completed parts to Tchaikovsky, annotating his musical preferences in calligraphic red letters (Vályi & Molnár, 2004, pp. 60–61; Petipa, 1971, pp. 129–144, as cited in Wiley, 1985, pp. 354–370).

The Prologue and Act I, despite their anachronistic waltzes, evoke the splendour of the 17th century. The depiction of the opulence of the royal court did not fail to impress, captivating not only the audience but also the critics of the time. As one of them wrote: "Silks, velvets, plush, gold and silver embroidery, magnificent brocades, furs, feathers and flowers, knightly armour and metal ornaments – sumptuous, and this sumptuous opulence is also true of the dancers in the smaller roles." (Benois [1870–1960], 1890, p. 3, as cited in Wiley, 1985, p. 189.)

3.2 The 18th Century: Minuets, Gavotte, and Other Suite Movements in Tchaikovsky's Œuvre

Act II marks a new era. The opening horn melody, an indispensable musical accompaniment to the hunt, not only introduces the hunting scene but also signals the passage of a hundred years since the events of the previous act. In addition to the music, the costumes and the sets are also indicative of the shift in time. In the history of music, the minuet and the gavotte frequently appeared in 18th-century compositions. Tchaikovsky masterfully presents these stylistic elements, which evoke the minuet (No. 12.b) and the gavotte (No. 12.c). Rather than being mere imitations, these compositions convey authenticity to the listener, giving the impression that they are original. A contemporary reviewer judged the music at the beginning of Act II as such:

> The whole hunting scene, all the court games and dances in the woods, and the musical turns that characterize the Désiré Prince have an »originality« that is not at all the same as a clever imitation of the old days or some kind of »stylization« (Benois, 1980, p. 603, as cited in Wiley, 1985, p. 291, fn. 10).

Serenade for Strings (C major, op. 48), 1880	
Movement1	Pezzo in forma di Sonata
Movement 2	Valse
Movement 3	Élégie
Movement 4	Finale (Tema Russo)

Table 2.a The movements of the *Serenade for Strings*

Suite no. 1 – Suite for orchestra in D minor (op. 43), 1878–79	
Movement 1	Introduzione e Fuga
Movement 2	Divertimento [waltz–allusion]
Movement 3	Intermezzo
Movement 4	Marche miniature
Movement 5	Scherzo
Movement 6	Gavotte

Table 2.b Movements of the Orchestral Suite No. 1

Suite no. 2 – Suite for orchestra in D major (op. 53), 1883 „Charactéristique"	
Movement 1	Jeu de sons
Movement 2	Valse
Movement 3	Scherzo
Movement 4	Rêves d'enfant
Movement 5	Danse (in the style of Dargomyzhsky)

Table 2.c Movements of the Orchestral Suite No. 2

Suite no. 3 – Suite for orchestra in G major (op. 55), 1884	
Movement 1	Élégie
Movement 2	Valse mélancolique
Movement 3	Scherzo
Movement 4	Tema con variazioni [Var. 4 – Dies irae Var. 12 – Polacca]

Table 2.d Movements of the Orchestral Suite No. 3

Suite no. 4 – Suite for orchestra in G major (op. 61), 1887 „Mozartiana"	
Movement 1	Gigue [After Mozart's Gigue for piano (K. 574)]
Movement 2	Menuet [After the Mozart Menuet for piano (K. 355)]
Movement 3	Preghiera [based on the transcription of Mozart's *Ave verum corpus* (K. 618) by Ferenc Liszt]
Movement 4	Thème et variations [Based on Mozart's variation on the aria „Unser dummer Pöbel meint" (K. 455) from the opera *Les Pèlerins de la Mecque* by Chr. W. Gluck *La Rencontre imprévue*]

Table 2.e Movements of Suite for Orchestra No. 4

The influence of the 18th century on Tchaikovsky can be seen in many of the composer's works, most notably the *Serenade for Strings* and his four orchestral suites (*Tables 2.a–e*). In the latter, the term 'suite' in the title originally referred to a series of dance movements, though by the Romantic era, composers no longer adhered as strictly to the traditional Baroque suite structure. Tchaikovsky's suites illustrate this evolution. The final movement of the first orchestral suite is a *Gavotte*. In Tchaikovsky's compositions, dance elements are not confined to movements explicitly labelled as such: the title of the second movement, for example, is *Divertimento*, but features unadulterated waltz music, while the last movement is called *Danse Baroque* but exhibits characteristics more reminiscent to Russian folk dance than a Baroque composition.

