

Queensland  
**Ballet**

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN

# LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE



Production Notes for the Classroom

## Contextual Information

**Choreographer** Marc Ribaud  
**Composer** Ferdinand Hérold / John Lanchbery  
**Conductor** Nigel Gaynor  
**Music** performed by Camerata of St John's  
**Costume Designer** Lexi De Silva  
**Lighting Designer** Jon Buswell  
**Set Designer** Richard Roberts

A CO-PRODUCTION WITH WEST AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Brisbane season proudly presented by Suncorp

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### OVERVIEW

*La Fille mal gardée* (*The Wayward Daughter* in English) is one of the oldest ballets still performed today. Since the original 1789 production, *La Fille mal gardée* has been kept alive throughout its long performance history by way of many revivals, undergoing changes of title and music scores alike.

The simple, sentimental story references characters of commedia dell'arte, a dramatic form and style originating around 1560 A.D. where actors assume stock (archetypal) character roles, improvising to create a comic plot that would arrive at a humorous climax.

Tracing the genealogy of *La Fille mal gardée*, most choreographers derive their production from two composers; either Ferdinand Hérold's 1828 score, which was an adaptation of the original 1789 music by an unknown composer/arranger, or Peter Ludwig Hertel's own original 1864 score.

### 1789 PRODUCTION

The first production of *La Fille mal gardée* was originally titled *Le ballet de la paille* or *Il n'est qu'un pas du mal au bien* (*The Ballet of the Straw* or *There is only one step from bad to good* in English). The production was first choreographed by Jean Dauberval and performed in France in 1789 at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux.

During this time, the aristocracy were attracted to the perceived simple human drama of peasant life as opposed to the complexities of the tense and urban life in the Paris royal courts. Consequently, much of the art created during this period such as paintings, plays, operas and ballets juxtaposed the pleasant aspects of the countryside and country life settings with that of a palace.

Allegedly, the narrative of the production was inspired by Pierre-Antoine Baudouin's painting, *Le réprimande/Une jeune fille querellée par sa mère*, which depicts a mother reprimanding her daughter who is in tears while her lover can be seen in the background scurrying up the stairs to the safety of the barn loft.

Similarly to most ballets of the period, the music of the original production was a pastiche (patchwork) of 55 popular French airs (vocal or instrumental compositions).

The premiere was performed less than two weeks before the French Revolution. However, the choreography was not treated in a particularly revolutionary manner as it did not attempt to highlight the social injustices, rather portraying the lower class with warmth and sympathy. The premiering production was popular with the public, and was performed two years later in London with today's title *La Fille mal gardée*.

### FERDINAND HÉROLD'S SCORE (OR ADAPTIONS OF)

Throughout the 1800s numerous productions and versions of *La Fille mal gardée* were choreographed and restaged.

One significant version is Jean-Pierre Aumer's production which was choreographed to Ferdinand Hérold's adaptation of the original 1789 score, premiering at the Paris Opera in 1828.

In 1959, English choreographer Frederick Ashton created a completely new *La Fille mal gardée* which was performed to John Lanchbery's score. Lanchbery, the Royal Opera House composer and conductor at the time, created an adaptation of Ferdinand Hérold's 1828 score but also derived some music from Hertel's 1864 score including the Widow Simone's clog dance.

Marc Ribaud's production is choreographed to John Lanchbery's score.

### PETER LUDWIG HERTEL'S SCORE (OR ADAPTIONS OF)

In 1864, Peter Ludwig Hertel was commissioned to compose an entirely new score for Paul Taglioni's *La Fille mal gardée* which was performed by the Court Opera Ballet of the Königliches Opernhaus in Berlin.

Taglioni's choreography to Hertel's score became the basis for most subsequent Russian versions of the production. The most prominent of which were Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa's 1894 production and Alexander Gorsky's 1903 production.

