

Queensland Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LEANNE BENJAMIN

Coppélia

7 - 22 JUNE 2024
PLAYHOUSE
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From the Artistic Director

Coppélia is a fun and uplifting ballet for families – full of twists and turns, mayhem and charm. The choreography is beautiful, Delibes’ music is joyous, and its wonderful humour will appeal to people of all ages.

This ballet is greatly loved, and it has been performed worldwide for more than a century. Choreographer Greg Horsman brought a contemporary twist to our 2014 production, setting it in a South Australian town with vibrant costume and set designs. Even though *Coppélia* was first created in 1870, the story and characters are relatable to all of us – dealing with love, jealousy, and the importance of friendships.

I remember dancing the role of Swanilda many times in my career and loved the technical challenge and her lively spirit. The ballet is full of fascinating characters and I have enjoyed seeing our dancers bring them to life during rehearsals.

From stunning pas de deux, interesting solos, comedic moments, to mimicking the movements of the Coppélia doll, this ballet has become another signature Company production.

Greg’s vision for his *Coppélia* has been realised with a talented creative team, including Noelene Hill for her exquisite costume designs – such as the beautiful 19th century bodices, floral headpieces, and Australian Rules Football uniforms. Hugh Colman’s set designs wonderfully depict early Australian settlement life. Further enhancing the production is lighting design by Jon Buswell and a brilliant score by Léo Delibes, arranged by Nigel Gaynor and played by Queensland Symphony Orchestra. My gratitude goes to the entire creative team for their work on this production.

I also want to warmly thank Queensland Ballet’s supporters and Partners, including the Australian and Queensland governments. Through this generous support we are able to enrich lives and share stories, such as this one, through our art form.

Finally, thank you to you – our audience, for being here with us. I am confident you will enjoy our Australian vision of this sunny ballet.

L Benjamin

Leanne Benjamin OBE AM
Artistic Director



Credits

Choreographer
Greg Horsman,
after Arthur Saint-Léon & Marius Petipa

Music
Léo Delibes

Music Arranger and Conductor
Nigel Gaynor

Costume Designer
Noelene Hill

Set Designer
Hugh Colman

Lighting Designer
Jon Buswell

Music Performed by
Queensland Symphony Orchestra

Animation
Produced by PixelFrame
Illustrated by S.M. Olive
Directed by Lucas Thyer
Edited by Ryan Smith

Duration: Approximately two hours and 20 minutes, including two 20-minute intervals.

A co-production of Queensland Ballet and West Australian Ballet, first performed in Brisbane, Australia, on 24 April 2014.

Coppélia is a classical ballet in three acts. Original libretto by Charles Nutter, based on ETA Hoffmann’s stories, *Der Sandmann (The Sandman)* and *Die Puppe (The Doll)*.

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we train and perform. Long before we arrived on this land, it played host to the dance expression of our First Nations Peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the valuable contribution they have made and continue to make to the cultural landscape of this country.



From the Choreographer

My journey with *Coppélia* began when I was a 15-year-old student at Geelong High School. It was a school trip to see a performance of *Coppélia* by the West Australian Ballet. I was mesmerised and loved the humour and how it was integral to the story. The next encounter had an even bigger impact on me – a performance by the Dancers Company of Dame Peggy van Praagh’s production, which had been created for The Australian Ballet.

In 1982, aged 18 and having completed my training at the Victorian Collage of the Arts Secondary School, I danced the role of Franz in a production by Ann Roberts and Maggi Sietsma for the North Queensland Ballet (now Dance North). Here, I learnt a great deal about being in character, comedic timing, and storytelling. A few years later, I danced as Franz with The Australian Ballet, this time in Dame Peggy’s production where I had the great fortune of being coached by her. In 1996, I performed Franz for the last time, with English National Ballet in Ronald Hynd’s equally charming production.

When I started thinking about my own production of this ballet, I looked at setting it in a different place and period which might relate more to our own community and audiences today. The original synopsis sets the ballet in a village in the Austrian Empire in the late 18th century. With names such as Franz and Swanilda, I felt I didn’t want to stray too far away from this setting.

I thought about all the people who had come to this country since 1788 and made Australia into the multi-cultural society that it is today. I also remembered a visit I had to the small village of Hahndorf in South Australia, which had been settled by German Lutherans fleeing religious persecution and war in 1838 and still retains its original character today. My first thoughts on seeing the village was how it had a different look and feel to other small towns I had visited and I joked at the time “you could set *Coppélia* here”.

