

NOUVELLES DU BALLET

Newsletter of Champaign Urbana Ballet

Spring 2012



Airborne

deconstructing ballet's big jump

Airborne in Grand Jeté



from the artistic director

This season has proven to be a perfect fit for our company and its dancers - a heartwarming **Nutcracker**, the technical challenge of **Off Stage**, and now a dose of delightful storytelling in **Coppélia**.

I love **Coppélia** for many reasons: it's an unassuming introduction to ballet with a great mix of story and character dancing; the music of Delibes is melodic and memorable; and most importantly, it's a ballet that allows our dancers to be themselves - happy, earnest, and just a little goofy. As we rehearse, I'm amazed by the comedic timing and cleverness of our young troupe - they bring the story to life in creative ways, and will make this production charming and unique.

It will be years before we restage **Coppélia** again, so be sure to catch this wonderful production at the Virginia Theatre in May.

Deanna D Doty
Artistic Director



In every ballet class, the staple of big jumps remains a dancer's favorite – the grand jeté. It's the Michael Jordan move of ballet, and every dancer wants to be like Mike.

Jetés (so named by the French, and meaning "thrown") can describe any number of leaps where a dancer transfers weight from one foot to the other, usually attempting to suspend their movement in midair. In a grand jeté, the dancer takes off with one leg stretched forward and throws the other back, striving to attain a split-like extension while traveling as far



Peyton Herbert, like Ben Chapman on our cover, outstretched in grand jeté.

and as high as possible. Technique, strength and sheer effort often result in a spectacular leap where the dancer's jeté reaches their standing shoulder height.

Grand jeté combinations are usually given at the end of the ballet class and choreographed into the coda of a ballet because they require so much energy – it's like running hurdles at the end of a full cardio workout. But if you're a hurdle jumper or a ballet dancer, it's a moment you look forward to, and you're willing to give it all you've got for the thrill of flight – carried through the air by your own strength and momentum.

Hard Landing

Of course, what goes up must come down, and the force of landing a grand jeté is considerable. The power of one's full body-weight hitting the ground on one foot is compounded by forces of gravity and velocity.

Dancers are trained to cushion their landing with a plié (bending the supporting ankle and knee), yet the act of "staying up" and transitioning to the next ballet movement comes naturally to

most. A dancer's intuition is to just keep going, and they always manage to do that with grace.

Preparing for Impact

What makes for a memorable grand jeté?

Today's emphasis on extreme athleticism has dancers striving to split their legs 180 degrees or more while moving upward and forward at great height and speed; yet some of the most beautiful grand jetés achieve a very different quality – the appearance of suspending in midair, stretched wide, with eyes deeply connected to the audience.

A great jump is marked by feelings of freedom and exhilaration shared between the dancer and the audience; collective hearts stop in a moment of awe, and ballet is beauty made perfect again.

Next time you're at the ballet or stealing a glance into a rehearsal studio, be sure to look for the grand jetés. And if you'd like to try one for yourself, there's a local adult ballet class and some studio airspace ready for your debut.



Champaign Urbana Ballet

Coppélia

May 4 7:30pm

May 5 11am & 2pm Children's Matinees

Virginia Theatre, Downtown Champaign

Tickets: 217-356-9063

Once upon a time . . .

Swanhilda loves Franz

Franz

is dating Swanhilda,
but becomes infatuated
with a doll he thinks is real

Coppélia a doll. . . for sure!



a toymaker who believes he can
magically bring his dolls to life

Dr. Coppelius

Dr. Coppelius tricks
the gullible Franz



Swanhilda realizes
Coppélia is actually a
doll. . .



. . .and pretends to be her



Dr. Coppelius is fooled
by Swanhilda's antics



Swanhilda's best friend
pretends to be a monkey. . .

Come see why!



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Champaign Urbana Ballet

May 4-5

Virginia Theatre

Tickets

217.356.9063

thevirginia.org

Enjoy a wonderful
evening at the ballet:

Friday, May 4

7:30pm

Full performance

or delight in a
children's matinee:

Saturday, May 5

11:00am & 2:00pm

Shortened performance and
Mime & Magic presentation

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