



Victorian  
Opera



# The Sleeping Beauty

**Education Resource - Music/Theatre Studies**

# The Sleeping Beauty

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### 1. Introduction

*The Sleeping Beauty* was composed by Ottorino Respighi in 1922 to be performed with puppets on stage and a cast of singers in the orchestra pit. A revised version was written in 1933 to be performed with child mimes, with the singers once again in the orchestra pit.

The opera's libretto was written by Gian Bistolfi and inspired by Charles Perrault's 1689 fairy tale, *La belle au bois dormant* (*The Sleeping Beauty*).

Respighi's opera was first titled *La bella addormentata nel bosco* and performed at the Teatro Odescalchi in Rome on 13 April 1922. It was written for Podrecca's Piccoli Theatre, a marionette puppet theatre, and toured for roughly 20 years. In November 1933, Respighi completed the new version of his children's opera, and retitled it *La bella dormente nel bosco*.

Although adapted from the original fairy tale, the opera has a few notable differences. In this version, the Princess wakes up in the 20th Century as the result of a kiss by a Prince who has just taken part in a race. Director Nancy Black has interpreted the awakening in a way which allows time for the Princess to decide if she is interested in this Prince, rather than instantly falling in love.

Victorian Opera's 2017 production features the 1933 score, with some elements of the 1922 version included.

This production of *The Sleeping Beauty* is a creative collaboration. VO has worked closely with the entire creative team to bring together the elements of puppetry and operatic performance. The singers are on stage throughout the performance and sing the roles. They occasionally assist the puppeteers to manipulate the puppets. The puppets/puppeteers perform all of the characters, except for the characters of the Prince and Princess who are portrayed physically by two of the puppeteers.

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## 2. Creative Team

**Composer** Ottorino Respighi

**Librettist** Gian Bistolfi

**Conductor** Phoebe Briggs

**Director** Nancy Black

**Puppet Design and Construction** Joe Blanck

**Set Design** Bluebottle, Joe Blanck

**Lighting Design** Phil Lethlean

## 3. Characters and Cast

Character	Singer – Cast	Voice Type
The Nightingale	Zoe Drummond	Soprano
The Cuckoo	Shakira Tsindos	Mezzo Soprano
The Frog	Kirilie Blythman	Soprano
The Ambassador	Timothy Newton	Bass
The Blue Fairy	Elizabeth Barrow	Soprano
The Jester	Timothy Reynolds	Tenor
The Green Fairy	Juel Riggall	Recitante (speaking role)
The King	Raphael Wong	Baritone
The Queen	Sally Wilson	Mezzo soprano
The Old Lady	Liane Keegan	Mezzo soprano
The Princess	Jacqueline Porter	Soprano
The Cat	Sally Wilson	Mezzo soprano
The Spindle	Kirilie Blythman	Soprano
A Woodcutter	Stephen Marsh	Baritone
The Duchess	Liane Keegan	Mezzo soprano
The Prince	Carlos E Bárcenas	Tenor
Mister Dollar Cheque	Timothy Reynolds	Recitante (speaking role)
A Villager	Tomas Dalton	Tenor

## Puppeteers

Christian Bagin  
Vincent Crowley  
Nadine Dimitievitch  
Hamish Fletcher

Kaira Hachefa  
Michelle Heaven  
Neal Holmes

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## 4. Director Nancy Black on The Sleeping Beauty



Nancy Black at Joe Blanck's studio with 'The Woodcutter'. Photo: Charlie Kinross

When I look at what's happening in the world right now, it just seems to me that there is no better time to have a kind of narrative that says 'things are awful, but they will get better'.

The opera begins with the ensemble in a bizarre, industrial space; it's all made from cardboard and metal trusses. They are unhappy; something bad has happened, though we don't know what. Either alone or in a group, they gradually come into this place around a fire. Once the music begins, an ember comes out of the fire and turns into a bird. It comes out over the balcony and we begin the Nightingale's song. Slowly this group of people, singers and puppeteers, come together to tell this story as a community.

The story begins in a beautiful, magical forest, where it is announced that the King and Queen have had a baby. It's a huge celebration, and the Blue Fairy says: "Yes, this is wonderful. We will all be the Godmothers to this wonderful little child." The whole court is celebrating the birth and everyone is in absolute joy about it. The Blue Fairy is about to bless the child with great beauty, when suddenly the Green Fairy arrives. She says, "Too bad! You may hope, but let me tell you, when she turns 20; it all ends and there is nothing you can do about it!"

