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## La Sylphide

The Colorado Ballet celebrates the 20th anniversary season of two of its principal dancers, Maria Mosina and Sharon Wehner, with one of the oldest surviving ballets, a compelling tale that serves as a perfect warmup for the Halloween season.

While the art of ballet can be traced back to 15th century Italy, it was not until *La Sylphide* was first performed in 1832 that en pointe was employed with an aesthetic rationale, rather than as a novelty.

The choreography from that production, by groundbreaking Italian choreographer Filippo Taglioni, was lost, and the music, by Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffter, was abandoned when Danish ballet master August Bournonville attempted a revival in Copenhagen in 1836 and the Paris Opera demanded too high a price for the score.



Maria Mosina as La Sylphide  
and Alexei Tyukov as James  
Photo: Mike Watson

Bournonville mounted his own production based on the original libretto (by Adolphe Nourrit, who adapted the story from various sources) with music by Herman Severin Løvenskiold. It is on this version, with staging and additional choreography by Karin Elver, that the Colorado Ballet's production is based.

The stunning sets (courtesy of American Ballet Theatre) for this production, which concludes next Sunday, October 11th, provide a grand stage for the tragic story.

James (Alexei Tyukov), a young Scotsman, dreams about a [sylph](#), who hovers lovingly over him and vanishes when he awakes. His friend Gurn (Francisco Estevez), who was nearby, did not see anything and reminds James that he is about to be married to Effy (Morgan Buchanan). During



Maria Mosina as La Sylphide  
Photo: Mike Watson

the pre-wedding festivities, James becomes enraged at the presence of Madge (Gregory K. Gonzales), an old witch, and attempts to oust her from the premises, which results in Madge's vow to prevent the marriage and destroy James.



Alexei Tyukov as James  
Photo: Mike Watson

As light as a feather, Mosina's La Sylphide floats across the surface of the stage, eluding James, remaining tantalizingly just out of reach. What better way for Mosina to celebrate her 20th anniversary than to display such delicate virtuosity. Tyukov's resoluteness as James increases with each unfulfilled appearance of La Sylphide, the only outlet for James being their ephemeral dances, where Tyukov's athleticism and artistry shine.

Since he retired from the company, Gonzales has made a career of portraying mysterious and/or threatening characters—such as Drosselmeyer (*The Nutcracker*) and the Stepmother (*Cinderella*)—and his witch is just as memorable, full of character quirks and nasty intent, all brought alive through Gonzales' mastery of pantomime.



Gregory K. Gonzales as Madge  
Photo: Mike Watson

Buchanan and Estevez work wonders as the spurned betrothed and frustrated suitor, adding to the urgency and risk of James' choices.

Adam Flatt and the Colorado Ballet Orchestra provide a bright and expressive rendition of Løvenskiold's score.

An unexpected delight is the psychological sophistication of the storyline. From a Jungian point-of-view, what we see is James comparing his anima, or feminine ideal (i.e., the sylph) to his betrothed, which feeds his pursuit of the sylph, whom he cannot touch. Tragedy results, because the male anima, or the female animus, can only be fulfilled through art, where the ideal can be manifest, not through another person, where flaws are natural.



Artists of the Colorado Ballet  
Photo: Mike Watson



Gregory K. Gonzales as Madge  
and Alexei Tyukov as James  
Photo: Mike Watson

The Colorado Ballet's presentation of *La Sylphide* runs through October 11th. For tickets: (303) 837-8888 or [tickets.coloradoballet.org](https://tickets.coloradoballet.org).

Bob Bows

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