


IT'S TO DYE FOR

For years, followers of Champaign Urbana Ballet have been dazzled by the costume designs of Deanna Doty, brought to life by a team of dedicated volunteers most recently headed by Costume Mistress Masumi Iriye. Dancers, too, enjoy the excitement of being fit for a new costume, or discovering what dancer from years past wore that particular Lady-in-Waiting or Topiary ensemble.

This year's production of *The Sleeping Beauty* features an entirely new set of costumes for the Garland Waltz, performed during Princess Aurora's fateful sixteenth birthday celebration. Twenty-six dancers ranging in age from nine to sixteen will be wearing costumes sewn from twill, silk, bengaline and velvet and custom dyed by Iriye to a color palette set by Doty. What began as approximately forty yards of white or neutral-toned fabric has been transformed into a veritable costume bouquet of golds, reds and purples through the dedication of Iriye and the CU Ballet costume shop.


Costume Mistress Iriye said of the Garland costumes, "These particular costumes were especially fun to work on, because they were designed for such a large group of dancers who range in age between 9 and 16. The challenge for Deanna was coming up with a pattern that would work for both the mature dancer on pointe as well as the youngest dancer." The girls wear fitted bodices over knee-length, custom-dyed tutus and the boys sport tailored jackets and vests over tights or knickers. All the costumes are elaborately trimmed with floral-inspired decorations, made with assistance from the dancers themselves.




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Champaign Urbana Ballet
PRESENTS





THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

The beautiful Princess Aurora...
felled by a curse, saved by a fairy,
awakened by **true love's kiss.**

SATURDAY, MAY 3
2:00 & 7:30 P.M.
SUNDAY, MAY 4
2:00 P.M.



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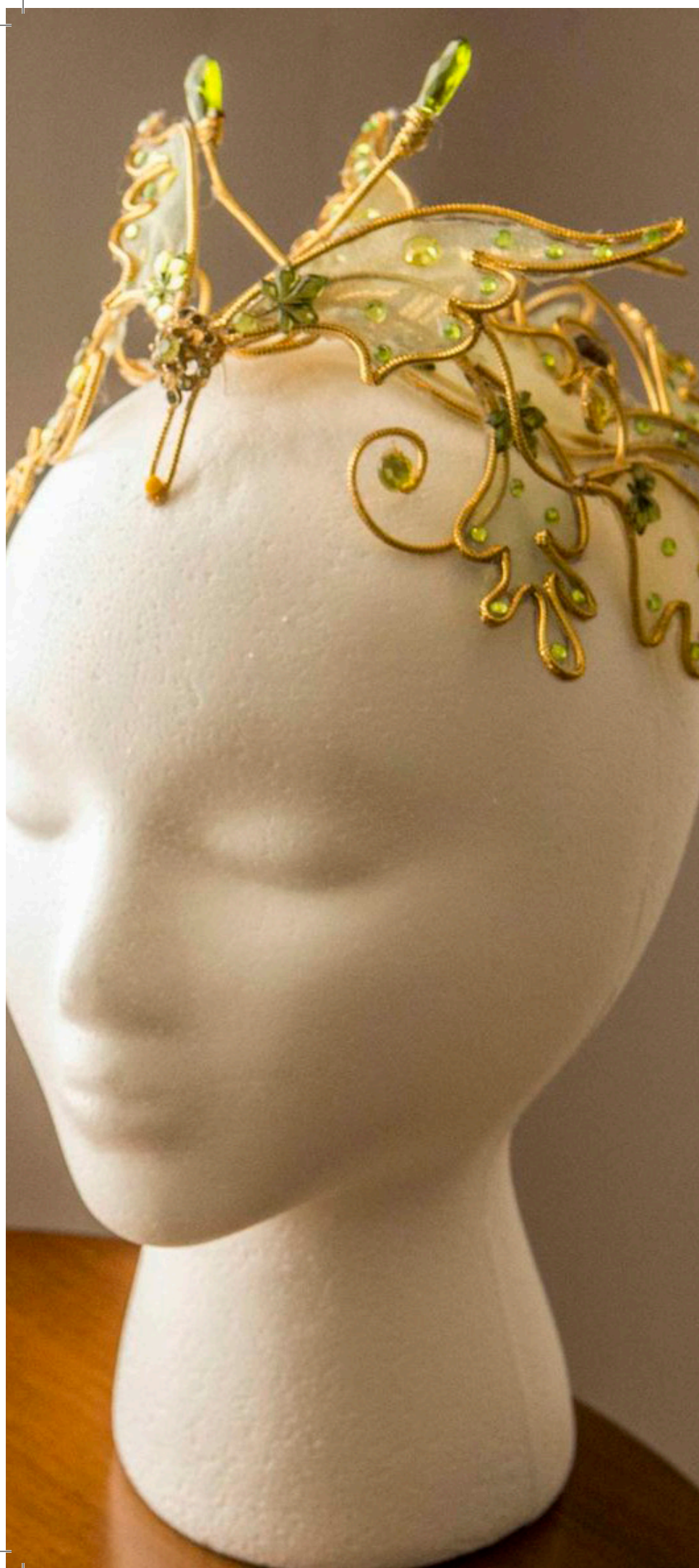


NOUVELLES DU BALLET

Newsletter of Champaign Urbana Ballet

Spring 2014

IN THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE



SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

The Sleeping Beauty is Tchaikovsky's famously grand ballet, known for its scale and for the opulence of its staging. Yet the ballet depends on the simplest of tools: the needle.

The story itself revolves around a needle prick that casts Princess Aurora into a 100-year sleep. But the story could never be so beautifully told without hundreds of needles wielded by scores of capable volunteer costumers.