#### COVER IMAGE

Artists: Alexander Idaszak,  
Clare Morehen and Jack Lister  
Creative Direction: Designfront, Photography:  
Harold David

#### PRODUCTION IMAGES

Photography: Emma Fishwick, Sergey Pevnev,  
courtesy of West Australian Ballet

## Ribaud's Production

**Marc Ribaud's *La Fille mal gardée*** is a co-production between West Australian Ballet and Queensland Ballet. Using Lanchbery's music as a basis, this production was first performed by West Australian Ballet in 2014 at His Majesty's Theatre, Perth.

Unlike many of the other versions which are set in 1700s France, this production which combines romance, humour and a touch of pathos is set in 1950s rural France when women were fighting for their rights. Ribaud explains that setting this production in this location and time period assists audiences to relate to it.

### MARC RIBAUD

**Marc Ribaud studied at Lycée Albert** in Monaco and later the Académie de Danse Classique Princesse Grace in London. Ribaud then joined Bonn Opera Ballet in 1986 and while there performed in productions including *The Nutcracker*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as well as choreographing *Love Songs* (1988) and *Impressions* (1988).

In 1997 Ribaud became Artistic Director of the Ballet de l'Opéra de Nice, choreographing *J.S. Bach* (1998), *Zig-zag* (2001) and *Boléro* (2002).

In 2006, Ribaud was appointed Guest Ballet Master with the Royal Swedish Ballet, and then in 2008 became Artistic Director.

Since 2011, Ribaud has worked as a freelance choreographer and guest teacher for ballet companies across the world.

### SYNOPSIS

#### ACT ONE

##### SCENE ONE – OUTSIDE THE FARMHOUSE

Lise is the only daughter of Widow Simone, who is the owner of a successful agricultural farm. Lise is in love with the young farmer Colas, but her mother has considerably more ambitious plans for her daughter.

Early one morning, Colas and Lise steal some time together but are disturbed by the villagers beginning their working day. Lise and Colas try to hide their relationship from Widow Simone, but she catches them and orders them to stay apart. She tries to put Lise to work, but the young girl is easily distracted and would rather be with her friends.

Later, Colas returns from the fields to surprise his love but they are once again interrupted by Widow Simone. Lise is saved from punishment by the arrival of the rich and pompous wine merchant Thomas, and his son Alain. Thomas asks Lise to marry Alain, however Alain behaves awkwardly and clumsily towards her. Lise is amused but not at all impressed.

##### SCENE TWO – THE VILLAGE SQUARE, HARVEST CELEBRATION

After the harvest and at the celebration, Lise dances with Alain but Colas interrupts and Lise gives him preference. The harvesters make fun of Alain and exclude him. Feeling triumphant, Colas dances with Lise. Widow Simone once again separates the lovers and then leads some villagers in a dance.

The joyful mood is broken by a sudden thunderstorm.

#### ACT TWO

##### SCENE ONE – INSIDE THE FARMHOUSE

Lise and Widow Simone return from the celebration soaked by the rain and sit by the fire where Widow Simone falls asleep. Lise, desiring to meet Colas, tries to take the house door key from her mother's pocket. Unfortunately, Widow Simone awakes and to avoid falling asleep again she taps the tambourine for Lise to dance. Soon however, tiredness wins and Lise is able to sneak to the stable door and dance with Colas.

The returning harvesters wake Widow Simone, so Lise quickly closes the stable door. The harvesters are invited in to the farmhouse with their barrel of goods.

When the harvesters leave, Widow Simone follows them out, locking Lise inside who is suddenly startled by Colas jumping out of the barrel where he has been hiding. Despite her embarrassment, Lise is reassured by Colas and they again declare their feelings for each other.

When Widow Simone returns, Lise quickly sends Colas to hide in her bedroom. However, Widow Simone guesses that the couple have met and, as punishment, sends Lise there too, subsequently locking the couple together in the same room.

Later Alain and his father arrive with the village notary in order to draw up the marriage contract. When all have signed, Widow Simone gives her future son-in-law the bedroom key. Alain unlocks the door and to everyone's dismay finds the amorous couple.