For me, this is the first indication that this story mirrors life, and the curve balls thrown at us. Everything might be going along fine, and then suddenly someone very close to you dies too young; there's a terrible accident.

The baby girl is going to prick her finger spinning on a spindle, so the King desperately orders that all of the spinning wheels be destroyed. The girl grows up, and she is this epitome of beauty, joy and innocence, fun and openness. One day, she comes across this little old lady spinning wool who just loves the Princess. The Princess is fascinated by this process she has never seen and so she picks it up, pricks her finger and falls asleep.



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The Queen and the King go into such grief; it's so beautiful. Everybody is shocked; they don't know what to do with their grief. The Blue Fairy arrives and reassures everyone; "Okay, although this is horrible; it's not the end of the world." She puts everyone to sleep and leaves them with some hope. "When the kiss of April comes again, she will wake and everything will be fine." It's like entering into a grieving period, but you don't lose hope; you have to deal with it.

We then meet the Woodcutter; this bizarre character, singing another song about loss and carrying on. He is the example of somebody moving on while still feeling sad.

We leap ahead hundreds of years and the Prince comes in followed by a lascivious Duchess, who is going to give him whatever he wants; and this American capitalist called 'Mr Dollar Cheque'. They meet the Woodcutter who tells them this story, and they see the castle off in the distance.

When they all went to sleep, the castle was all wrapped up in spider webs. The spiders came and with the most beautiful music, they wrapped everybody up in a cocoon. The Woodcutter tells them this story of the enchanted Princess and that someone must come with the kiss of April and wake her up. The Prince says, "My name is April", and he knows he must reject the Duchess and follow this dream. He doesn't know what lies ahead for him or what he's going to have to do to get there, but he has to do it. The Duchess is enraged and Mr Dollar Cheque tells her, "Don't worry about it, I'm going to buy that castle. Come with me, he can have this Sleeping Beauty, whoever she is."

The Prince starts his journey to the castle and along the way, he has to battle the Giant Spider. April kisses the Princess and she wakes up; in the music, it's instant love. Then, we are now in the present time and the court awakes; we have a celebration across centuries and of cultures and stories coming together.

For me, this is a story about resilience. It's about grief, recovery, moving on in your life. It's about never losing sight of the fact that it is bad today, there's no question about that, but it might get better, and probably will.

On some level, it's about the Prince making a choice at that moment, and we always have choices. Do you go with what's easy and available or do you go with something else that is truer to you and that you recognise on a deeper level is for you? That's what he does.



The 'Woodcutter'. Photo: Charlie Kinross

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## 5. Synopsis

### ACT I

#### Scene 1

The year is 1620. The Nightingale's song competes with the Cuckoo's; it's eventually disturbed by a group of dancing Frogs. The Royal Ambassador and a Herald arrive to announce the birth of the Princess and invite the Fairies to the christening. The Blue Fairy and her companions appear, agreeing to become the Godmothers of the Princess. The Fairies depart leaving the two lonely birds.

#### Scene 2

In the castle's Great Hall, the Court Jester sings a lullaby at the cradle of the baby Princess. The King and Queen arrive, accompanied by the Fairies and Royal guests. The Blue Fairy and her companions pay tribute to the Princess and a group of Rose Nymphs waltz. The ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of the angry Green Fairy. She declares that at the age of 20, the Princess will prick her finger on a spindle and fall asleep forever. After the Green Fairy leaves, the King calls the Master of Spindles and orders him to destroy all of the spinning-wheels. The Blue Fairy asks a chorus of singing stars to make sure the Princess will be watched over.

### ACT II

#### Scene 1

It is now 1640, and in a forgotten part of the castle an old woman sings at her remaining spinning-wheel. When she leaves the room in search of some wool, the Princess comes in, singing of the joys of spring. She greets a suspicious Cat, who introduces her to the Spindle and the three dance together. The old woman returns and when urged by the Princess, teaches her how to spin, using a spindle that she had kept apart. The Cat notices this too late: the Green Fairy's prophecy comes true.

#### Scene 2

The Doctors tell the King that they don't know the cause of the Princess' illness. The Queen joins her husband in a mournful duet. A funeral procession enters. The Princess seems to only be asleep, but no amount of sweet foods or soft melodies have been of use in rousing her. The Blue Fairy appears and orders the Princess to be put in an alcove. She casts a spell of sleep over the entire Castle, predicting that the Princess will one day be woken by a kiss of love. A group of humming Spiders wrap the castle in their silvery web.

