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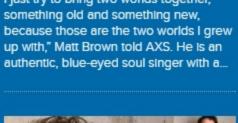
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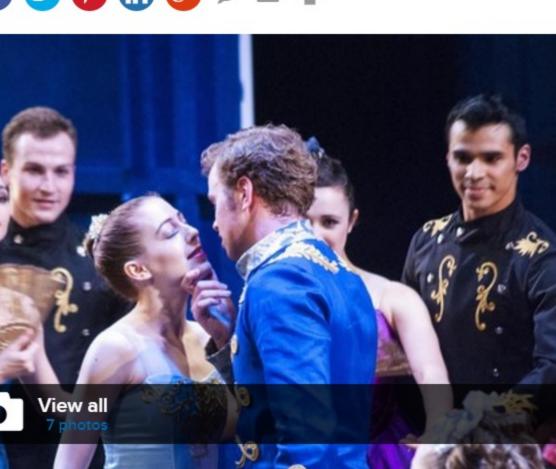


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Caroline Wiley as Cinderella and Nicholas Schultz as the Prince

Photo Courtesy of Grand Rapids Balle Grand Rapids Ballet ends their 2015-16 Season on a high note with a stellar performance of

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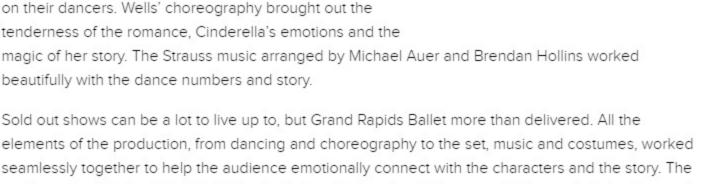
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"Cinderella," with choreography by world renowned choreographer Bruce Wells. This production captures the special magic of the classic fairy tale through enchanting dance sequences, emotional choreography and a fluid storyline. Grand Rapids Ballet's world premiere of "Cinderella" opened last weekend, and will hold four more shows this weekend, starting tonight, May 13-15, at the Peter Martin Wege Theatre. Most shows are sold out, but limited tickets are still available. "Cinderella" as a ballet is relatively new. The ballet first

premiered in 1945, performed by the Bolshoi Ballet, with music by Sergei Prokofiev and choreographed by Rostislav Zakharov. Since that premiere, there have been many productions of "Cinderella," most using the music by Prokofiev. Grand Rapids Ballet created a unique version of "Cinderella," setting it to music by Johann Strauss II, using four fates played by male dancers in place of the usually female four seasons, and having Bruce Wells choreograph on their dancers. Wells' choreography brought out the tenderness of the romance, Cinderella's emotions and the magic of her story. The Strauss music arranged by Michael Auer and Brendan Hollins worked



show, it is clear that people had a good time. The creative team of Grand Rapids Ballet Artistic Director Patricia Barker, Grand Rapids Ballet Creative Director Michael Auer and choreographer Bruce Wells created a strong and fluid storyline for "Cinderella." The story is retold in a way that shows Cinderella's loving relationship with her mother as a source of strength for Cinderella, and how Cinderella's strong character and goodness overcome the mean-spirited behavior of her stepmother. It is still love at first sight for Cinderella and her prince, but they first lock eyes in the garden by her mother's grave, not at the ball. Cinderella's mother's spirit transforming into the fairy godmother is a clever plot angle. The show provides the excitement of the ball, Cinderella's grand entrance, and the love-struck dancing between her and the

prince. However, it is the tenderness between the main characters after the prince finds Cinderella

audience for "Cinderella" at last Saturday's show had a mix of all ages – children, whole families and couples. So the challenge was to please all these age groups. Judging by the audience reaction of

smiles at tender moments, laughter at comic displays and the standing ovation at the end of the

and returns her shoe, as well as their private wedding dance with the spirit of Cinderella's mother that is most memorable in the love story. The set worked well with the lighting and costumes. One of the unique things about this production was the way Grand Rapids Ballet Creative Director Michael Auer designed the set to come to the dancers for scene changes, rather than have the dancers enter each scene. For example, the garden changes into the house through a series of panels while Cinderella remains on the same place on stage. The costumes designed by Grand Rapids Ballet Artistic Director Patricia Barker were all in jewel tones and created a lovely 18th century atmosphere. The magical transformations of the horses and coachmen were entertaining and performed smoothly. It was a nice touch when Cinderella's dress transformed into her ball gown with one quick movement, as if by magic. The lighting by Matthew Taylor helped set the mood for scenes. One memorable use of lighting was the pas de

deux between Cinderella and the prince after he finds her and returns her shoe, because all fades

Choreographer Bruce Wells did an excellent job creating lovely, romantic choreography that

out to black except the two of them dancing, showing the intimacy of the moment.

conveyed the characters' moods and brought out an emotional response in the audience. In the original production of "Cinderella," four seasons portrayed by female dancers, were prominent in the story as both a plot and choreography element. Choreographer Bruce Wells decided to have four male dancers portray the four fates of Cinderella as a way of showing emotional mood and to allow freer movement across the stage through many lifts. For example, it is through the four fates that the audience sees the fairy godmother fly around the stage in a series of lifts. Wells employed lifts in his choreography in key sequences that truly brought out Cinderella's mood with how she uses the movements in the transitions. Wells created strong classical ballet sequences that were both beautiful and entertaining for partnering and corps de ballet numbers. The inclusion of 18th century ball dancing movement added to the beauty of the production. The movements throughout the show created the right amount of romance, drama and comedy for various scenes. The interactions between Cinderella and the prince were romantic. The scenes between Cinderella and her mother's spirit were tender. The awkward antics and bickering between the two stepsisters was good comedy.

skills. Solos, partnering and corps numbers all showed top-notch classical ballet technique. There are three "Cinderella" casts for the eight shows. In last Saturday's evening performance of the show, Caroline Wiley played Cinderella and Nicholas Schultz played the prince. Wiley danced with elegance and expression. Wiley and Schultz danced beautifully together and showed the range of emotions of falling in love, losing the love and the joy in finding it again through their dancing. Dawnell Dryja danced with grace and emotion as both Cinderella's mother and the fairy godmother. Cassidy Isaacson and Therese Davis were entertaining stepsisters through the physical comedy of their characters' awkward advances to the prince. Laura McQueen Schultz did a good job as the cruel stepmother, working well with Isaacson and Davis' stepsisters. The student dancers from Grand Rapids Ballet School's Junior Company, who played woodland creatures and debutantes, also did a great job in their dances.

Grand Rapids Ballet dancers gave a strong performance in both classical ballet technique and acting

why most of the eight shows are sold out. The remaining four shows will run on May 13-15 at the Peter Martin Wege Theatre at 341 Ellsworth SW. A few limited tickets are still available for the Saturday, May 14, matinee show at 2:00 p.m., as well as Royal Workshop backstage package tickets for select shows. Call the Grand Rapids Ballet Box Office at (616) 454-4771, ext. 10 for the most current ticket information or connect with them on Facebook. SUGGESTED LINKS

Grand Rapids Ballet's "Cinderella" is possibly one of their best shows this season. It is easy to see

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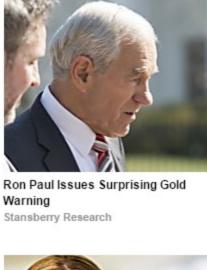
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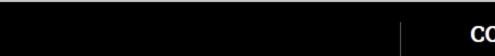




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