



THE ROYAL BALLET

Director KEVIN O'HARE CBE

Founder DAME NINETTE DE VALOIS OM CH DBE

Founder Choreographer SIR FREDERICK ASHTON OM CH CBE

Founder Music Director CONSTANT LAMBERT

Prima Ballerina Assoluta DAME MARGOT FONTEYN DBE

Giselle

BALLET IN TWO ACTS

Choreography MARIUS PETIPA

after JEAN CORALLI and JULES PERROT

Music ADOLPHE ADAM edited by LARS PAYNE

Scenario THÉOPHILE GAUTIER after HEINRICH HEINE

Production and Additional Choreography PETER WRIGHT

Designer JOHN MACFARLANE

Original Lighting JENNIFER TIPTON

re-created by DAVID FINN

Staging CHRISTOPHER CARR, SAMANTHA RAINE

Senior Répétiteur SAMIRA SAIDI

Répétiteurs ZHAN ATYMTAYEV, SIAN MURPHY

Assistant Répétiteur GREGORY MISLIN

Principal Coaching OLGA EVREINOFF, MONICA MASON,

ISABEL MCMEEKAN, SAMIRA SAIDI

Benesh Choreology DANIEL KRAUS

Conductor VELLO PAHN

ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

Concert Master SERGEY LEVITIN

Directed for the screen by ROSS MACGIBBON

Exceptional philanthropic support from

Royal Ballet and Opera Principal JULIA RAUSING TRUST

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JOHN AND SUSAN BURNS, THE FONTEYN CIRCLE

and THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE ENDOWMENT FUND

The 2025/26 Royal Ballet Season is generously supported by

AUD JEBSEN

The role of Giselle is supported by STUART AND JILL STEELE

and PIPPA LEWINGTON

The role of Myrtha is supported by EMMA GILBEY KELLER

Approximate timings

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours 35 minutes, including one interval.

Pre-show: 15 minutes

Act I: 55 minutes

Interval (Incl. Interval Feature): 25 minutes

Act II: 50 minutes

Curtain Call: 10 minutes

Guidance

Parental guidance recommended.

Some of the characters in this performance experience the challenges of mental health.

Cast

Giselle AKANE TAKADA

Albrecht MATTHEW BALL

Myrtha ANNETTE BUVOLI

Hilarion VALENTINO ZUCCHETTI

Peasants, Courtiers and Wilis

ARTISTS OF THE ROYAL BALLET

Students of The Royal Ballet School appear by kind permission of the Artistic Director, IAIN MACKAY

All casts subject to change. For full up-to-date casting, find the full cast sheet online.

Broadcast live from the Royal Opera House

TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2026

Synopsis

ACT I

Giselle, a peasant girl, has fallen in love with Count Albrecht, who tells her that he is a villager named Loys. Her superstitious mother, Berthe, hopes that Giselle will marry the forester Hilarion and warns her against Loys. To discourage Giselle, Berthe recounts the legend of the Wilis, ghosts of young women who dance to death any man who crosses their path between midnight and dawn. Giselle disregards her mother and joins in the harvest celebrations with Loys.

Wilfred, Albrecht's squire, warns him that a hunting party is approaching, led by the Duke of Courland and the Countess Bathilde (Albrecht's future bride). Albrecht hides, but Hilarion has witnessed this meeting and decides to discover the secret of his true identity. The hunting party arrives. Giselle dances for the nobles and tells Bathilde that she too is engaged. The Countess gives her a necklace and asks to rest in Berthe's cottage. The Duke decides to continue the hunt and leaves a hunting horn so that he and the rest of the party can be recalled when Bathilde wants to rejoin them.

Hilarion now appears from Loys's cottage, having found Albrecht's sword. It bears the same crest as the hunting horn – this is the evidence he needs. Albrecht returns and Hilarion reveals the truth: that Loys is really Albrecht. He sounds the horn, the hunting party returns and Bathilde, coming out of the cottage, claims Albrecht as her fiancé. The shock is too much for Giselle. In her madness she relives her love for 'Loys' and, seizing his sword, she kills herself.

INTERVAL

ACT II

Hilarion keeps vigil by Giselle's grave, which lies deep in the forest. It is midnight and the Wilis materialize, causing Hilarion to flee in terror. Myrtha, their queen, arrives and summons her Wilis. She initiates Giselle into their rites. Albrecht approaches and lays flowers at Giselle's grave. When her spirit appears, he follows it into the forest.

Hilarion, pursued by the Wilis, is forced into an endless dance. Exhausted, he is driven into the lake and drowns.

The Wilis now seek out Albrecht. When Myrtha commands him to dance, Giselle urges him to the safety of the cross. But Myrtha orders Giselle to entice him away by dancing with him, rendering him powerless. Giselle tries to sustain him, but he becomes weaker and weaker as the night progresses. Just as he is about to die, dawn breaks. Daylight destroys the Wilis' power and they fade away. Giselle returns to her grave, leaving Albrecht sorrowful and alone.

—Peter Wright

The Royal Ballet

Director KEVIN O'HARE CBE
Music Director KOEN KESSELS
Resident Choreographer WAYNE MCGREGOR CBE
Artistic Associate CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON OBE
Administrative Director HEATHER BAXTER
Rehearsal Director CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS
Clinical Director Ballet Healthcare SHANE KELLY

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