

Queensland Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN AO

The Little Mermaid

22 JUNE - 1 JULY 2023
TALBOT THEATRE
THOMAS DIXON CENTRE

exciting
Every step an
audacious
enthralled
adventurous
enchanted story
spirited
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From the Artistic Director

Mystical and magical, this fairytale has been loved for generations, passed down by storytellers and families since it was first published by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen in 1837.

The Little Mermaid is part of our 'My First Ballet' series for children and families, and I am delighted to present it at the Talbot Theatre in our beautiful home, Thomas Dixon Centre. Choreographed by Queensland Ballet Academy's talented Ballet Master and Resident Choreographer Paul Boyd, our new retelling is a world premiere based on Andersen's original story – with a few magical twists and turns that I have no doubt will charm audiences of all ages.

With a parade of well-known and reimagined characters, including the Little Mermaid, the Sea Witch, and of course, the Prince, the story is brought to life with a sublime score by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius as a nod to the story's Scandinavian heritage. A new collection of stunning costumes designed by Queensland Ballet's inhouse Associate Designer Zoe Griffiths, along with original sets by acclaimed designer Josh McIntosh, that further transport us to the depths of this underwater wonderland. Enriched with incredible lighting by Lighting Designer Ben Hughes and Video Designs by Craig Wilkinson, underpinned by the tones and characterisations of our fantastic Narrator Sarah McIntosh.

As always, we are immensely thankful to the organisations and individuals who support Queensland Ballet, and I offer my heartfelt gratitude to the Australian and Queensland Governments, our partners, and our supporters who enable us to produce world-class productions like this one.

We remain wholeheartedly committed to producing works for children, sharing the magic and creativity of dance to the littlest of theatre-goers. Visually spectacular and utterly enchanting, I hope this family fairytale captures your hearts and imaginations as it does ours.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Li Cunxin AO
Artistic Director

From the Choreographer

I was absolutely thrilled when Li invited me to create a new production of *The Little Mermaid* for Queensland Ballet's 'My First Ballet' series. After deciding that I would base the story on the beloved Hans Christian Andersen tale combined with what I felt could be delightful segments connected to new and adventurous characters, the music was the next vital element to discover.

Wanting to pay homage to the Scandinavian origins of the story I have chosen music from Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius. I decided to keep the old-world charm and set this version in a magical place in faraway Scandinavia.

Wanting to create a ballet where our heroine was of a strong nature and help promote the strength that we wish for in our young women of today, this Little Mermaid is determined, honest, feisty, compassionate and fights for what she believes in. The Prince falls in love with her courageous nature and all that she strives for.

I felt that the support of narration during the ballet was an important element for our younger audience, and the character of the Spirit of the Sea will navigate you on this adventure. If this is your first entry into the world of ballet, then I hope the Spirit of the Sea, the Little Mermaid and all these wonderful characters lead you on a path that you may want to return to.

My gratitude goes to the Costume, Set Design, Production, Audio Visual and Lighting teams whose imagination and wonderful skills have assisted me to bring this magical production to the stage. A special thanks to narrator Sarah McIntosh and all the wonderful character voices that she has created!

To the dancers of the Jette Parker Young Artist Program who developed these characters and gave them honesty, humility, humour, and charm, I thank you for your dedication, artistic integrity and work ethic.