In Suite No. 3, in addition to the *Valse melancolique* (Movement 2), the final variation of the variation movement is the *polacca* (polonaise), a dance which also appears in *Sleeping Beauty. The Queen of Spades*, written around the same time as *Sleeping Beauty,* also features a polonaise. Furthermore, Variation 4 of the orchestral Suite No. 3 evokes another historical period with its Gregorian *Dies irae*.

The orchestral suite No. 4 is, as its subtitle *Mozartiana* indicates, a tribute to one of Tchaikovsky's greatest idols. Mozart's influence extends beyond *Mozartiana* and *Sleeping Beauty*; it is also evident in the intermezzo of the opera *The Queen of Spades*, which pays hommage to the Salzburg master and evokes the pastoral idyll music of the 18th century (*Op. 1*). *The Queen of Spades*, written at the same time as *Sleeping Beauty,* also contains numerous French references; for example, in Pushkin's story, the title character spends his youth in Paris, and the beginning of the intermezzo recalls both the beginning of *La Marseillaise* as well as Mozart (*Figure 1*).

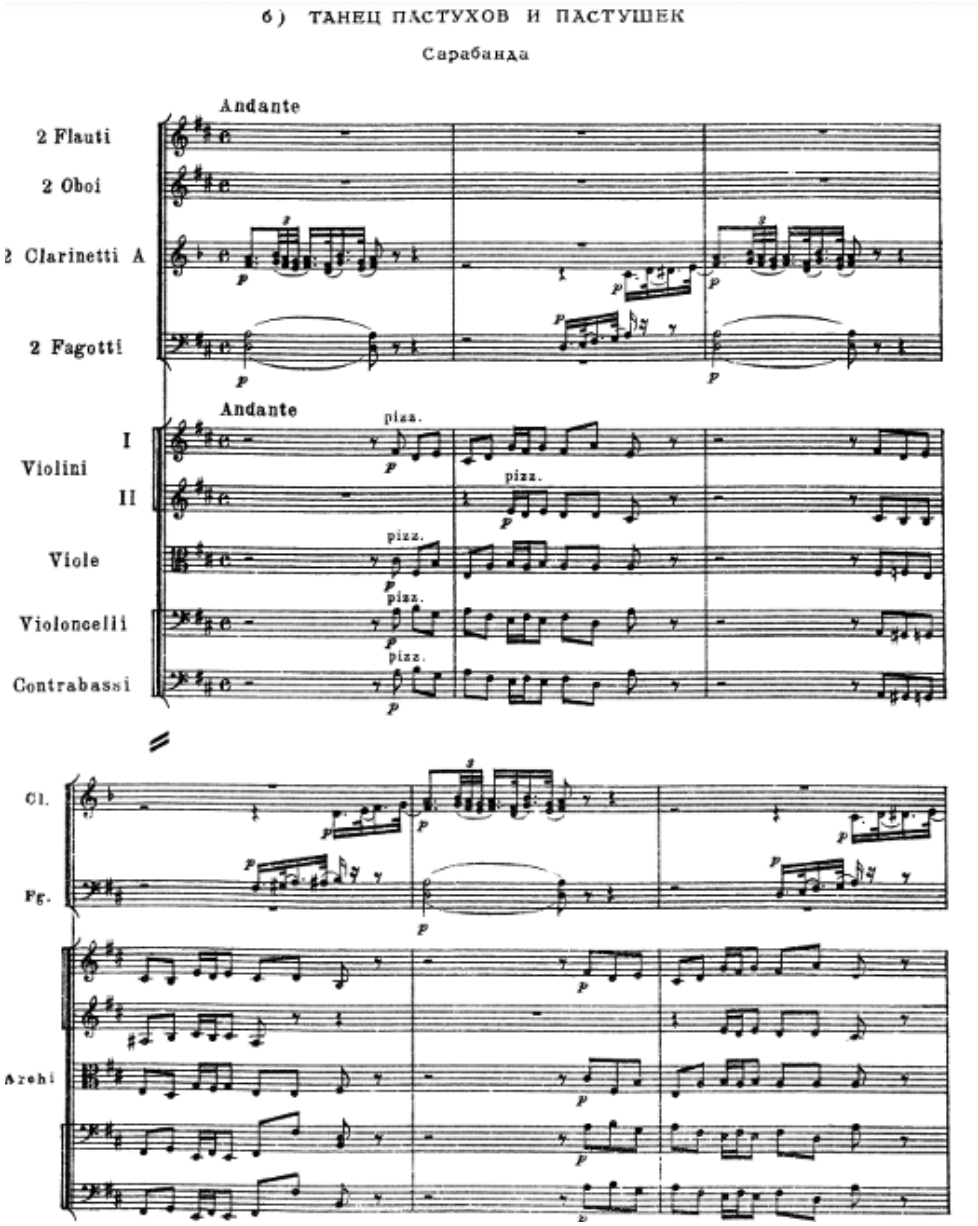

Figure 1. The Queen of Spades – beginning of the Intermezzo.
Tchaikovsky, P. I. (1890) The *Queen of Spades* [Score], p. 371.

3.3 The 17th Century: The Sarabande

A striking example of how music conveys underlying meaning is the appearance of the sarabande in Act III (No. 29, Nera, 2018, 1:47:30–1:50.26). The exact origins of

the dance are obscure; while it is now thought to be Spanish in origin, some dance historians do not rule out Saracen and Grenadian Moorish influences (Ranum, 1986, p. 22). The triple–meter sarabande is one of the slowest dances in the suite, making it technically challenging to perform. This difficulty arises from the dancer's need for an exceptional sense of balance to execute the slow movement combinations. Furthermore, the slow tempo allows for the incorporation of numerous complex dance steps within a single beat of the melody (Kovács, G., 1999, p. 25).

