

ABOUT COPPÉLIA

Coppélia is a comedic ballet first performed by the Paris Opera Ballet in 1870 shortly before the start of the Franco-Prussian War. It broke from the tradition of the romantic ballet and engaged audiences through its humor.

Coppélia was originally choreographed by Arthur Saint-Léon. Born the son of a Ballet Master of the Wuerttemberg Ducal Theatre, Saint-Léon eventually went on to become Ballet Master of St. Petersburg Imperial Ballet.

Coppélia features music composed by Leo Delibes. For this piece Delibes combined classical composition with folkloric dance music. This style was new at that time and became very popular.

Coppélia first appeared in the United States in 1887 with the American Opera Company. In 1960 Princeton Ballet School first produced *Coppélia* with choreography adapted by Audree Estey. In 1972, American Ballet Theater legend Frederic Franklin staged *Coppélia* for the Princeton Ballet, as our company was called at that time. Among the performers in that production was Sherry (Kaplan) Alban, then a teenager, but now our children's rehearsal director for *Nutcracker*.

ABOUT ACCESS & ENRICHMENT

American Repertory Ballet's Access & Enrichment department is dedicated to exposing New Jersey communities to the art form of dance, as active participants and informed observers, and to develop life-long dance enthusiasts.

ARB has educational programming available for Pre-K to 12th grade that meets the NJ State Core Curriculum Standards for Visual and Performing Arts.

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COPPÉLIA

Mini Guide



AMERICAN REPERTORY BALLET
PRINCETON BALLET SCHOOL

THE LIBRETTO (THE STORY)

ACT 1

It is a sunny morning in the village and Swanhilda, seeing an unknown, elegant young woman reading at the balcony, dances a greeting of welcome. However, she is completely ignored, as the girl, Coppélia, never raises her eyes to return the compliment.



Next Swanhilda's betrothed, Franz, appears, and he too greets Coppélia and receives an unexpected response—she blows him a kiss! He is thrilled and is about to blow her a kiss when Dr. Coppélius appears at the window. He escorts Coppélia inside.

Swanhilda is very upset by Franz's behavior and threatens to break off their engagement. A deep rift develops between the two lovers when Franz chooses to dance with a group of traveling Gypsies.

Some of the young men of the village approach Dr. Coppélius for beer money, and in the ensuing struggle, the key to his toyshop falls out of his pocket. Swanhilda and her friends discover the key and decide to investigate Dr. Coppélius' mysterious workshop.

Act 2

The toyshop at night is a scary place, and Swanhilda and her friends discover that it is filled with automatons, life-sized mechanical dolls. Dr. Coppélius, realizing that he has dropped his key, returns and is angry to find Swanhilda and her friends in his workshop. He chases them out, although Swanhilda eludes him and hides in the alcove where Coppélia is kept.

Next Franz enters, hoping to see Coppélia again. After a brief chase, Dr. Coppélius offers him a drink that he readily accepts. Dr. Coppélius secretly slips in a sleeping potion. They toast to peace, and before long, Franz falls into a deep sleep.

Finally Dr. Coppélius can realize his diabolical plan, to transform Coppélia from a mechanical doll into a living, breathing human by draining Franz's life energy and giving it to her. Unaware that Swanhilda has switched places with Coppélia, Dr. Coppélius bring out his most precious of creations. With the help of spells from his magic book, he brings Coppélia to life. Swanhilda creates the perfect illusion for him and he is utterly enchanted.

But the new Coppélia is a very naughty girl. She winds up all the mechanical toys, wakes Franz, and reveals her deception. Dr. Coppélius is devastated to discover that Swanhilda was only pretending to be Coppélia, and that all of his great magic has been a hoax. He is crushed by this revelation as Swanhilda and Franz escape together.

Act 3

It is the wedding day of Swanhilda and Franz, and all of their friends in the village have come to dance for them as they celebrate their love. Even Dr. Coppélius has forgiven them, and they all live happily ever after.