Paul Boyd
Choreographer

Credits

Choreographer

Paul Boyd

Music

Jean Sibelius

Costume Designer

Zoe Griffiths

Set Designer

Josh McIntosh

Video Designer

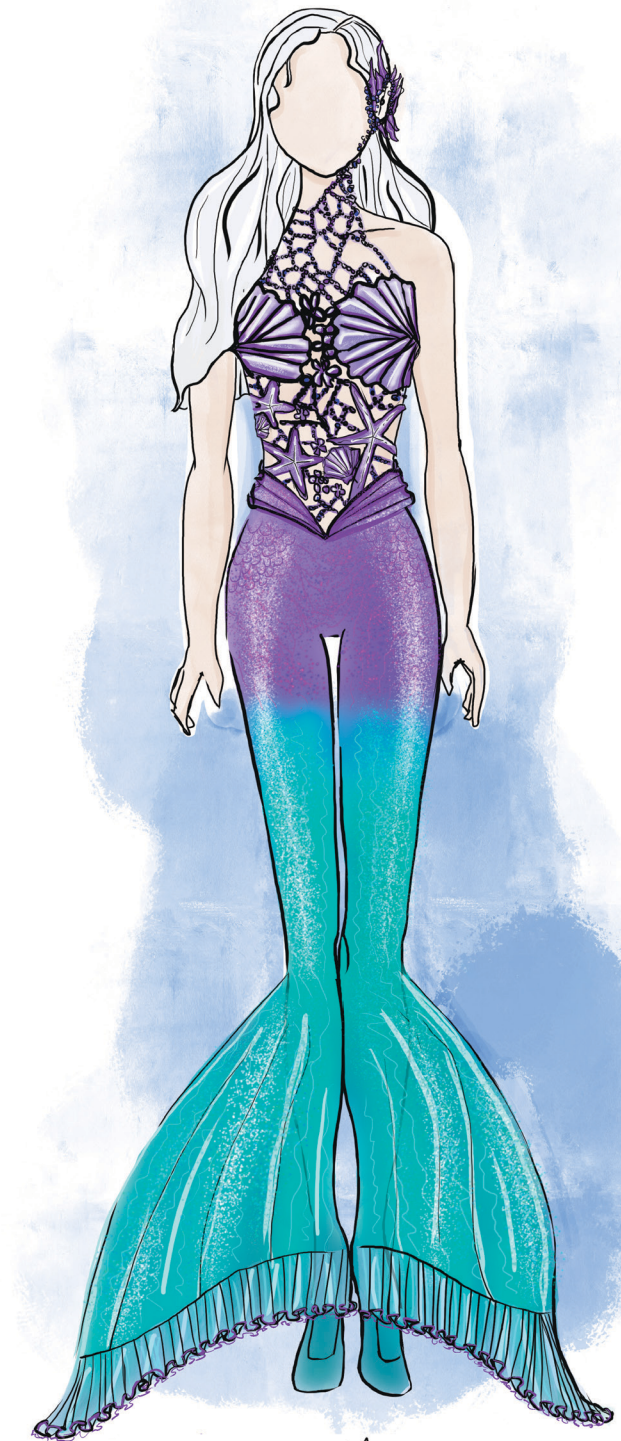
Craig Wilkinson

Lighting Designer

Ben Hughes

Narrator

Sarah McIntosh



*Little Mermaid
'Underwater'*

Duration: Approximately 60 minutes, no interval.

This production is performed to recorded music.

Every effort was made to ensure program details were correct at the time of printing, however details are subject to change where necessary and without notice. Please check queenslandballet.com.au for updates.

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we train and perform. Long before we arrived on this land, it played host to the dance expression of our First Nations Peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the valuable contribution they have made and continue to make to the cultural landscape of this country.



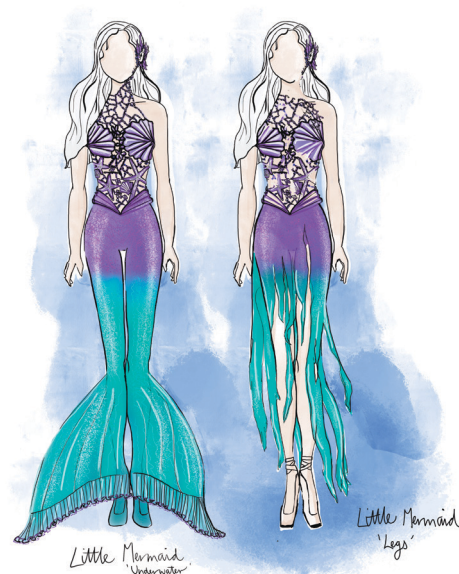
About the Costumes and Characters

It's been truly delightful creating the under the sea characters for this production of *The Little Mermaid*. Paul Boyd is a wonderful collaborator, with a great vision for the story that encouraged me to realize vivid colours and strong silhouettes into my designs. The team worked ocean-inspired textures into each costume through their clever fabric manipulations and detailed hand work that can be seen in every moment of the ballet. It's been a great achievement watching the dancers fulfil all Paul's choreography uninhibited by the complicated structural costumes and seeing the designs come to life.

It will be beautiful to see the incredible set, lighting and animation come together with the costumes and choreography to create a captivating, fantasy underwater world to be enjoyed by all.

Zoe Griffiths

Costume Designer



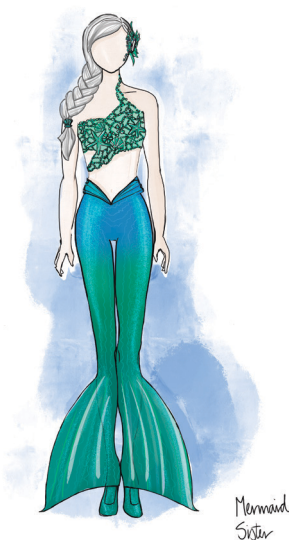
The Little Mermaid

The Little Mermaid is a determined, feisty, and free-spirited mermaid who dreams of exploring the world beyond her underwater kingdom.