I read about their journey to Australia and found out that some children and elderly had died on the voyage. I considered how this could be incorporated to enhance Dr Coppélius’s character. I didn’t much like the concept of him as a magician or toy maker, and he disappears after Act II in a lot of productions. Who is this man and why did he want to make a life like doll and try to bring it to life? I concluded he had to have lost his daughter, and he was trying to recreate her. This gave me the context for Dr Coppélius arriving in Australia, a grieving and broken-hearted man. I made him a real doctor, a man of science, and developed the other characters and the story from there.

I also wanted to address the third act which has great music but less narrative. I included Dr Coppélius here and resolved his storyline. I also used other pieces of Delibes’s music, in this production, which he wrote for a ballet called *La Source*, that I feel fits perfectly and allows for my expanded storyline.

I must also thank my design team Hugh Colman, Noelene Hill and Jon Buswell for bringing to life images that were in my head, and also PixelFrame for their creation of the video in the prologue.

I can’t believe it was ten years ago that the production was created. I hope that you, the audience, enjoy this version of *Coppélia* and who knows, will maybe visit Hahndorf someday if you haven’t already.



Greg Horsman
Choreographer



Former Principal Artist Natasha Kusch and Former Guest Artist Qi Huan performing *Coppélia* in 2014.
Photography David Kelly.

The Story

Prologue

Germany, 1878

Dr Coppélius and his daughter Coppélia are migrating to South Australia, where he will be a doctor in the small German settlement of Hahndorf. During the long voyage to Australia, Coppélia’s fragile health deteriorates, and she dies in her father’s arms.

Act I

South Australia

In Hahndorf, Dr Coppélius is grief-stricken and shuts himself off from the townspeople, despite their entreaties for his medical help. When he smashes his daughter’s mechanical toy, he is suddenly struck by an idea which could restore his beloved Coppélia to him.

Six years later, Swanilda and her friend Mary are intrigued by a beautiful young woman, Coppélia, sitting on Dr Coppelius’s balcony. When she blows a kiss to Swanilda’s sweetheart, Franz, and he enthusiastically returns the gesture, Swanilda is enraged.

The townspeople return victorious after a local football match. Mr Angus announces that the new bell which he has commissioned for the church has arrived and will be dedicated tomorrow. The celebrations are interrupted by a cacophony of noise and strange lights in Dr Coppélius’s house.

Swanilda tests Franz’s faithfulness by the tradition of listening to an ear of wheat – if the wheat whispers, it means that her beloved is true. Unhappily, the wheat is silent. The older folk encourage the young people to dance with them in the style of their forebears and soon everyone is dancing together.

As night falls, Dr Coppélius emerges. He is teased by a group of boys, and unknowingly drops his house key. Finding the key, Swanilda urges her friends to enter his house. Franz has a similar idea.

Act II

Swanilda and her friends discover that Coppélia is in fact a life-size doll. When Dr Coppélius returns and drives the girls out in a rage, Swanilda manages to hide. Franz enters the workshop by climbing up a ladder. Seizing the new intruder, Swanilda manages to hide. Franz enters the workshop by climbing up a ladder. Seizing the new intruder, Dr Coppélius tries to use Franz’s spirit to give life to his precious mechanical doll. Playfully masquerading as Coppélia, Swanilda dupes the doctor into thinking that his dearest wish has come true.

Act III

The new church bell is hung with great ceremony. Having escaped from Dr Coppélius’s workshop, Swanilda and Franz are telling Mary and Henry of their adventure, when they are confronted by an angry Dr Coppelius, clutching his lifeless doll. In the scuffle which follows, Mary is knocked to the ground. Shocked, Dr Coppélius revives Mary and makes his peace with the townspeople. Franz proposes to Swanilda, who joyfully accepts, and all join in the celebrations.



Former Principal Artist Natasha Kusch performing *Coppélia* in 2014.
Photography David Kelly.

Q&A with Costume Designer, Noelene Hill

214 individual pieces make up 67 costume sets for *Coppélia*, including striking late 19th century bodices, full skirts, jackets, pants, kilts, and football uniforms. Then there are 78 accessories – earrings, brooches, glasses, tie pins and watches; 13 floral headpieces, traditional German hats and fedoras; and 12 caps and bonnets. Costume Designer Noelene Hill designed the collection for *Coppélia*'s premiere, drawing on research of the period, architecture, characters, and art of the time.

How do the costumes convey Hahndorf in the 19th century?

