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From classical to edgy for Ogden

National Ballet season features
old favourite *Sleeping Beauty*,
new work by Aszure Barton

Heather Ogden's performance in the title role of Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*, which opens the 2009-2010 season of the National Ballet of Canada at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts starting November 13, will epitomize the meaning of classical ballet. With its lavish sets, opulent costumes and the glorious music of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the original 1972 production by Rudolph Nureyev and Marius Petipa, restaged by Karen Kain, is a glittering centrepiece of the company's repertoire.

Next, Ogden will perform in a rather different production. Until now titled only "World Premiere", the new piece by Edmonton-born choreographer Aszure Barton will show audiences a very different side of ballet - and the principal dancer.

"It's a great balance," says Ogden. "The role of Aurora is your idea of what being a ballerina is all about... But it's great to stay edgy and keep your creative side, with new choreographers and new material."

Growing up in Vancouver, Ogden was fascinated with the National Ballet's huge classical productions when the company came to town. This is her fourth time performing in *Sleeping Beauty*. She says the time-honoured production "was the face of the National Ballet for a long time, so it holds a special place in our company."

The production was refurbished to open the National Ballet's inaugural season at the Four Seasons Centre in 2006, although many of the costumes and sets date to when the company first performed Nureyev's work in 1972.

"Sometimes you look inside a costume and there's Karen Kain's name," Ogden says, adding that she feels comfortable in the role of Aurora, which she also danced in 2006, so she can relax and "focus more on the artistic side."

The Barton piece in which she will dance from November 25 to 29 will be "a great contrast," she allows. The work is more contemporary and is not a story or narrative ballet like *Sleeping Beauty*. There will be minimal costumes. This is the first time Ogden has worked



Heather Ogden as Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*.

with Barton. "It's always exciting to work with someone new," she says.

The renowned Barton is considered one of the most exciting choreographers working today. Her energetic and complex choreography explores both tragedy and comedy, often dramatizing inner thoughts and impulses. She has created new works for Mikhail Baryshnikov, Fang-Yi Sheu, the Sydney Dance Company, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, The Juilliard

ments."

For Ogden and her fellow dancers, this means somewhat of a collaboration with the choreographer. Barton uses the dancers in the room to create the steps, Ogden says, a somewhat different process from other choreographers, who might start the process having decided each move the dancers will make. During the summer Barton spent one month creating the work on the dancers; further polishing and the naming of the piece will follow.

Dancing in new creations is "an important part of a dancer's repertoire," Ogden says. "It develops a different side of you." It also is a wonderful feeling "to have a piece custom-made for you" and to lead the way with a work that others will study and perform in the future, much as *Sleeping Beauty* has been time and again.

Barton's new work will be part of a mixed program, which includes George Balanchine's neo-classical *The Four Temperaments* and Jerome Robbins' modernist *Glass Pieces*.

For audiences "there is always the unknown" when a new ballet is presented, Ogden says, so including it among better-known works such as Balanchine's is helpful. "They're usually drawn to one

name, something they've heard of... but they leave liking them all," she says, or even preferring the new piece.

While she likes the history and majesty of classical productions, it is equally important to have the challenge and variety that such new creations bring.

"Nobody wants to come to see a ballet museum," she says. "We need to keep feeding ourselves artistically... we have to keep advancing."

Essential information

Learn more about the National Ballet of Canada's dates and tickets by visiting www.nationalballet.ca or calling 416-345-9595 or 1-866-345-9595.

The Sleeping Beauty

Nov. 13 - 22

World Premiere by Aszure Barton, *The Four Temperaments, Glass Pieces*

Nov. 25 - 29

The Nutcracker

Dec. 12-Jan. 3, 2010

24 Preludes by Chopin, *A Suite of Dances, The Four Seasons*

Mar. 3-7, 2010

Swan Lake

March 11-21, 2010

West Side Story Suite, World

Premiere by Jorma Elo,

Opus 19/*The Dreamer*

June 4-13, 2010

Ogden

June 19-25, 2010