

Article from the *Reno Gazette-Journal* in Reno, Nevada (October 28, 2007)

'Coppelia' could be good start for ballet newbies

Tour manager says comedy, drama make it easy to enjoy

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STORY CHAT(read or post comments)

Brigham Young University junior Kristina Mitchell says touring with the school's Theatre Ballet company is one of the highlights of her year.

"We get to go to new places," she says. "We get to see different parts of the country, and then we get to meet a lot of people, which is really exciting."

On Saturday, Mitchell and her peers will dance for folks in our neck of the woods when Theatre Ballet presents a performance of "Coppelia" at the Pioneer Center. The show is being presented as part of the Washoe County Concert Association's 2007-2008 season.

"Coppelia" is a classic comic ballet about a couple whose relationship is tested by a life-sized doll. Said doll is so realistic and attractive that a young man named Franz mistakes it for a real girl and becomes smitten, at the risk of losing his true love, Swanilde. Needless to say, she is discouraged by his attraction to the "new girl," so she and her friends go to meet her. When they do, they discover she's really the creation of a mischievous doctor named Coppelius, and they hatch a plan to shame Franz.

Mitchell plays one of Swanilde's friends, and she says the ballet is delightful for all ages.

"It has childlike characters and things like that, but it's also very comedic for an adult to appreciate," she says. "I like it because it's a lighthearted ballet. "» A lot of times just dancing it you finish rehearsing it and you're just happy because you play happy characters and it's fun."

Tour manager Sandra Allen says Theatre Ballet is staging "Coppelia" traditionally, with the action set in a French village during the mid-1800s. Some choreography dates back to the work's 1870 debut, but most has been assembled over decades by a variety of BYU choreographers. Allen says so many choreographers were involved that the company now credits the movement to "Theatre Ballet directors past and present."

Still, she says, BYU's take is conventional.

"('Coppelia') normally does not vary much from one company to another," she says. "It's almost like all of the dramatic action is written in the music. "» You can pretty much listen to the music and tell what's supposed to be happening."

The score was composed by Leo Delibes to a libretto by original choreographer Arthur Saint-Leon and Charles Nuttier, and it has become a staple of dance repertoire. But that doesn't mean only aficionados can enjoy.

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MARK A. PHILBRICK/BYU PUBLICITY PHOTO

Doctor Coppelius admires his creation, the mechanical doll Coppelia, played by Ashley Ivory in the BYU Theatre Ballet's production of Coppelia.

"This is the most excellent first-time ballet experience," Allen says. "It is so endearing and delightful and comic, anybody can come off the street and be charmed. They'll recognize some of the music. It will be familiar to them, and then they'll just fall in love with the comedy and the drama. And actually our students are very good, so your more experienced audience will like it just as well."

Allen says the performance is also beneficial to the students, who get a taste of the touring life.

"It's excellent in giving them experience," she says. "The students usually feed off of the performing experience and feeling that they're doing something for the community."

COMMUNITY



The Snow Queen was a hit with a Sisters audience.

photo by Sue Anderson

Ballet wows Sisters audience

By Jim Cornelius
Editor

Sisters provided a large and rapt audience for Brigham Young University Theatre Ballet's production of "The Snow Queen" on Tuesday, March 9.

Children in particular were enthralled by the colorful sets and costumes and the evocative dancing in this ballet adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen tale of a young girl's quest to save a boy, her best friend, from the clutches of the evil Snow Queen.

The production was an

unusual treat for Sisters audiences. It is the first time a major ballet troupe has visited Central Oregon.

The performance was a benefit for SOAR (Sisters Organization for Activities and Recreation) and Central Oregon Boys and Girls Club. SOAR board member Bonnie Malone did not have any official tally of the proceeds, but the nearly-full Sisters High School auditorium boded well for the results.

Malone said she expected SOAR to net several thousand dollars from the show.

Malone said she would like to see Sisters attract other ballet troupes to the area. It will be several years before BYU's Theatre Ballet will return, since the troupe tours in a different region of the country each season.

The Sisters stage hosted some of the most exceptional dance talent in the nation.

Theatre Ballet at Brigham Young University is the largest dance program at any American University.

Many of BYU's dancers graduate to become dance professionals.

Article from *The Daily Universe* in Provo, Utah (December 8, 2003)



Photo courtesy of BYU Theatre Ballet Company

Members of the BYU Theatre Ballet Company travel around Utah performing for the state's youth.

Ballet company brings culture into area schools

By NICKI SCHMIDT

An audience of 400 children, six, months ago, as ballerinas in tutus and elaborate costumes perform for the students at a school assembly.

Questions like "How do you stand on your toes?" and "How are the guys so strong?" sent their lips during the question and answer time at the end of the performance.

All of this is part of the annual program called "Outreach," used to introduce children to the arts.

The BYU Theatre Ballet Company is part of the many performing groups that participate in the Outreach program.

Most recently, the company visited Geneva Elementary School in Green. With no opportunity to experience school dance programs at Geneva, students can experience ballet, some for the first time, through the Outreach program.

"It was great," said Janette Strong, Geneva Elementary School principal. "I was very impressed."

"These kids don't have much exposure to the ballet, and it was great for them to see what a ballet really is all about. Even the sixth grade boys were as into it as everybody else."

Strong said the audience of students, ranging from preschool age to sixth grade, was attentive throughout the assembly.

"I was kind of surprised at what a good audience they were because it was something that is so different to them," Strong said.

Throughout the assembly, the ballet director explained to the audience certain ballet etiquette, including appropriate times to clap.

"It was a great opportunity for them to learn how to behave in a ballet as an audience," Strong said.

After the assembly, many teachers allowed students to ask questions about ballet when they went back to their classrooms.

In past years, the BYU Theatre Ballet Company has visited anywhere from seven to 25 elementary schools each year for the Outreach program, performing for about 400 students per school.

This year, the company will visit a total of 19 schools during November, December and January reaching from Santaquin to Bountiful. The company is performing a condensed version of their spring show, "The Snow Princess," a fairytale by Hans Christian Andersen, the author of *The Little Mermaid* and *The*

Princess and the Pea.

"We've taken the fun parts of the story and reduced it into 20 minutes," said Jennie Creer-King, artistic director for the BYU Theatre Ballet Company.

Students go in groups of 12 to the schools and teach some about three days of school to be part of Outreach.

"It's an important part of the citizenship dancers have in being part of a performing company," Creer-King said.

Jessica Shippen, a senior on the Theatre Ballet Company, said she thinks dancers have a responsibility to share dances with children because "the next generation needs to be cultured."

She said the world is so packed with media, children are forgetting about the arts.

"Not only is it a chance for us as dancers to serve, but also to get the children out of their media zone," Shippen said.

"One of the messages we try to pass onto them is they need to cultivate their own talents," Shippen said.

Creer-King said the company will continue the Outreach program, using touring in the spring.

"The positive results are the gorgeous, smiling faces of the children," Creer-King said. "They just love it."