In *Sleeping Beauty*, as in other romantic works, archaisation often carries a secondary meaning. As previously noted, the inclusion of the sarabande serves to evoke the past within the fairy tale narrative, transporting the audience back a hundred years, The choice is particularly striking, as the dance was considered archaic not only in the 19th century but also in the 18th. The sarabande has been embedded in the musical consciousness since the Baroque period; however, in the post-Baroque era, the fixed movements of the suite became less prevalent in composers' compositions. In the 19th century, these movements, including the sarabande, were employed as stylistic curiosities. This practice continued into the 20th century, when famous and popular sarabandes were also composed. Examples include Claude Debussy's *Danseuses de Delphes* from *Preludes* I; Igor Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress*. (In Act II of Stravinky's work, following the marriage of the protagonist Tom Rakewell to the famous bearded lady, Turkish Baba, the couple returns home. As Baba, overcome with joy, ascends the stairs, she removes the bobblehead that previously concealed her face, an act that once made her a circus attraction. This bizarre scene is also accompanied by a sarabande (Kovács, 2024, 37.48–43.31). Further example from the 20th century is Dohnányi, Ernő: *Suite in the Old Style*, op. 24, 4th movement (Kovács, 2022, pp. 103–107).

The inclusion of the sarabande in the ballet (*Figure 2*) was very much the result of conscious planning. As previously indicated, Petipa did not dictate the specific dances the composer should choose (Wiley, 1985, p. 130), but it is known that he did suggest that the sarabande be included in Act III.[6] While the sarabande is not of French origin, its use in *Sleeping Beauty* serves as another reference to the time of Louis XIV, functioning as a carrousel (Mahiet, 2016, p. 122; Wiley, 1985, p. 188).

[6] Petipa wrote to Tchaikovsky: "J'ai donné à M. Tchaikovsky des morceaux de musique de la Sarabande. M. Petipa" (Wiley, pp. 130, 291 fn. 9, 358, 370). In a letter to Tchaikovsky, Vsevolozhsky asks the composer to evoke the style of Louis XIV's era with melodies composed in the spirit of Lully, Bach, and Rameau (Wiley, 1985, p. 104).