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The King and Queen. Photo: Charlie Kinross

## ACT III

### Scene 1

It is around 1940. In the woods adjacent to the enchanted castle, a Woodcutter sings and is joined by his fellows. Prince April enters, accompanied by a Duchess, a group of huntsmen and members of the “Paper-Hunt”, a rich American society lead by Mr. Dollar Cheque. The Prince is fascinated by the tale of the Sleeping Princess as told by the Woodcutter; still waiting for the kiss of April that will break the spell. The Duchess is already jealous, but is consoled by Mr. Dollar, who offers to buy the Sleeping Beauty. The Prince leaves his horse and approaches the castle.

### Scene 2

In the hall where the Princess lies, Prince April greets the motionless courtiers; voices tell him that love, inspired by the spring, will help him break the magic spell.

A large spider attempts to trap him in her web, but the Prince defeats her. He sees the Sleeping Beauty on her bed and his kiss awakens her and everyone else. They sing their love duet until the Blue Fairy appears, transforming the old room into a splendid new throne-room. They all rejoice. The “Paper-Hunt” group enters, gathering all into a “nouveau style” Fox-Trot.



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## 6. Ottorino Respighi



Ottorino Respighi was an Italian composer born in 1879. He is best known for his trilogy of tone poems, *The Fountains of Rome*, *The Pines of Rome* and *Roman Festivals*, but he also wrote nine operas, five ballets and many other works for orchestra, chamber ensembles and voice.

He was a gifted violinist and viola player who went to St Petersburg where he worked as a musician and studied composition with Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Respighi eventually gained recognition as a composer, taking up a post as Professor of Composition in Rome in 1913. He is very highly regarded for his orchestrations. His music is described as atmospheric, lyrical, dramatic, playful and descriptive. He is said to have referenced many other composers in his work including Debussy and Stravinsky.

He died in 1936.

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### 7. The Sleeping Beauty – The Fairy Tale

The journey of this tale begins with the earliest identified version, *Troilus and Zelandine*, which appeared in oral tradition in the 1300's. Another version from this time was *Perceforest* which was finally recorded in print in 1528, and in 1636 the story *Sun, Moon, and Talia* was published. These three versions have the 'Prince' as a crude and violent man.

Charles Perrault's version *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* was written in 1696. Here the Prince is a loving man, although there is brutality in the form of his mother, the Queen; she is an ogress who wishes to eat the children he has with the Princess. It was this version that inspired Respighi's opera, although the story stops at the point where the Prince and Princess unite.

Another notable version of this tale was penned by the Brothers Grimm in 1812. Called *The Briar Rose*, it is similar to the Charles Perrault version; but without reference to the Ogre Queen or the addition of a kiss to break the enchantment. A successful English version was written by Sir Arthur Weller-Couch in 1910.

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## 8. The Music and Instrumentation: An Interview with Conductor Phoebe Briggs

### How would you describe the music of this opera?

Respighi himself described it as ‘an innocent mockery of contemporary melodrama.’ It is full of drama, humour and emotion.

### What is the style of this opera?

The opera is written in neo-classical style, meaning a style that is influenced by the Classical period (approximately 1750-1820). Respighi was influenced by the Italian composers of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries but he added late 19th century harmonies and textures and dance movements to the work. It is made up of 3 acts each containing 2 scenes.

### Is the music of *The Sleeping Beauty* indicative of Respighi’s other compositions? Why?

Respighi had an incredible ability to write music that conjured up pictures in the mind of the listener. These were known as tone poems and the most famous of his was *The Pines of Rome*. I feel that the score of *The Sleeping Beauty* is effective this way as well. One example is the music of the spinning scene.

### Respighi has a glorious reputation for his capacity to compose for orchestra. As the conductor, what are you especially going to enjoy about this music?

Respighi was a very clever orchestrator and he could create so many different sounds from a relatively small group of instruments. I think what I will love is hearing the different colours and textures of the orchestra and seeing how they match the characterisation of the puppeteers and singers.

### Working with the diverse elements of puppetry, singers and orchestra, how will you have to collaboratively work to make this production come together?

I’m really looking forward to seeing how the puppeteers bring the characters to life. The puppets will be the expressive visual extension of the music and the singers will provide the voices for the puppets. The music won’t change from the way the opera would normally be performed so the puppeteers will work within a musical time frame. Each element will be an extension of the other so it should meld beautifully. I look forward to seeing how the puppeteers and singers create the characters together.

