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Colorado Ballet opens 55th season with stunning performance of 'La Sylphide'

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La Sylphide

Rating: ★★★★★

Colorado Ballet's production of August Bournonville's *La Sylphide* that opened Oct. 2 surely will go down in history as one of the most aesthetically pleasing ever performed by the company.

Everything about it—the sets, the costumes, the music, the dances, the story—are breathtakingly beautiful at every turn.

La Sylphine, first performed in 1832 in Paris, is one of the oldest surviving ballets and the first to introduce romanticism into the art form. It explores illusion versus reality and the insatiable desire for unattainable love, with romantic elements of a Scottish castle, woodland sprites, a wicked witch, magic potions, a poisoned scarf and mysterious death. This narrative masterpiece is an example of great storytelling through [dance](#) and pantomime.

The plot centers around James, a young Scotsman who, on the eve of his wedding day, is visited by an enchanting forest fairy—a sylph—while sleeping. He is obsessed by her, leaving his fiancé to wed another suitor, Gurn (played by Francisco Estevez); and, tricked by an evil witch, eventually causing the sylph to die in his arms when she loses her wings and then tragically dies himself.

Colorado Ballet's prima ballerina, Moscow-born Maria Mosina, danced the Sylph on opening night. This was the start of her 20th season with the company, reprising her role when it last performed *La Sylphide* in her debut season in 1996. Her interpretation was flawless—playful and coy when she dances around James sleeping in his chair, and ethereal and delicate as a butterfly when she prances with the other sylphs in the forest. She is fascinating to watch, the consummate ballerina who defies age.

James, as played by Alexei Tyukov, spends much of the time in the first act looking for the elusive Sylph. Finally, the audience is treated to Tyukov's leaps when he dances in the pre-wedding celebration with adorable Effy (Morgan Buchanan) and the ensemble of her girlfriends and tartan-clad men. Tyukov goes airborne more in Act II, performing his powerful jumps and intricate footwork (in a kilt) when he dances in the forest with the Sylph and her sisters.

Gregory Gonzales is appropriately scary as Madge, the ragged sorceress who concocts a poisonous scarf, which she convinces James to wrap around the Sylph. Her silent triumphant scream in the final scene can be heard throughout the theatre.

The sets, courtesy of American Ballet Theatre, transform the stage into a grand hall of a Scottish castle in Act I. The second act takes place in the forest, with morning light filtering through the trees that fill the stage from top to bottom. Lighting by Todd Elmer is especially effective when Madge is brewing her potion over a huge cauldron.

Period costumes by Desmond Heeley are magnificent—the girls in pastel embroidered ankle-length frocks, the sylphs in diaphanous white gowns and the men in full Scottish Highland dress. There's not a tutu in sight.

For its sheer beauty, this is a performance not to be missed.

Remaining performances at the [Ellie Caulkins Opera House](#) in Denver are October 9 and 10 at 7:30 p.m. and October 11 at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 303-837-8888 ext. 2, or visit www.coloradoballet.org.

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