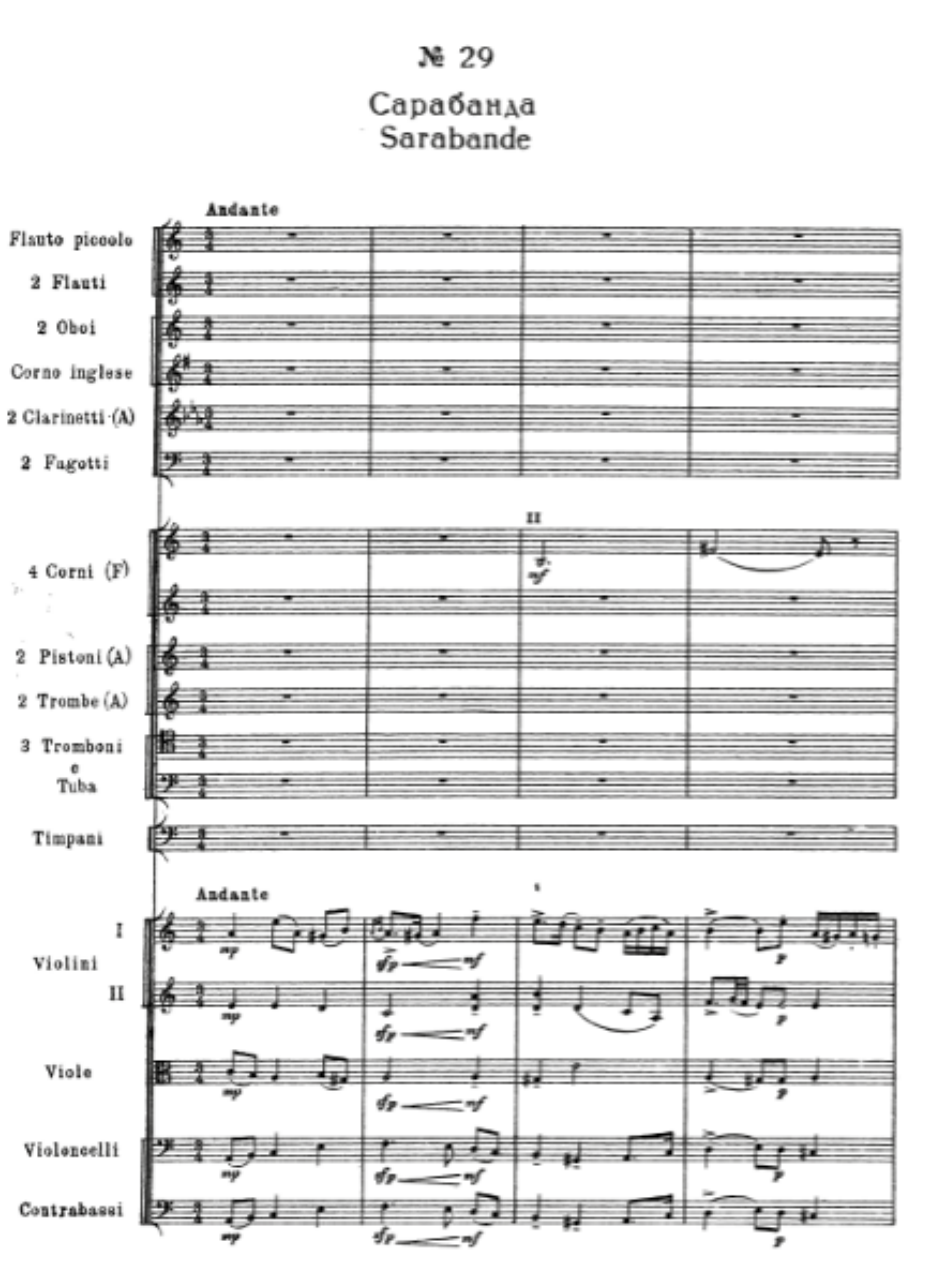

Figure 2. Sleeping Beauty – beginning of the Sarabande.
Tchaikovsky, P. I. (1890) *Sleeping Beauty* [Score], p. 273.

This spectacular genre, which included equestrian displays, was very popular in the 17th century and epitomised the absolute power and splendour of the monarch. It was performed, for example, at the court of Louis XIV in 1662, during the

celebrations marking the birth of the heir to the throne (Burke, 1992, p. 66; Mahiet, 2016, p. 122). The carrousel also provided an opportunity to showcase different nations. The 1890 libretto of *Sleeping Beauty* reveals that the creators of Act III imagined groups of couples at Aurora's wedding representing Roman, Persian, Indian, American, and Turkish nations for, an arrangement reminiscent of the 1662 carrousel at Louis XIV's course.