Lise and Colas beg Widow Simone for forgiveness and her blessing. Defying the rage of Thomas and Alain, Widow Simone finally gives her consent to the young couple, much to the delight of all.

## Ribaud's Production

### MOVEMENT

As this ballet has been choreographed many times by different choreographers throughout the romantic, classical and modern historical periods, influences can be seen from all three.

The *La Fille mal gardée* narrative pays homage to romanticism of the 1700s. The human drama present in the narrative is communicated through mime and delicate expressionism, which is consistent with most romantic ballets.

The movements in Ribaud's *La Fille mal gardée* are of classical ballet origin, including jeté en tournants, high extension arabesques and other virtuosic movements. However some movements also reference the modern ballet historical style such as the freer use of arms and torsos, and the occasional use of parallel in pirouettes and fourth position lunges, flexed feet, unexpected transitions between movements and floor rolls.

Ribaud stated that he has explored movement vocabulary from the neo-classical choreographic style, made possible through his choice to set his production in 1950s regional France.

Other highlights of the production include high-spirited village dances, winsome duets and a clog come tap dance.



### MUSIC USED IN RIBAUD'S PRODUCTION

Using John Lanchbery's orchestration, the music is reminiscent of the music of Haydn. Like Haydn, Lanchbery had a great wit and a playful sense of humour which can be heard throughout the score. The music has charm with a sweet sincerity to match the innocence of true love that blossoms between the main characters.

The music conjures a country setting. Some effects include oboists imitating the sound of a rooster's crow by playing their double reeds separate from the instrument. The flute and strings also play the love theme which is simple yet poignant.



## Ribaud's Production

### SET

Designed by Melbourne-based freelance theatre designer, Richard Roberts, the sets consist of pastoral environments inspired by Peille, a small village in France. The production commences with a sky-blue show cloth which has the words 'La Fille' written with a tiny heart dotting the 'i' and a plane just visible in the distance. This is raised to reveal the Act One, Scene One set which depicts the outside of the farmhouse.

During Act One, Scene Two, the set consists of a sandstone café of sun-kissed pink and beige tones, terracotta urns of geraniums and simple architectural lines, creating a romantic and nostalgic atmosphere. Act Two, Scene One occurs within a farmhouse typical of South France, featuring stucco walls (brickwork that's been covered by plaster) and wooden beams. These are juxtaposed by the retro rock'n'roll aesthetic created by three motorbikes, one of which is an old Vespa.

All three scenes of the production include three dimensional built sets which feature doorways, windows and steps that dancers interact with.



### COSTUMES

The costumes assist in demarcating the two main age groups of the production including the views which they hold.

Designed by Melbourne-based costume and set designer, Lexi De Silva, the young people's costumes reflect the 1950s period where the youth were considered spirited and rebellious.

The females wear colourful swing-dance and rock'n'roll inspired, flouncy skirts and blouses while the men wear denim overalls or jeans, with singlets or t-shirts, and black jackets.

In contrast, the older characters wear traditional clothing of a rural French town from an earlier age.



## Q & A with Noelene Hill

WARDROBE PRODUCTION MANAGER AND RESIDENT DESIGNER

**Your work at Queensland Ballet consists of a dual role of Wardrobe Production Manager and Resident Designer. Describe these roles.**

**As Queensland Ballet's Resident Designer,** I collaborate with the creative team to design how the costumes look and feel when creating a new production. However, if we are hiring costumes from another company for an existing production, I act as an assistant to the costume designer to ensure their designs are realised.

In my role as Queensland Ballet's Wardrobe Production Manager, I project manage a highly skilled wardrobe team, ensuring we have the required number of staff and the right amount and types of materials to produce the costumes within a timeframe and within budget. I'm also involved in forward planning, often looking 12 months ahead.