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### **Which 'songs' or 'themes' particularly stand out for you?**

I love the opening duet between the Nightingale and the Cuckoo (Act I, Scene 1), the Stars chorus (end of Act I, Scene 2), the Mourners chorus (Act II, Scene 2) and then the foxtrot at the end to celebrate the marriage of the Prince and Princess (Act III, Scene 2).

### **What is the orchestration for The Sleeping Beauty? Does anything particularly stand out, or is unusual/unique in his orchestration?**

Respighi uses a standard orchestra of flute (doubling piccolo), oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, piano (which includes celeste and spinet - like a harpsichord), percussion and strings. The percussion includes campanelle (bells) and an instrument called a raganella (cog rattle) to create the sound of frogs for the frog chorus. He uses piano throughout the opera and often uses it as a harp would have been used, with big flourishes and arpeggiated figures that stand out in the orchestral texture.

### **It is said that Respighi has referenced other composers and styles in this work. Which composers and styles have you recognised?**

I can hear snippets of Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, Debussy, Stravinsky and Massenet. The styles include waltz, foxtrot, march, minuet, dramatic spoken text (such as the Green Fairy's entrance), a slow section in the style of a 'ninna-nanna' or children's song, a cakewalk and sound effects such as a cat miaowing and the 'crowd' cheering and applauding.



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### 9. Joe Blanck on Designing the Puppets

When looking at the show, we needed to factor in 35 characters featured, though only 6 puppeteers. We ended up, however, with only 27 puppets.

There is no time for quick changes and the puppets needed to be able to be passed around really easily with puppeteers able to manipulate more than one puppet at a time. They need to be packed down on stage when not in use, rather than be placed off stage, so they are made of very lightweight material and can be laid on stage in such a way that they almost disappear.

They have been made to suit the size of the stage, so many of the puppets are life-sized or bigger. They are mostly similar to 'Silk Puppets' – a foam head on a stick with a lightweight frame and arms with hands on sticks.



The puppet designs. Photos: Charlie Kinross

The designs were inspired by drawings from the illustrations by Kay Nielsen.



The fairies are designed to be covered in silk with LEDs built into the face frame to give them a fairy-like quality.

The inside of a fairy puppet. Photo: Deborah Vanderwerp

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Moulds for the faces of the puppets. Photo: Charlie Kinross

They are first carved from clay and then these moulds are made from plaster. The actual puppet face is then a latex foam that is poured into the mould. The moulds are kept so that they can be reused as needed.



The Old Woman puppet. Photo: Charlie Kinross

Her face is cast from latex foam.



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The set model of the puppet characters. Photo: Charlie Kinross



The Queen puppet. Photos: Charlie Kinross

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The Ambassador puppet. L Photo: Charlie Kinross, R Photo: Deborah Vanderwerp

Many of the characters are designed to be able to be easily held from behind by a puppeteer and manipulated by either a single or multiple puppeteers. They are made on a lightweight frame, with the head separate to the body.



## 10. An Interview with Director Nancy Black

### What is this project?

I always want to ask myself, 'why are you doing this? Why bother? Why not just go to the movies?' The answer always guides me into the way I want to shape something. I can have an intuitive response to a piece of work but I don't know why I want to do it until I've thought it through.

This particular rendition of this folk tale and what Respighi has done to it is so pertinent to what the world is going through right now. For me, it's a story about resilience and hope. Throughout the history of human beings we have used narrative. We've used stories to make sense of a chaotic world; to bring reason to something that we don't understand, to try to figure out where we belong in it and how we could function within it to bring about some degree of happiness and stability. It's a way of trying to define a future. Religion, of course, comes into that same kind of category but so do folk tales: in all different kinds of ways they give you moral direction and hope.

It's a creation. I was listening to an interview with someone who specialises in Greek mythology. She was talking about why people love *Game of Thrones*, why there is this obsession around the world with these stories. It's because the stories are about gods, they are about people who have more power than we do yet they go through similar things to us, at that simple level that we can understand, yet they are another step removed.

In *The Sleeping Beauty*, we go into a fantasy world. It will begin as quite austere and a bit colourless. Gradually, the puppets will become beautiful and colourful and sometimes funny, silly and sentimental. There will be horror as well. That's the very simple construct that I'm giving and my challenge as a director and the challenge for the performers is going to be to give it all these nuances, all the nuances that are in the script.

### You have a bunch of opera singers, are they acting?

They are, but they are telling. They are able to sing the story. The puppeteers can't sing, but they give material and materialise the story the opera singers are singing.