In this respect, the ballet héroïque *Les Indes galantes* by the French composer Jean–Philipp Rameau (1683–1764), which is also closely associated with the carrousel, can be considered a predecessor to *Sleeping Beauty.* Rameau's work represents a distinctive form of *ballet des nations*, featuring depictions of various cultural groups, including generous Turks, Peruvian Incas, Persians, and American Indians. This procession of diverse peoples is very similar to that seen in Tchaikovsky's ballet.[7]Another notable parallel – this time within Tchaikovsky's own works – can be observed between *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Queen of Spades*. Tchaikovsky also included a sarabande in the opera's music; however, in this instance – *horribile dictu* – it appears in 4/4 (!), again serving as a reference to the past (The sarabande, typically a very slow dance, is distinguished by its characteristic beat, usually composed in 3/4 or 3/2; Maksakova, 2019 – 1:17.36–1:19:47, *Figure 3*).

[7] A remarkable example of simultaneous dance on stage as part of a plot is the ball scene from *Don Giovanni by* W. A. Mozart (1756–1791) at the end of Act I. Unlike in *Sleeping Beauty*, where different nations are represented, this scene features dances from different social classes: nobles dance a minuet, the bourgeois a contra dance, and the peasants a country dance. Thanks to Mozart's genius, these three dances unfold at the same time, creating a stunning finale in which three dances in three different metres are played simultaneously by three different orchestras: a minuet in 3/4, a contra dance in 2/4 and a country dance in 3/8.

