

Ballet: Giselle

Choreography: Jean Coralli and Jules Perot, later adapted by Marius Petipa

Composer: Adolph Adam

The Story

Giselle is a romantic ballet in two acts, or parts, that tells a tragic love story:

In the first act we meet Giselle, a beautiful young peasant girl, whose lively and kind personality is beloved by all in the village. A nobleman named Albrecht visits the village disguised as a peasant. He flirts with Giselle and she falls in love with him. But Albrecht is deceitful, he doesn't tell Giselle that he is already engaged to another girl! When Giselle finds out that Albrecht lied to her, her heart is broken and she dies!

In the second act, Giselle is summoned from her grave by the Wilis, the spirits of maidens who died after being betrayed by their lovers. They try to take revenge on Albrecht for breaking Giselle's heart. But out of her love for him, Giselle saves Albrecht from the Wilis instead. By saving him, Giselle also saves herself from becoming a ghost too.

The History

Giselle was first performed in Paris, France, on June 28, 1841. That's almost two hundred years ago! It was hugely popular and performed all over Europe and then in America. It's still being performed today, all over the world! In the first act, Giselle charms the audience with her energetic and joyful dancing. In the second act, the ethereal Wilis command the stage with dramatic movements, wearing layers of ghostly white tulle.

The picture to the right shows Carlotta Grisi, 1842, in the first act of Giselle.

Did you know? Giselle is one of the most often performed classical ballets, and also one of the most challenging to dance!