Costumes play an important part in helping the dancer to not only portray their character, but also reflect the time and setting of the ballet. Every aspect of the costume has a role to play – the cut, colour, type of fabric chosen, and the way the fabric is treated. I designed the costumes to reflect the silhouettes and features of late 19th century German, English and Scottish attire, such as the full skirts, shapes on the sleeves, bodice details, style of the men's pants, accessories and other details. While I based my designs on historical references, I have taken some designer liberties to suit the style of the ballet, the character, and the need for dancers to be able to move easily in the costumes.

What research did you do?

I considered the story, the period and setting, and the style of choreography and other research – such as looking through my library of costume reference books, looking at art, architecture, anything that might interest me in relation to the theme, including colours, shapes, textures, or historical characters. I then discussed all these ideas with the choreographer.

How do you ensure the costumes are easily danced in?

Ballet costumes are constructed differently from fashion garments. Each costume is fitted on the dancer, and it's important they fit well and conform to the movement of the dancer's body. Fabrics are selected with wearability and mobility in mind; for example, jackets are made with built-in gussets and tutus are made in two separate pieces – a bodice and the tutu skirt.

Where did you get your inspiration for the Hahndorf Magpies football uniforms?

I chose to dress the football team in black and white, which are the colours historically worn by the Hahndorf Magpies since 1920. The style of costumes I took from historical references of the time period – stripes and jerseys we stitched strips of black and white jersey together to create the striped fabric.

Any personal standout or favourite pieces or accessories?

I am fond of all the costumes as they represent each unique character, however a standout would be the tutu that Swanhilda wears as the Coppélia doll. My inspiration came from the 19th century music box dolls. I also enjoyed designing the artwork for the clockwork automation dolls in Dr Coppelius's workshop.



Photography Jakob Perrett.

In Conversation with Set Designer, Hugh Colman

When it came to evoking a small, sunburnt town in 19th century South Australia, Set Designer Hugh Colman designed elements he knew would capture a feeling.

Eucalyptus trees, corrugated iron roofing, a pub, church, and a magpie perched on Coppélia's balcony transport us to the German village of Hahndorf in the 1880s, where the washed-out hues in creams and browns project a warm climate and a sense of village charm, too.

Hugh was approached by Choreographer Greg Horsman who said he immediately thought of him for the role of Set Designer ("I wanted an Australian designer and he was at the top of my list"). They knew each other from Maina Gielgud's 1984 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*; Greg had been a dancer, Hugh a costume and set designer.

Queensland Ballet commissioned him for 2014's *Coppélia* and it remains one of his only Australian-themed works. Hugh found inspiration in art and research, delving into late 19th century Australia and paintings of the era that he says captured a feeling of the early days of colonial settlement. Following this was an exploration of music.

"My creative process, especially where ballet is concerned, is a deep immersion in the music and the discussions with the choreographer or director, before embarking on a detailed research program for visual references," he says.

"Also, of course, if the design load is shared as it was with *Coppélia*, I contact my fellow designers of costume and lighting, because everything in the theatre comes down to collaboration. This connection is critical."

Having worked in Adelaide previously, he knew Hahndorf well, and was onsite for the building, painting and prop-making as much as he could be.

"The collaboration with the skilled workers in the workshop and costume departments is of the essence," he says.

"Every designer relies totally on these teams to bring their models and costume drawings to life."

From concept to completion, the process for this three-act ballet took about six months.

"The opportunity to create a world for the performers to inhabit – that's my favourite part of being a set designer," he says.

"I particularly enjoyed Greg's decision to set the ballet in Australia, having had only a few design commissions that were set in my homeland.

"Of *Coppélia*, I love the characterisation, and the humour the dancers express. It was my first collaboration with Noelene Hill (costumes) and Jon Buswell (lighting), and I felt it was such a success when it all came together in the theatre."



Set designs by Hugh Colman.