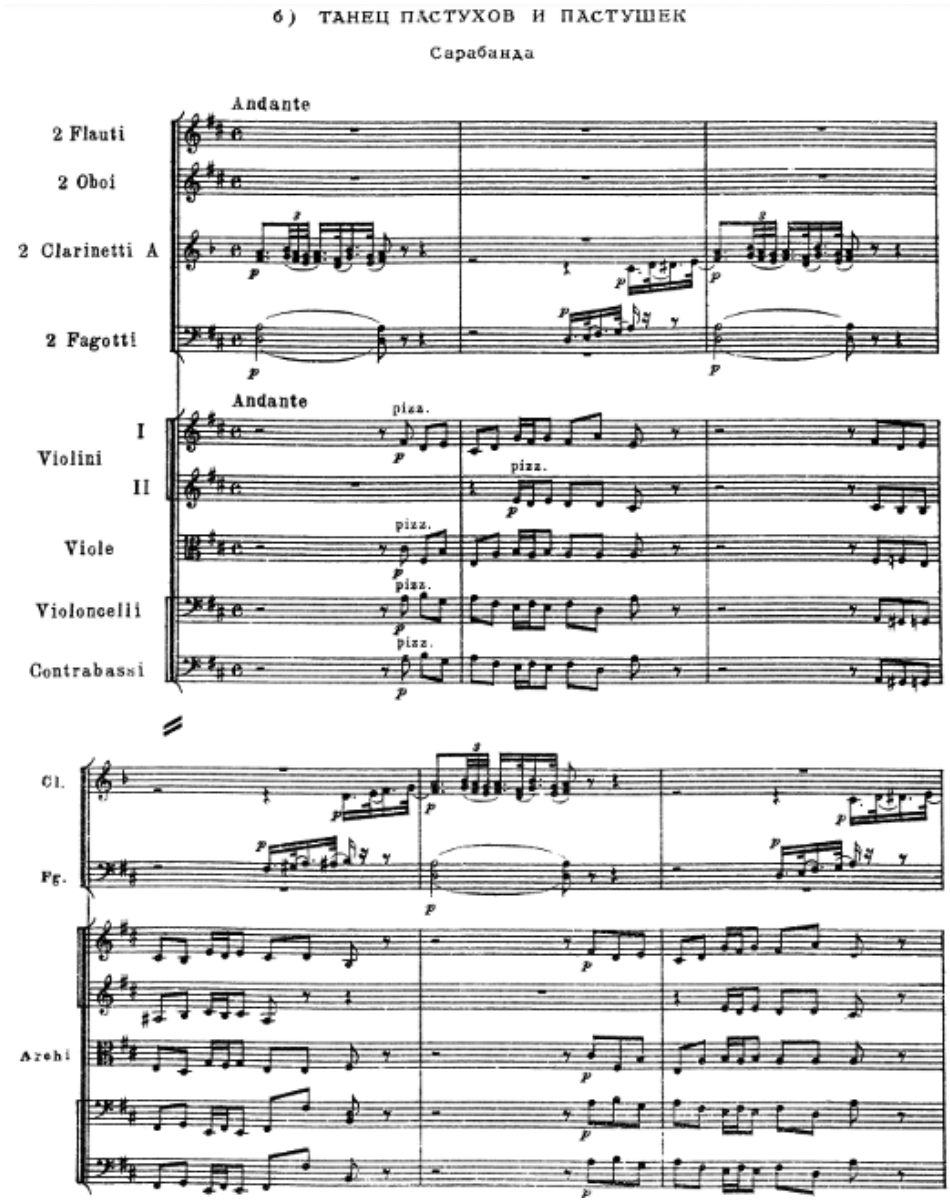

Figure 3. The Queen of Spades – beginning of the Sarabande.Tchaikovsky, P. (1890). *The Queen of Spades* [Score], p. 366.

The Sarabande in *Sleeping Beauty* is a two–part form (*Table 3*). Part *A* consists of two eight–note periods of identical material (*a+a*). In Part *B,* two new elements appear: *b*, which introduces tonal colouring, and *c*, which imitates a four–note motif with a single upbeat. The first section of the eight–note periods from Part *A* then returns

in a slightly varied form (a^v). The structure ($b–c–b–a^v$) is repeated, mirroring the first period (*a*). The only surviving rehearsal score used before the premiere, however, indicates that the conductor Riccardo Drigo presumably made several changes to the score that Tchaikovsky sent to St Petersburg. One such alteration concerns the Sarabande: at the premiere, Part *B*, beginning at bar 17, was played three times rather than twice (Wiley, 1985, p. 154, p. 410).

Form	A		B							
Form parts	a	a	b	c	b	a^v	b	c	b	a^v
Send to	1–8	9–16	17–20	21–24	25–28	29–32	33–36	37–40	41–44	45–48
Item number	8	8	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Table 3. Structure of the *Sleeping Beauty*'s Sarabande

The distinctive character of the *Sleeping Beauty* Sarabande is further demonstrated by the fact that it is the only piece in the entire ballet written in A minor whose tonal quality evokes a sense of sorrow and a nostalgic reminiscence of the past. While the piece also has E major and G major phrase endings, these merely serve as glimpses, with the Sarabande's music never permanently breaking away from its A minor tonality.

According to the 1891/92 yearbook of the Tsarist theatre, the Sarabande was dropped from the ballet shortly after its premiere and is not included in the printed piano excerpts (PR–1, PR–II; Wiley, 1985, p. 305), presumably because it was perceived as slowing down the action. This also explains why it has since been dropped from most productions. Following its premiere, few critics recognised the dramaturgical significance of the sarabande. Wiley (1985) identifies only two contemporary critics (p. 305) who recognised its role in evoking the past – specifically, the splendour of the court of Louis XIV and the fabled king Florestan XIV. Moreover, they noted that the ballet was indirectly intended to glorify the power of the Russian Tsar Alexander III. Rudolf Nureyev, however, understood the importance of the Sarabande retained it in his choreographies. Both of the Nureyev–choreographed ballets known to the author include the Sarabande (Booth, 2014; Nera, 2018).

4. THE SARABANDE OF SLEEPING BEAUTY AT THE HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA HOUSE

77 years after its premiere in St Petersburg, *Sleeping Beauty* was first performed in Hungary at the Hungarian State Opera House on 14 May 1967. The production featured choreography by Marius Petipa and was directed by Pyotr Gusev (*Figures 4–5*), with Gedeon Fráter as conductor and Tamás Pál conducting the second cast. Between 1967 and 1973, Gedeon Fráter and Tamás Pál took turns conducting the piece, and at the ballet's revival on 22 October 1975 – again directed by Gusev –

posters listed János Sándor as the conductor. Petipa's original choreography was performed in Budapest between 14 May 1967 and 28 March 1976, revived by Gusev. From 6 April 1991 until the performance on 25 February 2003, Viktor Róna's version was danced, a period that also witnessed the 100th Hungarian performance of the ballet in 1999. Between 17 and 28 April 2016, the ballet was performed in Hungary under the direction of Sir Peter Wright. The most recent performance of the ballet in Budapest took place on 4 December 2018 as part of a guest appearance by the Moscow City Ballet (for detailed performance dates and casts of *Sleeping Beauty* at the Hungarian State Opera, see https://digitar.opera.hu/alkotas/csipkerozsika/9374/).