Spirit of the Sea

The narrator for this special story. The Spirit of the Sea accompanies the Little Mermaid on her journey and helps her in times of need.



The Little Mermaid's Sister

As the Little Mermaid's sister, she supports the Little Mermaid and warns her that the human world above the waves is dangerous.



The Prince

The handsome Prince is the Little Mermaid's love interest. He is a kind-hearted human who falls in love with the Little Mermaid's courageous nature.



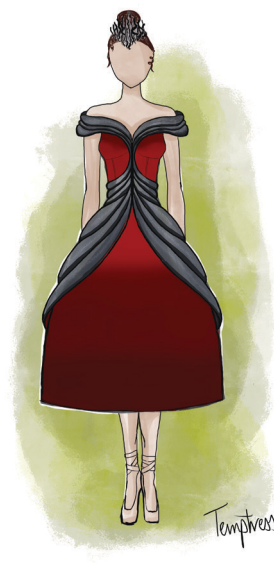
Sea Witch

The Sea Witch is a cunning and villainous sorceress who does not have the Little Mermaid's best interests at heart. She convinces the Little Mermaid to trade her voice for legs.



Eels

The Eels are the Sea Witch's assistants who serve as her eyes and ears throughout the kingdom. They lead the Little Mermaid to the Sea Witch.



Temptress

The Sea Witch transforms into the Temptress through a love potion to lure the Prince away from the Little Mermaid.

The Story



By Paul Boyd after Hans Christian Andersen

The Spirit of the Sea observes the Little Mermaid in her underwater garden playing with her collection of treasures. The Little Mermaid is fascinated by a statue of a handsome Prince that is the centre piece of her garden, she longs to seek adventures above the waves with the human folk but her mermaid sister and merman friend explain that it is dangerous above the waves.

The Little Mermaid sees the shadow of a boat overhead and decides to follow it accompanied by the Spirit of the Sea. Upon her arrival above the waves, she sees a Prince in his boat and is immediately captivated by him.

A storm starts to take shape in the sky, the sea becomes rough, and a huge wave tosses the Prince into the deep waters. The Spirit of the Sea assists the Little Mermaid to save the drowning and injured Prince and she brings him to dry land in an unconscious state. The Little Mermaid kisses his forehead and for a moment he awakens. She spontaneously places her necklace around his neck but is suddenly startled and leaves his side only to return to the sea and the safety of her garden.

The Little Mermaid reminisces about meeting the Prince and is once again fascinated by the statue and yearns to be with the Prince who she had just rescued. In the background, two slippery, slimy, sinister eels are lurking around her garden.

The eels invite the Little Mermaid on a journey where she must seek help from the Sea Witch who will have the powers to assist and advise her with how to see her Prince again. And so, she sets out through the dark and gloomy depths of the sea, accompanied by the two eels who lead her to the cave of the Sea Witch.

The Sea Witch explains to the Little Mermaid that in order for her to get closer to the Prince she must forfeit her mermaid's tail for human legs so that she can walk on land. This can be arranged but there is a price to pay, and the price is that the Little Mermaid sacrifices her voice for her land legs, a painful transformation and she will never be able to return to the sea again. Should the Prince want to kiss her, he has until sunset on the day she arrives otherwise the Little Mermaid's voice will remain the property of the Sea Witch!

The Little Mermaid agrees to this and so the Sea Witch creates a potion which is given to her, but she can only drink it upon the dry land where she will be granted her land legs. The Little Mermaid bids farewell to her sister and the underwater life she has known and makes her way to dry land and drinks the potion, falling asleep.

The Prince in his castle garden, fascinated by the necklace, remembers the beautiful girl that gave it to him.

The Little Mermaid awakens with the land legs that she so desired, but she has indeed sacrificed her voice and so she begins the uncomfortable experience of discovering how to walk. The Prince happens upon her and is fascinated by her yet confused that she has no voice.

He invites her to his garden in the castle, where they are greeted by the Prince's two attendants. There is a majestic fountain and a statue of a man and his son so the Prince explains to the Little Mermaid that the man is his deceased father and the little boy is himself. She ponders, as the statue of the man looks very familiar.

Back under the sea, the Sea Witch through a magic crystal ball is watching the Little Mermaid's every move and is observing the fascination that the Prince has for the Little Mermaid.

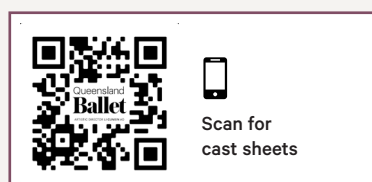
Raging with anger the Witch decides that the love that is developing between the Prince and Little Mermaid must stop and so with a magic potion transforms into the Temptress, a character to lure the Prince away from the Little Mermaid.