The puppeteer is bringing you a visual character. It is not going to be very naturalistic. There's a Jester that's very funny. He will be played by one of our puppeteers, who is also a circus performer. The Jester's head will come off and be tossed around and come back together again.

When the Queen goes into her grief, she will actually fall apart; her arms will come off and her head will come off and the King will gradually put her back together again in an effort to comfort her. The Woodcutter is going to look strange like an old tree because he knows everything, a kind of a magic figure.

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The music is gorgeous, so we could hear it just on a musical level. The visual level will give you nuances and take you into other areas that the music does not. That's my hope and that's why we're designing it the way we are.

### **How do you bring the actor out of the opera singer?**

I give them things to do, little things, because when we change cast we don't have another three weeks to rehearse. But it's kind of acting 101, you have a crowd on stage there's a point of focus, people look at that.

Also, the Prince and the Princess are not going to be puppets, they are going to be real people. They are not going to be the singers, but rather two of the puppeteers. I will set up right from the beginning that the singers are the voices of the puppets.

The music is very accessible, very easy and so is the story. The story is known and so the visuals are going to give some depth to what's happening. That's my aim.

### **As director of an opera with all these elements, who in this process has come up with the overarching vision?**

I laid out my overarching vision and the designers said, 'oh yes, well.' They then went off on their own exploration, thinking 'we could do this or we could do that.'

I gave them a whole lot of beautiful Nielsen illustrations for inspiration, which we've drawn from. The designers then came up with their own ideas, which can take it off into different directions.

I wanted was that the telling of the story would transform. I want it to be a very cold, colourless place at the beginning and the end it will not be, it's been changed. For me, at its simplest level, that's the power of the story. It enables you to go to a very dark place and come out and get on with your life.

### **Going back to the original question, why are you doing this?**

Because it is an important story to tell. I had to, however, have something that I really cared about within the piece and what got me first was the Queen, her grief is so deep and touching. They are there by themselves and the Blue Fairy doesn't come in and say 'stop crying', she lets them go into their grief. I also wanted to stage this work because, like everybody else, I am very aware of what is going on in the world and am very worried.

## 11. Education Activities – Music and Theatre Studies

### Pre-visit Exploration

#### Research

1. Research information about puppetry.

- Which other theatrical productions have used puppets?

For example [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King\\_Kong\\_\(2013\\_musical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Kong_(2013_musical))

- Research theatre companies that exclusively use puppets or theatre companies that regularly use puppets. For example <http://snuffpuppets.com/>
- Why do you think puppets get used in theatre?
- Would you use puppets in a show? Why?
- Discover/Explore the different kinds of puppet construction used in theatre.

2. Discover/explore which other operas were composed in the 1920s and 1930s. Some of the famous composers of the time were Giacomo Puccini, Igor Stravinsky, Kurt Weill, Vaughan Williams, Richard Strauss and Leoš Janáček.

- What do you notice about the style and content of these operas?
- Is the style and content similar to earlier operas?
- Where do these 'modern' composers come from?
- Which of these 20th Century operas are still popular with opera houses today?

#### Listen/Watch

1. Watch this brief introduction to Victorian Opera's production.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QONcMqirMBE>

- What kind of puppets can you see being created here?
- What does Nancy's description and this short introduction lead you to believe this production will be like?

2. Here is a link to a recording of the entire work. Listen to it to become familiar with what you will hear when you come to see the production.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZJLCjoLqYE>

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3. Here are links to a production of *The Sleeping Beauty* by Conservatorio G. Verdi Milan, that doesn't use puppets. It uses choreography and costume to create the sense of puppets.

It also uses live projected set drawings, which gives it a unique feeling. The three acts of the opera are in the three links below. In this version, they chose to make a break to create Act Three at the point after the Princess falls into her sleep, rather than following the Acts in the score.

**Act 1** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkZjcsCm5bs>

**Act 2, Scene 1** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cefls2dq9Lk>

**Act 2, Scene 2 and Act 3** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjPYf\\_uUNBc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjPYf_uUNBc)

Here is a link to Act 1 of a production at Teatro Rendano, Cosenza. This production uses puppetry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF051iwEBmk>

How does the use of puppetry affect your appreciation of the story?

4. Phoebe Briggs, the conductor, mentions that Respighi was good at writing music that conjures visual imagery for the listener. One of his most famous works is *The Pines of Rome*. Watch the talented young orchestra in this video play the piece. Some of you might recognise it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvgyfqzLC0A>

Do some research into what this piece was about, and decide if you think it represents that accurately.