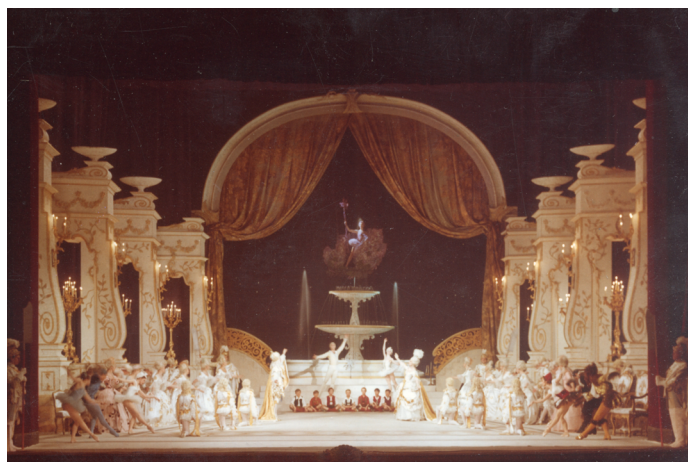

Figure 4. Detail from a 1967 performance of *Sleeping Beauty* at the Hungarian State Opera (Magyar Állami Operaház, Emléktár [Hungarian State Opera, Archive], 1967)

Figure 5. Detail from a 1991 performance of *Sleeping Beauty* at the Hungarian State Opera (Mezey, 1991, Magyar Állami Operaház, Emléktár [Hungarian State Opera, Archive])

It is encouraging that the Sarabande has been retained in most of the Budapest Opera's performances of *Sleeping Beauty*, although there is some ambiguity in the score as to whether or not to include it. Pencil annotations (e.g., "*tagliato*", "*does not go*", "*T.*") clearly indicate an intention to omit the s Magyar Állami Operaház, Emléktár [Hungarian State Opera, Archive] Sarabande. Conversely, the red pencil entry reading "*goes*", along with a reference to the number after which the dance should be played and the corresponding page number ("*No. 22 before – p. 197.*") confirms that the Sarabande indeed included in the Budapest performances (*Figure 6*).