Back at the castle garden, the Prince bestows upon the Little Mermaid a regal dress, fit for a Princess, and together they dance falling more in love.

The Temptress and her two valets magically arrive at the castle garden to put the Prince under her spell so that he has a distraction and will not kiss the Little Mermaid. The Little Mermaid sees the Prince becoming more entranced by the Temptress but without her voice she cannot tell him that she is falling more in love with him.

The Prince, although enchanted by the Temptress, witnesses her and the two mischievous valets manipulating and taunting the Little Mermaid and confronts her about her actions and insists that she leave the castle at once. The Temptress is sent into a rage and; suddenly in a whirlwind of fury, turns back into the Sea Witch after witnessing the Prince kiss the Little Mermaid. The plan is destroyed, and the Sea Witch and the two eels dissolve into oblivion.

After having been kissed by the Prince, the Little Mermaid discovers that her voice has returned. The Prince returns the necklace that she gave him on the beach and he swears of his devotion to her. A celebration is danced by the Prince and his new found love along with his attendants in the garden.



Set Designs

It's been a joy to invent an underwater world for this production of *The Little Mermaid*! One of the challenges was creating many different places in the story with just a few set items on our stage, so an early idea was to ensure that we could use all facets of the set elements. Rather than being flat, painted set items, they're three-dimensional sculptural items. Part of the storytelling happens through the movement of the set elements across the stage – it helps us feel like we're swimming to different parts of the ocean as the Little Mermaid's adventure unfolds.

The colours and tones of the set items are important and help us know where we are. Everything underwater is in blue tones. Did you know that red doesn't look red once you reach a certain depth underwater? Tomatoes look purple! So, in our hero's part of the ocean, we're seeing soft aqua-blue tones; in the Witch's cave we're seeing darker, purple-blue tones. Once we're on the surface and in the Prince's garden, we're seeing orange and golden hues – it heightens the contrast between his world and that of our Little Mermaid.

Josh McIntosh

Set Designer



The Little Mermaid set model by Josh McIntosh. Photography Angharad Gladding.



Support New Works

Help support this new chapter for Hans Christian Andersen's spellbinding fairytale with a gift to Queensland Ballet.

Choose a costume from *The Little Mermaid* to support and have your name acknowledged inside the costume for its life – a personal thread connecting you with the artists of Queensland Ballet for generations to come.

Colouring-In Activity



QB Youth Programs

Leap into the wonderful world of ballet or prepare for your next move with memberships for Juniors and Teens aged 5 – 17.

Membership includes a *Little Mermaid* inspired T-shirt and access to year-round ballet classes, experiences and benefits.

Queensland Ballet's Jette Parker Young Artists

The Jette Parker Young Artist Program is an apprenticeship program which fosters the talents of gifted young dancers at the start of their professional careers.

This Program allows dancers from Australia and around the world access to elite training designed to refine their technique and gain valuable industry knowledge before becoming company artists. Through performance opportunities and world-class mentoring, this introduction to a professional dance career allows our artists to soar in years to come.

Jette Parker Young Artists often move seamlessly into Queensland Ballet as company artists, and other alumni have secured contracts with international and Australian ballet companies.

2023 Jette Parker Young Artists



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From its beginnings in 1908 as a boot and shoe factory, the heritage-listed Thomas Dixon Centre has been transformed into a world-class performing arts destination and cultural precinct, abundant with stories and home of Queensland Ballet. It features a state-of-the-art theatre, stunning public art, community dance studios, and will soon unfold beautiful green spaces, a café, and bars. The Thomas Dixon Centre is aiming to be the first performing arts organisation in the world to achieve Platinum WELL™ accreditation, with health and wellbeing at its heart.

The Talbot Theatre at the Thomas Dixon Centre is an extraordinary new performance space, where stories are shared, creativity flourishes, and connections between artists and audiences are forged.

The recent revitalisation of the Thomas Dixon Centre is an extraordinary story of passion, tenacity and altruism. Queensland Ballet, a not-for-profit arts company, chose to refurbish its heritage home, not only to house its own artists and arts workers for years to come, but to create a vibrant space for its neighbours, sector and wider community.

Discover more about the Thomas Dixon Centre at thomasdixoncentre.com.au and see stories unfold

 @thomas_dixon_centre

 Thomas Dixon Centre

We are welcoming and accepting of people from diverse backgrounds and identities, and strive to create an accessible and inclusive environment for all.

To view our full staff list, please visit
queenslandballet.com.au/discover/company/staff

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Queensland Ballet is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding advisory body.

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