

The New Criterion

Dance

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Wall of thorns

by [Laura Jacobs](#)

On American Ballet Theatre's *Sleeping Beauty* at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

“In front of each fairy was a golden plate and a golden casket made to hold her knife, fork and spoon. These caskets were beautifully carved and engraved, and each one was of a different shape... . they were the King’s presents to the fairy godmothers.”

—C. S. Evans, *The Sleeping Beauty*

In the same time and place that the Imperial goldsmith Carl Fabergé was making incomparable eggs, flowers, and follies for Czar Alexander III and Nicholas II after him, a Frenchman named Marius Petipa was making incomparable ballets for the Czar’s Imperial Theatre. As maître de ballet for forty years, until his retirement in 1903, Petipa made over fifty classical dance entertainments—long evenings, history tells us, filled with magical effects that included fountains spouting, fires burning, oceans roaring (nothing was too expensive for a Czar) ...

Laura Jacobs's *Landscape with Moving Figures* is available from Dance & Movement Press. She has been the dance critic for *The New Criterion* since 1994. Before that she wrote about dance for *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Ballet Review*, and *Boston Phoenix*. Jacobs is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*, where she writes about fashion as well as performing arts. From 1987 to 1994, Jacobs was editor in chief of *Stagebill*, the national program magazine. In this position she edited and wrote articles on opera, music, theater, and dance. Jacobs has written two books on fashion (*Beauty and the Beene*, Abrams, 1999; and *The Art of Haute Couture*, Abbeville Press, 1995). Her first novel, *Women About Town*, was published by Viking in May 2002.

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