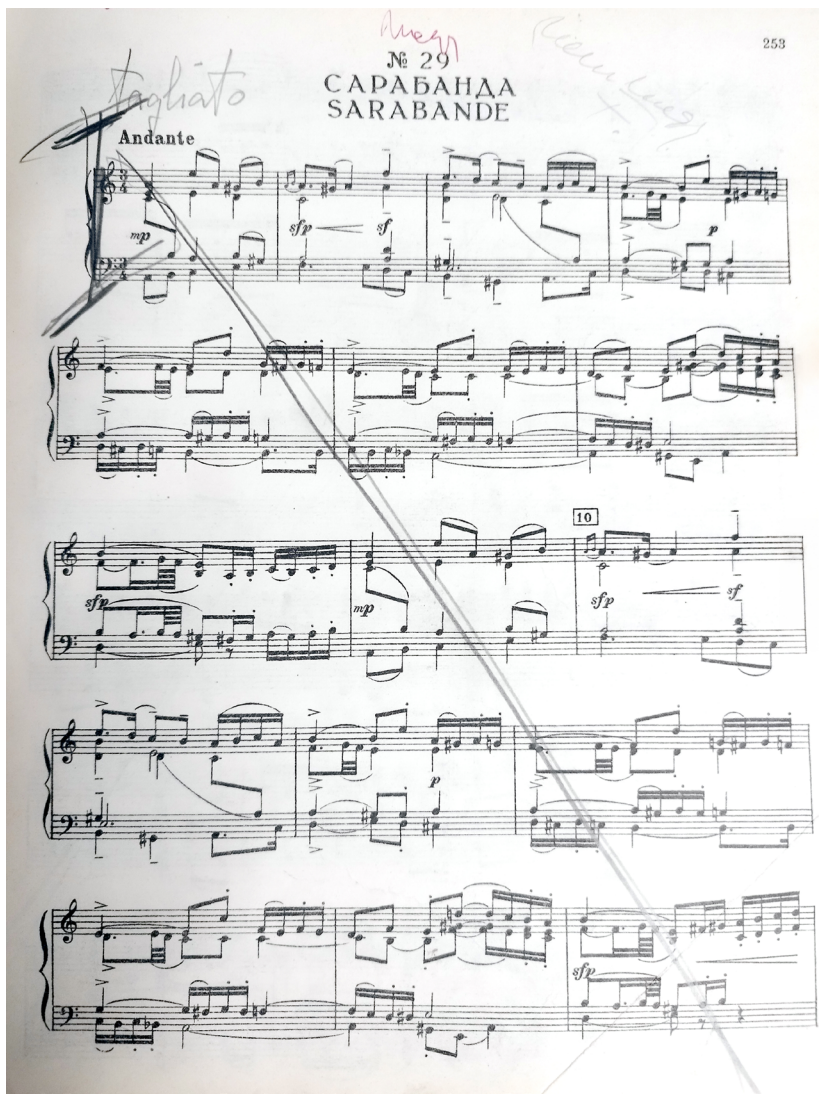

Figure 6. The Sleeping Beauty, piano score used in the Hungarian State Opera [Score] (Tchaikovsky, 1952)

The question remains as to which conductor omitted or intended to omit the Sarabande. According to dance historian Mark Gara, the dance was not included in the 1991 production and in Sir Peter Wright's version. The score was brought to my attention by Márton Karczag, head of the Opera House's Archive, to whom I extend my gratitude. Karczag also noted that the piano score may not have originally belonged to the Budapest Opera House, but could have originated from an Italian song theatre or conductor.

5. SUMMARY

Tchaikovsky composed the music for *Sleeping Beauty* at the height of his career, and its success has remained uninterrupted since its premiere on 15 January 1890 at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. In addition to analysing the musical and choreographic complexity of the ballet, this paper has examined the different dance types and their dramaturgical significance, with particular emphasis on the sarabande in Act III.

The creation of *Sleeping Beauty* was greatly influenced by Russian political and cultural events in the 19th century, especially artistic decisions reflecting Russian–French diplomatic relations. Ivan Vsevolozhsky, director of the Tsarist theatres in St Petersburg, sought to convey political and social messages by staging French–inspired ballets. The courtly splendour of the French Baroque and the lavish festivities of Louis XIV's era clearly influenced the ballet's set design, costumes, and musical characters. Particularly striking in the production were the references to French national symbols and the reflection of the importance of French courtly etiquette at the time. The archaic Sarabande of *Sleeping Beauty*, whose role was in the key focus of this study, appears in Act III of the ballet, recalling the history and values of the past and evoking the opulent courtly lifestyle of the 17th century, while at the same time conveying nostalgia within the social context of the 19th century. The analysis highlights that the Sarabande plays a crucial role not only musically but also dramaturgically, as it reinforces the historical dimensions of the narrative and emphasises the importance of the past in the present.

Sleeping Beauty is Tchaikovsky's longest ballet, with a full performance of the score exceeding three hours. For practical reasons, productions frequently present abridged versions, often omitting the Sarabande despite its important dramaturgical role in the narrative. This paper points out the symbolism of the Sarabande, which Rudolf Nureyev also emphasised in his choreographies, not only through the dance itself but also through the costumes. The appearance of the different dances – such as the waltz, minuet, polonaise, and sarabande – is not only a stylistic choice on the part of the artists, but also a conscious construction of a historical timeline. The present paper also draws parallels between *Sleeping Beauty* and stylized dances in the other works of Tchaikovsky's œuvre. The ballet represents different eras of the past through dances that convey different emotional and social messages to the audience. The work of Tchaikovsky and Petipa is therefore not only an artistic experience, but also a complex reflection of history, society, and culture.

While it may be an exaggeration that Wiley concludes his musical analysis of the ballet by asserting that "whatever the excellence of his other works, Tchaikovsky

never surpassed *Sleeping Beauty*" (Wiley, 1985, p. 150), there is no doubt that this fairy-tale-inspired score has been considered, both in its own time and in subsequent music history, to be one of his most successful works.

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