
Prologue

Beyond the gates, in the palace of King Florestan XXIV, a reception-hall has been prepared for the ceremony of Princess Aurora's presentation at court. The royal procession descends the grand staircase, the courtiers followed by the king and queen and the new-born girl, carried by her nurses. Catal-abutte, the master of ceremonies, starts the celebrations. Enter the seven Fairies, accompanied by their escorts, each bearing a gift and a blessing. But suddenly the wicked witch Carabosse appears with her acolytes. Indignant at not having been invited to the ball, she casts a curse upon the baby girl: at the age of sixteen – exactly as in the vision which she evokes – the princess shall die after pricking her finger. The good Lilac Fairy, however, enters to reassure the desperate parents: Aurora shall not die, but will fall into a deep sleep until she is awakened by a kiss of love.

Act one

Outside the gates of the royal gardens three women are knitting. The master of ceremonies discovers them, to the consternation of those present. All forms of needles or spindles have been banned from the country lest the curse should come true. The king and queen arrive, but show the utmost clemency, for today is Princess Aurora's sixteenth birthday. The dancing begins. Aurora enters with her friends and dances the Rose adagio with the four princes who aspire to her hand. Carabosse, disguised as an old woman, approaches and offers a bunch of flowers to Aurora. Without realising, the princess pricks her finger on a spindle concealed in the flowers. Carabosse vanishes triumphantly as Aurora falls into her deep sleep and is mournfully carried off to her apartments by the courtiers. In a short time the whole court falls asleep. The Lilac Fairy returns and magically envelops the castle in a thick wood.

Act two

One hundred years after, three carriages draw up in a clearing in the wood. Prince Désiré's courtiers get out and begin their games and dancing. The prince appears, joins them in their pastimes and organizes a game of blind man's buff. Then he asks to be left alone. He is melancholy and restless until the Lilac Fairy comes up to him, tells him the story of Aurora and conjures up a vision of her surrounded by sylphs. Florimondo falls in love with her and is conducted by the Lilac Fairy to the Sleeping Beauty's castle, where Carabosse unwinds her treacherous thread. When the Lilac Fairy appears, the thread snaps and Carabosse is dragged away in a faint. Florimondo advances incredulously into the sleeping court. Drawing near to Aurora's bed, ravished with delight, he gazes at the girl and kisses her. At once Aurora wakes up and with her the entire court. The princess leads Florimondo to her parents, who bless the young couple.

Act three

In the ballroom the festivities for the marriage of Aurora and Florimondo are in progress. The king, the queen and the courtiers dance a saraband. Then the gifts arrive, with a number of characters from the fairy-tales of Perrault: Diamonds, Gold, Silver, Sapphire, Puss in Boots and White Cat, Blue Bird and Fiorina. The betrothed end the dancing and move off towards the ceremony and happiness.

(Traduzione di Rodney Stringer)