To put *The Sleeping Beauty* on the Virginia Theater stage, Champaign Urbana Ballet's Artistic Director Deanna Doty with assistance from Ballet Mistress Tobey Martinez have cast 140 roles and staged three acts, each with multiple dances and variations.

Cast members have had to study, practice, and polish their dances, and learn to portray characters ranging from devilish creatures to the noble Prince Desire.

Taken together, the size of the cast, the range of roles, and the grandeur of the ballet combine to place significant demands on the costumes themselves, and on the dedicated volunteers who create them.

Costuming ballet dancers is, in many ways, as complex and intricate as the art of ballet itself. Dancers strive to balance grace and strength, to make the most stunning athletic feats look effortless. They devote hours of work over weeks, months, and years to achieve the perfect balance. The perfect costume must strike a similar balance between grace and strength, beauty and toughness. It must accurately reflect the style of an era—

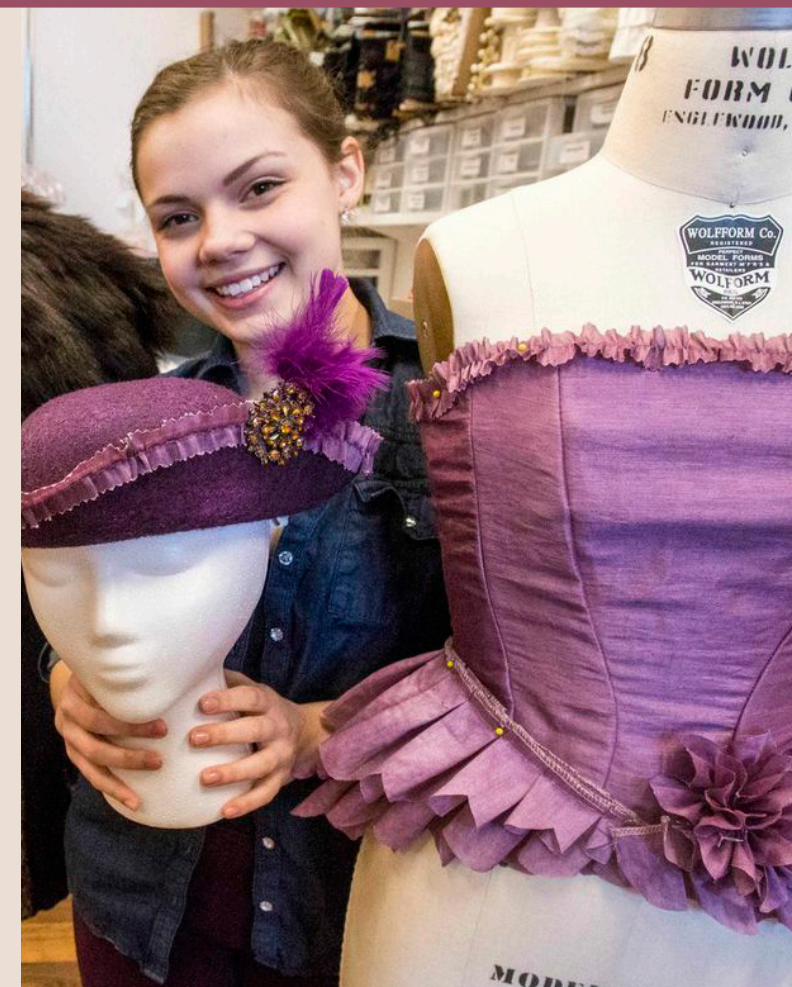


Each step in the process, from choosing an overall color palate for a production to sewing the final button on a court lord's jacket is purposeful.

eighteenth-century France for *The Sleeping Beauty*—but do so in a way that does not hinder a dancer.

Deanna Doty's artistic vision determines the design, fabrics, colors, and features of the dancers' costumes, and she constructs many of them in her workshop. She is supported by Masumi Iriye, CU Ballet's Costume Mistress, and a dedicated corps of volunteers to dye, cut, sew, taper, hem, and adorn until Doty's vision has been translated onto the bodies of the dancers.

Each step in the process, from choosing an overall color palate for a production to sewing the final button on a court lord's jacket is purposeful; each step reflects the aesthetic of the production, consideration of the best way to convey that aesthetic in a particular scene, and close attention to how the dancers and their costumes will interact. If a scene requires long dresses with large bustles, how long is too long, how large is too large? Which fabrics will give the dresses the right amount of flow?



The final costumes can only emerge after conversations between the costumers and dancers, whose body language will often say all that costumers need to know about how well a costume is working.

Iriye, who has been Costume Mistress since 2011, describes the costume shop as a tightly-knit community, whose members often stumble into costuming, find that they like the work, grow to love the work, and then come back year after year. "Even after their dancers graduate," she observed, "these parents keep at it."



It's challenging work. The volunteer costumers work many weeknights and long hours every weekend so that every dancer takes the stage in a hand-made, individually-tailored costume. With 140 roles and countless alterations per costume, the volume of work is staggering.

The volume of costuming work grows as the company grows. Costumes that worked five years ago may not work for a new corps of dancers. But the care and skill of the costumers, and the quality and the beauty of the costumes they create remain unparalleled, except, of course, by the dancers themselves.

There is no better opportunity than the upcoming production of *The Sleeping Beauty* to recognize and admire the work that costumes and costumers do, and to take note of how quietly integral they are to every CU Ballet production.

PHOTO CREDITS

The Sleeping Beauty performance photos: Dan Merlo
Costuming photos: Darrell Hoemann

