

## DANCER OF THE WEEK – Katie Webb Wed 4 May

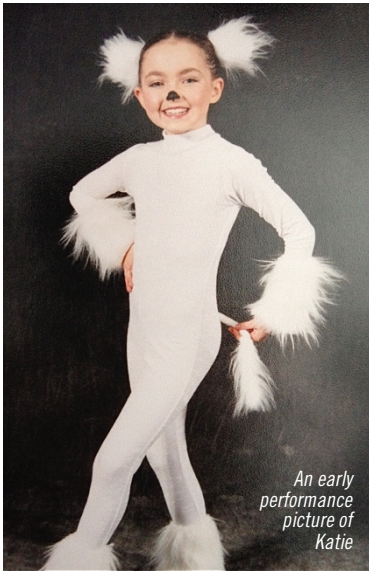
This week Matthew Bourne's *Sleeping Beauty* is at Teatro Arcimboldi in Milan, Italy! Nick, our Audience Engagement Coordinator, had the chance to speak to Katie before she jetted off to Milan. Katie plays the roles of Ardor, Feral and Queen Eleanor.

Katie joined the Company in 2014, for the UK tour of *Edward Scissorhands*. As well as performing in *Sleeping Beauty* at the moment you may spot her in cinema screenings of the 2015 film recording of *The Car Man*.



### **When did you start taking dance classes?**

I started dancing at the age of 4 at my local dance school, Harlequin Stage School. I was a timid little girl when I started off but thanks to Miss Paula and her wonderful team at Harlequin they turned the little girl that would shed a tear going into class, into a child who later couldn't leave the studio and spent every evening after school studying ballet, modern, jazz, tap and singing. From a young age I participated in festivals, competitions, pantomimes and shows, giving me stage experience and many wonderful memories. Harlequin played a massive part in making me the dancer I am today. For those that know me, my renowned "beehive of hair" started from the baby ballet days when my mum had the struggle of trying to tame my ringlets into some form of bun that sat like a doughnut on the top of my head! Looking back now I find it hard to believe that the little baby elephant in a pink leotard and skirt, squashing fairies with my tendus in baby ballet ever became a professional ballet dancer.



### **Where did your formal training take place?**

Alongside my lessons at Harlequin I attended Junior and Mid Associates with the Royal Ballet School in Birmingham and at the age of 13 I became a boarder at the Arts Educational School, Tring, now known as Tring Park School for the Performing Arts. I spent 5 memorable years training under the guidance of many special teachers who helped transform me into the versatile dancer I believe I am today! Upon graduating, at the age of 18, I was fortunate enough to be offered a position with Scottish Ballet Company in Glasgow, where I spent 5 happy and successful years.

### **What drew you to the Company?**

Matthew Bourne's New Adventures had always appealed to me from a young age, with their ability to bring productions alive through exceptional dance quality, strong storytelling and characterisation. During my last year at Scottish Ballet I was given the greatest joy of working with Matt and Etta in Matthew Bourne's production of *Highland Fling*. This has to be one of my favourite productions of all time and I was given the wonderful role of Effie to play. It was a dream come true and a huge reality check for me, in that I realised New Adventures was where I wanted to be and the rep was exactly what I longed to do. I joined New Adventures for the UK tour of *Edward Scissorhands* in 2014 and have been with the Company since, performing in *The Car Man* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

### **Do you have any hobbies/interests outside of dance?**

Outside of work I have a real love for interior design, art and fashion. I love my sports - watching and playing which runs throughout my family.

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## ***What's it like being on tour and in a different place every week?***

Tour life can sometimes seem like a hardship, living out of a suitcase the whole time and the struggle to see family, friends and loved ones on a regular basis, but touring is also one of the most enjoyable times. Most ordinary jobs keep you at one base however we get to visit new venues every week, it's a great way of seeing the country and experiencing the highlights of each new city we go to. All venues are very welcoming and being able to perform at so many theatres and entertain such a wide audience is very rewarding. Creating memories with my fellow friends and colleagues is priceless! This year is particularly exciting with there being a long international tour which is such a great way to see the world, experience different cultures and create memories that will last a lifetime. For this I am extremely grateful and an opportunity that not everyone is fortunate enough to experience in their life. Tour life is also a great way to catch up with distant friends and family who may be abroad or farther afield in the UK.

## ***Do you have a favourite venue to perform at?***

My favourite venue to perform at would probably be the Birmingham Hippodrome. This theatre holds many happy memories for me from a young age when I performed with Birmingham Royal Ballet in the *Nutcracker*, and a special memory of performing at the Silver Gala in *Still Life at the Penguin Cafe*. Birmingham is also very close to my hometown of Worcester so all my family and friends come to watch me and support me always.

## ***In many of Matthew Bourne's shows the dancers have to learn more than one role, performing several tracks in one show and *Sleeping Beauty* is no exception. How do you remember more than one role?***

I consider myself to be quick at picking up choreography, so learning multiple roles is great and especially if you're on a long tour it's nice to perform multiple roles to keep things fresh. It can be confusing learning multiple roles in the early stages of rehearsal, especially if it's a revival, like *Sleeping Beauty* that a lot of the Company have already performed. Rehearsals move a lot faster and you have to be more switched on so you're not playing catch up. However, learning multiple roles is pretty standard in any company so you are covered from illness and injury. When lots of people are learning multiple roles you get to interact with different characters in scenes and have new partners to dance with which is lovely. No show is ever the same which keeps the production alive. You have to adapt to everyone's individual character choices they make and respond accordingly and nobody partners exactly the same so it's a good way to keep your partnering skills sharp.

## ***Do you have a favourite costume you've worn during your time with New Adventures so far?***

My favourite costume would have to be the Queen outfit in *Sleeping Beauty*. It's very grand and for everyone that knows me I love my jewellery so in this role I get chance to wear lots of bling and jewels. You really feel like a Queen.

## ***What's your favourite role that you have performed as so far, in the Company, and is there another New Adventures production that you would love to take part in?***

My favourite role that I've performed to date would have to be the part of Mercedes in *The Car Man*. It is such an amazing show and from the moment I first saw it many years ago I just knew it was the one show I'd love to be in. Sassy, gritty and so different to all my other roles I usually dance. One of the things I love best about the Company is the vast range of characters and choreography you perform throughout all productions, to challenge yourself and develop as an artist. The production that I would love to be part of is *Cinderella*.



*Katie dressed as Mercedes in The Car Man*

**You are able to follow Katie on Twitter (@KatieWebb152) for a further insight into her world!**