Our Dancers

Principal Artists



Lucy Green



Alexander Idaszak



Yanela Piñera



Patricio Revé



Joel Woellner



Neneka Yoshida

Senior Soloists



Chiara Gonzalez



Kohei Iwamoto

Soloists



Vito Bernasconi



Lina Kim



Georgia Swan



Laura Tosar

First Company Artists



D'Arcy Brazier



Luke DiMattina



Vanessa Morelli



Libby-Rose Niederer



David Power



Ivan Surodeev



Rian Thompson



Sophie Zoricic

Company Artists



Luca Armstrong



Mali Comlekci



Shaun Curtis



Lewis Formby



Clayton Forsyth



Heidi Freeman



Renee Freeman



Ines Hargreaves



Kaho Kato



Bronte Kielly-Coleman



Dylan Lackey



Callum Mackie



Edison Manuel



Briana McAllen



Amber Mitchell-Knight



Frederick Montgomery



Joshua Ostermann



Alisa Pukkinen



Brooke Ray



Paige Rochester



Leisel Rose



Jessica Stratton-Smith



Isabella Swietlicki



Ari Thompson




Kayla Van Den Bogert




Eliza Wenham


Jette Parker Young Artists




Ashlee Basford




Joshua Douglas




Taron Geyl




Milana Gould




Jack Jones




Gina Lee




Seth Marshall




Annabelle McCoy




Joseph Moss



Ethan Mrmacovski



Alyssa Park



Corina Poh

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Pre-Professional Program Dancers

Asher Flynn-Kann, Jenson Blight and James Willis.


Young Dancers

The following Queensland Ballet Academy students will feature in the production: Alexandra Lelliott, Amelia Samorodny, Charlie Matheson, Dean Round, Eliza Goodwin, Evie Robertson, Giselle Garnsworthy, Ima Sol Henriksen, Indira O'Neill, Jessica Tang, Jude Males, Madeleine Kluger, Malcolm Doyle, Moses Waters, Olivia Morgan, Oscar Peet, Oscar Ziolek, Patrick Martin, Peregrine Taylor, Sofia Fedorova and Sophia Nozic.


Artistic and Music Staff




Greg Horsman
Assistant Artistic Director




Zenia Tatcheva
Ballet Mistress




Matthew Lawrence
Ballet Master



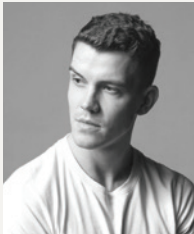
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Associate Choreographer



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| | Kathryn Close | Nicholas Harmsen |
| Violin 1 | Matthew Jones | |
| Margaret Blades | Oliver Scott | Bassoon |
| Lynn Cole | Rory Smith | David Mitchell = |
| Jordan Hall | Min Jin Sung | Evan Lewis |
| Matthew Hesse | | French Horn |
| Gregory Lee | Double Bass | Timothy Allen-Ankins = |
| Chaeun Oh | Justin Bullock | Lauren Manuel |
| Eliza Scott | Kenneth Harris | |
| Claire Tyrell | Paul O'Brien | Trumpet |
| | | Rainer Saville ~ |
| Violin 2 | Flute | Mark Bremner |
| Katie Betts | Alison Mitchell ~ | |
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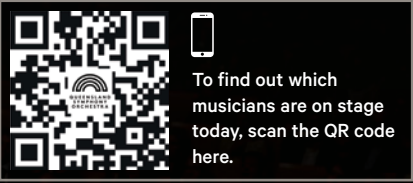


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Queensland Ballet

Queensland Ballet was founded in 1960 by Charles Lisner OBE.

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














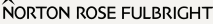






Director-General, Department of Treaty,
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Clare O'Connor.

**We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this
land, their spirits and their legacy. The
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| GOVERNMENT  <i>Queensland Ballet receives financial assistance from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.</i>   <i>Queensland Ballet is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding advisory body.</i> | |
| MAJOR AND PRESENTING PARTNERS       | |
| SEASON PARTNERS        <i>Dedicated to a better Brisbane</i> | |
| SUPPORT PARTNERS       | |
|       | |
| OFFICIAL POINTE SHOE PARTNER  | LIVE MUSIC PARTNERS  RESTAURANT PARTNERS AND OFFICIAL SUPPLIERS   CREATIVE PARTNERS   |
|      | |
| Thomas Dixon Centre Partners | Queensland Ballet Academy Partners |
| GOVERNMENT PARTNERS    FOUNDATION PARTNERS    | CAPITAL SUPPORT PARTNERS       |
| |     Club REVOLUTION Members <i>A cultural club celebrating heritage and vibrancy of ballet.</i> Dr Marosh & Lily Vrtik |

“Queensland Ballet has breathed new life into *Coppélia* with the successful fusion of new elements and the use of a more familiar setting, creating a joyful and stirring performance tailored perfectly to their Australian audiences.”

Limelight, 2014

“This is a beautiful looking *Coppélia*; Hugh Colman’s sparse set design is awash with the browns, creams and greys of the Australian outback, framing a wide-open Australian sky of a cyclorama evocatively lit by Jon Buswell.”

Dance Australia, 2014

Queensland
Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LEANNE BENJAMIN



Scan for
cast sheets



Queensland Ballet



Queensland Ballet



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