### Discuss

1. In the notes above, director Nancy Black discusses this production, reflecting that this 'is a story about resilience and hope' and 'is so pertinent to what the world is going through right now'.

This is a different notion to the original fairy tale of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

- Do you think it is important to retell stories and to re-contextualise to connect to today's situations?
- Can you think of remakes of stories that you have read or seen that have done this? (For example, the two different Disney film versions of *Cinderella*, or Roald Dahl's original *Matilda* being adapted into a film and a musical) Were they successful? Why?



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2. In this version of *The Sleeping Beauty*, there is a character called Mr Dollar Cheque. When the Duchess is unimpressed by the Prince's choice to leave her to follow the Princess, Mr. Dollar Cheque offers to buy the Sleeping Beauty. How does this character connect to contemporary sensibilities of consumerism and romance?

### Learn

1. Here are some excerpts from the score showing some of the significant themes used in the work. See if you can play or sing them.

Here is the Mr Dollar Cheque music. Respighi has created a completely different feel with the music here. Learn the melody below from the fourth bar of 89 until 90.

When you hear this section in the opera, why do you think Respighi chose the instrumentation he did for this section?

**89** *Tempo di Cake-Walk*  
MISTER DOLLAR *Impettatissimo offrendo il suo braccio.* Oh yes!

*Tempo di Cake-Walk*

*f* *p* *f* *pp*

Mr. Dol. Poverinal Esser molto dolorata, mio piccolo Duchessin!

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Ma potere consolare mio piccolo dolorata. Quanto costa?

Mr. Dol.

*f pp*

90

Io comprare questa bella dormentata!

Mr. Dol.

*f p p*

6

*mf f*

2. Watch the following recording of the start of ACT II.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cefls2dq9Lk>

Below is the piano score from the start of the Act. An important theme is heard here. Learn to play the highlighted theme. You will be able to hear it during the opera from that point. See if you can identify the theme when you hear it.

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## ATTO II

### Quadro I

**Vivo**

The musical score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time. It begins with a 'Vivo' tempo marking. The score is divided into six systems. The first two systems are not highlighted. The third system has a yellow highlight on the right hand. The fourth, fifth, and sixth systems have yellow highlights on both hands. Dynamics include 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano).



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41

42

dim.

p

dim.

f

The image displays a musical score for measures 41 and 42 of a piece from 'The Sleeping Beauty'. The score is written for piano and features a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. Measures 41 and 42 are highlighted with yellow. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system (measures 41-42) is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system (measures 43-44) is marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The third system (measures 45-46) is marked with a dim. (diminuendo) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 47-48) is marked with a dim. (diminuendo) dynamic. The fifth system (measures 49-50) is marked with a forte (f) dynamic.



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### Analyse

Read the excerpts in the resource with director Nancy Black.

- What is she saying that she wants the audience to get from this production?
- Thinking about the strife that exists in our world today, what do you think of her idea about the narrative, music and visuals providing healing for an audience?
- How do you think this comes about for an audience?
- What have you watched that took you on a narrative journey and allowed you to feel better about your world as a result? How and why did this work for you?

### During your visit

1. Observe the theatre and the patrons. What observations can you make about the style of the theatre? How would you describe the Playhouse? What do you notice about the patrons of this type of opera, were they the audience you expected? How did they respond to the opera?
2. Observe the stagecraft elements of the production. What are the elements you notice most? What did you notice about the lighting design? How do the puppets affect you emotionally? What do you find most appealing about the puppets? How did the set enhance the performance?
3. How well does the orchestra balance with the singers? What affect does the instrumentation have on you and your reaction/connection with the story?
4. What are you enjoying about the entire experience?
5. Does the addition of surtitles affect your experience?

### Post-show reflection

1. What did the critics say? Look up reviews of the opera and see how they compare with your interpretation. Write a review of the opera for your school newsletter.
2. Did you enjoy the opera? Why? What appealed to you? Be clear about the different elements in your reflection – singing, orchestration, set, puppets, lighting etc.
3. What was it about the set/costumes/lighting that impacted on your experience/enjoyment of the opera?
4. Which character(s) impacted on you most? What was it about this (these) character(s) that connected with you?
5. Discuss with other class members how you saw and responded to the production differently.

# The Sleeping Beauty

Education Resource



Victorian  
Opera

## 12. Credits

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