

NOUVELLES DU BALLET

Newsletter of Champaign Urbana Ballet

Spring 2009



MAKING MAGIC

Company dancers rehearse the Ballroom Scene in CU Ballet's world premiere production of *Cinderella*.

When the curtain goes up on CU Ballet's world premiere performance of *Cinderella* in May, it will be the culmination of collaboration and a labor of love that has been many Mays in the making.

From the meticulous detail of Cinderella's coach, created by an Amish buggy craftsman, to the majestic artistry of the dancers, to the creative vision of Andy Warfel's shining set design, *Cinderella* creates a magical setting that will transport and transfix the audience.

It's a vision that started with equal doses of inspiration and persistence. Tracy McCabe, director, had envisioned this production for years and took on responsibility for its planning with the blessing of Artistic Director Deanna Doty. The ballet is an original piece, none of it recycled from other ballets, that will bring a unique environment to the stage, unlike any the Company has created before.

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Doty and McCabe collaborate in the studio: Mason Anders partners Alexandra Warwick in the Grand Pas: Constance Hosier breathes life into her character role.



Apprentice dancers illuminate their Waltz of the Stars in rehearsal.



Gina Wojnar, Anna Lin, Chloé Cooper, and Maura Dickson work out subtle hand gestures fitting the ballet's vogue style.

MAKING MAGIC

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At the heart of this original piece is McCabe's inspired interpretation of the Prokofiev score. "In ballet, the music and the story are my inspiration," he says. "I've listened to Prokofiev's *Cinderella* score for two decades, and I've daydreamed the ballet in great detail. I obsess over the music until I sense the meaning behind it and form a picture in my mind, and I interpret that in staging and choreography. I truly believe that the music and the composer are channeled in what's created; otherwise, I wouldn't do them justice. It doesn't make my way of thinking right or more profound than another choreographer's; it just gives my artistry a personal meaning that I hope translates meaningfully to the dancers and to the audience."

In addition to the inspired choreography and staging, the audience will be treated to Doty's breathtaking costume design and Warfel's magnificent sets, both of which add to the fairytale quality of the production.

Warfel, too, uses the music as the starting point in the creative process. "I listen to the music over and over again to get the feel for the mood and the pacing and the scale of the piece, while working through the story line and choreography to give a shape, or arc, to the evening." Then he pores over reams of research on historical architecture, painting, and design styles to determine what meshes most authentically with the story line.

But, of course, it's the talent and passion of the dancers that is the heart and soul of the production and that will most elicit the admiration and awe of the audience. "It's well known that Deanna creates exceptional dancers," says McCabe. "She has trained and developed a creative group of artists who have responded surprisingly well to the different ways I'm asking them to move. Their artistry will outshine the choreography. CU Ballet's dancers catch audiences by surprise and make them great fans of what we do. *Cinderella* will continue that tradition."

- Cathy Lockman

Cover and inside cover photography by Jason Lindsey

"CU Ballet's dancers catch audiences by surprise and make them great fans of what we do."

Driving Forces

Featured in the *Cinderella* Cast:

Cinderella	Alexis Hedge, Alexandra Warwick
Prince Charming	Mason Anders
Fairy Godmother	Chloé Cooper, Erica Johnston
Stepsisters	John Dayger & Philip Johnston

Cinderella Designers:

Director, choreographer	Tracy McCabe
Choreographic assistants	Deanna Doty, Emily Buss
Production Supervisor	Andy Warfel
Lighting Design	Kevin Gawley
Costume Design	Deanna Doty, Anne De Velder, Tracy McCabe

Champaign Urbana Ballet:

Artistic Director	Deanna Doty
President	Bonnie Ziegler
Company Manager	Julianna Gelke
Ballet Mistress	Emily Buss

Beauty to Behold

Cinderella presents an opportunity to express an important theme—that is, the interplay between what is perceived as beautiful and what is considered ugly—and CU Ballet's production does it magically. *Cinderella* may be in rags, but she is true beauty; the Fairy Godmother first appears as a decrepit beggar before transforming into quintessential grace; and an ordinary pumpkin is turned into the most fabulous glistening coach any production has ever seen. This beautiful/ugly metaphor extends to Prokofiev's score, which at first sounds strange but then moves the audience in a rapturously beautiful way.



Director Tracy McCabe sees it this way: "The message of *Cinderella* isn't that you need to dress like a princess to catch a prince," he says. "It's that there is beauty to behold in everything, just the way it is."

Artistic Director Deanna Doty designed a leafy pattern used as a ragged edge on many of the costumes. The tattered effect makes for an organic yet refined result.

BEHIND THE SCENES

with *Cinderella* set designer Andy Warfel

Andy Warfel conceived of his *Cinderella* set design long before his association with CU Ballet. In fact, it was the drawings he completed as a graduate student at NYU, under the guidance of renowned ballet set designer Oliver Smith, that most informed the design both compositionally and stylistically.

With those drawings as a framework, Warfel researched a variety of styles, including neoclassicism, romanticism, medieval, and art nouveau and came to a conclusion that helped him refine and finalize his drawings: "I decided I could use any of these styles and periods so long as they were presented with a decisively modern, theatrical sensibility," he says.

The result is masterful. "Andy's designs for the set are in every way magical," says producer/director Tracy McCabe. "Audiences will be stunned at the imaginative environment he has created to cradle the ballet."

It's a set that includes three major components:

- **The Chateau**, which has a sort of medieval-meets-art-nouveau feeling and is the most "realistic" of the three scenes
- **The Forest**, which is very mysterious and organic
- **The Palace**, which is pure fantasy with its massive circular windows, sliver of a grand staircase, and billowing swags

Once the drawings were complete, Warfel worked with vendors to obtain the materials and carry out the work, and for the last month of production guided technical director Bob Weber and the local crew of builders to fabricate the set. Then, he says, comes the fun part. "Seeing it all take shape in the theatre!"

- Cathy Lockman

See other stunning Warfel designs at www.a-w-e-d.com



Andy Warfel



Warfel's set design sketches for CU Ballet's world premiere of *Cinderella*.

Hosier joins National Ballet of Canada

Alumna Kate Hosier (pictured below in an audition photo) was recently accepted to join the National Ballet of Canada as an apprentice next season. Hosier trained at the National Ballet School of Canada after leaving CU Ballet and Champaign Ballet Academy in 2006 to embark on her professional career. CU Ballet artistic director Deanna Doty describes Hosier as a talented, determined dancer with a dramatic flair. Parents Connie and Mike Hosier, longtime CU Ballet supporters, steadfastly encouraged their daughter to pursue this dream.



Save the Date

Soirée du Ballet: *Lilac Lounge*

August 28, 2009





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It's Midnight! Company dancer Claire Liu is captured in Cinderella's infamous moment by fashion photographer Tuan Bui, outside the Art Institute of Chicago. See more fashion photography at www.cuballet.com.