

## BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

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Hello. I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large. I have felt as if I were living in an English Colony for the last few days instead of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Queen was doing walkabouts in Richmond, Williamsburg and Jamestown and Prince Philip did the same thing in Norfolk. Then, as a climax, we were allowed to peer into the treasure chest of the Birmingham Royal Ballet to behold the most extravagantly lavish production of a ballet that I have ever seen.

One of the company's goals is to nurture and retain the best young dancers in the world. "The Sleeping Beauty" performers reveal the company's success. I counted some fifteen countries in a quick glance at the program and I'm sure there are more.

They are a diverse blend of stellar talent. The corps de ballet moves with incredible precision. The principals are richly trained in technique, character and attitude. Nao Sakuma as Princess Aurora is a story book beauty who tosses off classic steps and combinations with unbelievable lightness and ease. Her prince, Chi Cao, is a perfect partner and a true classical ballet virtuoso dancer with a distinctive style of vigor and sharp definition. The two of them dance with rarely seen majesty and skill, specially in the grand pas de deux in Act III. I wish I could name each and everyone in this fine collection of dancers.

Marius Petipa created The sleeping Beauty 117 years ago. This version has revisions by choreographer and director Peter Wright. The elegant scenery and opulent costumes are by Philip Prowse. They glow with tasteful richness in Mark Johnathon's lighting. Conducted by Paul Murphy, the Virginia Symphony gives a brilliant rendition of the fairy tale sound of the Tchaikovsky score

This visual feast of beauty is indeed a dandy balletic dish fit to put before a king. It is brought to us by The Virginia Arts Festival in honor of America's 400th anniversary. The support of numerous foundations and business institutions made this very special event possible. To one and all we are deeply indebted. This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.