It is challenging to balance these two roles, often requiring the wardrobe team and myself to work intensively in short timeframes. In some cases, we may have only ten weeks to create hundreds of costumes for a new show. At times, the costumes are incredibly intricate and may have up to five different elements. One male role alone may require various headpieces, jackets, vests, pants, tights, shirts, coats, wigs and shoes.

**Describe the creative team's collaborative process when working to achieve a particular vision.**

**Usually we commence the creation of the production** by having conversations with the choreographer. During these conversations, the choreographer explains to the creative team (which may include the costume, lighting and set designers and music director) any ideas they have for the work such as the style of the piece or period it is set in. Usually the set and costume designers will create their ideas first so that the lighting designer is able to have a clear idea of what they will be lighting. The whole design process may take an average of 12 months, and usually occurs in short stages.

**What is the process of creating a costume from design to performance?**

**I first research the background of the piece** and any historical references that might exist. For example, the production may be set in the Renaissance period, in which case I would research characteristics of the typical attire of the time as well as any artworks from that period. I may also be inspired by objects, colours, shapes and textures which I come across in my everyday life. From this, any images that grab me are selected for an image board located in my studio.

I then complete many sketches. Sometimes I will draw over a rough template which features an outline of a figure in a pose. Other times I work straight from a blank piece of paper.

Once I have my design sketches, I visit fabric suppliers and look online, attaining swatches (small samples) of any fabrics I think suit the style of the costume. This allows me to physically see and feel them to ensure they are appropriate, all the while considering how the fabric may sit on a moving dancer's body.

I then discuss the designs and associated swatches with the choreographer. I'm often designing costumes for productions that have not yet been choreographed and so it's important the choreographer ensures the costumes won't restrict any of the potential choreography.

Once finalised, these designs are provided to our wardrobe team cutters and I discuss with them the style lines, fabrics and potential movements the dancers will be performing while wearing them. They then draw and cut patterns to create a mock-up which we fit on a dancer to guarantee it looks right and moves well on their body. Once the choreographer approves, the final costumes are then cut from the fabric and created by our team of costumers. The cutting and sewing process usually takes our team of up to 33 costumers ten to twelve weeks.

## Q & A with Noelene Hill

WARDROBE PRODUCTION MANAGER AND RESIDENT DESIGNER

**The costumes of *La Fille mal gardée* are from West Australian Ballet, what is the process of preparing them to be used for the performance?**

Once the costumes arrive they have to be unpacked and checked to ensure all of the requirements have arrived. Ideally, we are sent information on the costumes in what we call a costume bible. This bible includes information about every costume in the show, a photograph of what they look like while the dancers are wearing them, swatches and details of the fabrics and trims that are used and suppliers and/or locations to indicate where these were purchased from. It also includes maintenance instructions and information on any necessary wigs, facial hair, hairstyles, makeup, footwear and quick costume changes. Having this information allows us to remake costumes if they wear-out or are damaged. If we don't receive a costume bible, we create our own from what we can determine through any digital footage that we obtain.

We then sort and measure each costume to determine which Queensland Ballet dancers will be allocated to which costume and also whether we will need to make any additional costumes.

We then fit up to eight dancers a day and alter the costumes accordingly, usually by hand. Ballet costumes are created specifically to be altered; instead of zips, we use hooks and rows of bars so that the same costume can fit different dancers. Ballet costumes also have larger seams than that of a fashion garment to enable us to unpick and make adjustments. We make extensive notes on any alterations to the costumes as often we have to return the costumes to the state they were when we received them.



**What is your favourite part of your role as Queensland Ballet's Wardrobe Production Manager and Resident Designer?**

There are many aspects of my role at Queensland Ballet that I enjoy. If I was to pick just one, I love the design process as it provides me the opportunity to be creative with my ideas. It is also very satisfying to see the costumes on stage when all the other components (such as music, sets and lighting) come together and to share the production with audiences.



# Queensland Ballet

For more information about how Queensland Ballet supports students and teachers, or to discuss ways to get involved with us, please contact:

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