

## PROGRAM NOTES

**ACT ONE:** In a village square in Galicia, a small German town hundreds of years ago, a festival is to be held in honor of a new bell tower. Dr. Coppélius, a toy maker, inventor, and magician, exhibits his masterwork in his upstairs window - a life-sized doll that he thinks of as his daughter.

Swanhilda enters and sees Coppélia reading a book in the window. Not knowing it is a doll, Swanhilda attempts to get Coppélia's attention and asks her to join her in a dance, but to no avail. Swanhilda's friends who are headed to harvest in the fields also inquire with the girl in the window. Along comes Franz, Swanhilda's sweetheart, who becomes infatuated with the girl in the window and is seen flirting and blowing kisses to her!

The villagers enter and perform a lively Mazurka. The Burgomaster (*mayor*) enters and congratulates the couple to be wed and announces the anticipated arrival and blessing of a new town bell. Burgomaster gifts the couple with a blessed bundle of wheat. According to the old custom, the sound of shaken wheat will tell who was to be married. Swanhilda dances with an ear of wheat, listening for the good luck sound which will say that Franz is true to her. Though he claims to hear the good luck sound, she and all her friends do not, causing wedding drama and townspeople conflict. The marriage appears to be canceled and the grape harvesting villagers add to Swanhilda's jealousy by joining Franz in the dance of the Czardas. As the day's end nears, festivities wane and villagers find their ways homeward.

Dr. Coppélius leaves his house for a trip to the tavern and locks the door. With the other boys, Franz roughs up Dr. Coppélius. In their horseplay, the key to his workshop is lost which Swanhilda and her friends later discover, enabling them to invade his secrets. Dr. Coppélius returns, discovers his door ajar and rushes in. Franz, meanwhile, curious about Coppélia, raises a ladder to her window and starts to climb.

### - INTERMISSION -

**ACT TWO:** Dr. Coppélius' Toy Shop - Life-sized dolls in various costumes are scattered about the room. Swanhilda and her friends enter and are frightened by the figures. Coppélia is discovered and they realize that she, too, is only a doll. They wind up the dolls, but are interrupted by Dr. Coppélius. All of the girls flee except for Swanhilda.

Franz climbs in a window in search of his new infatuation, Coppélia. He is soon drugged by Dr. Coppélius, and the magician imagines he may animate his doll by drawing energy from the sleeping youth. He attempts this, not realizing Swanhilda has assumed the doll's place to conceal her own presence. Swanhilda responds to the magic. She dances a Spanish fandango and a Scottish reel, and when the toymaker is not watching, awakens Franz who recognizes her as his true love.

Dr. Coppélius is plunged into despair when he realizes the truth. He is left alone with the limp body of his doll that never came to life, except in the heartless impersonation by Swanhilda.



### - INTERMISSION -

**ACT THREE:** The arrival and blessing of the bell on Manor Grounds – Villagers arrive excitedly to take part in the festivities of such, including the reconciled couple to be married, Swanhilda and Franz. However, Dr. Coppélius interrupts the festivities, demanding to be paid for the damages sustained in his studio and to his special dolls. The Burgomaster gives the distressed, greedy toymaker a bag of gold. The scene ends on a note of joy with the Burgomaster suggesting that the dancing celebration begin. The progression of dances represents the different reasons the bell tolls – Dawn, Prayer, Harvest, War & Discord and Peace (newlyweds). Swanhilda and Franz live happily forever after.

## Historical Coppélia Notes



'Coppélia', considered one of the greatest comic ballets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has remained one of the best-loved classical works in ballet repertory. Originally choreographed by Arthur St. Leon in 1870, restaged by Petipa in 1884 and revised by Cecchetti in 1894, it has been performed regularly since then. None of St. Leon's original choreography remains in today's productions for sure, nor have all roles stayed the same. However, Acts I and II have retained much of his story and ideas. Coppelia debuted with immediate success and is noted to be St. Leon's most famous ballets, and Delibes' most successful full-length ballets. Delibes composed 'Coppélia' as well as 'Sylvia' for Paris Opera when commissioned at the age of 33. The music of 'Coppélia' links two great historical periods of ballet- the French Romantic style and the Russian Classical style. 'Coppélia' is based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann – the same tale that sparked Offenbach's "Doll Act" in his opera, 'The Tales of Hoffmann.' It is notable that in the 1870 'Coppélia', folk or national dance (Mazurka and Czardas) was introduced for the first time into ballet. The precedent was thereby set for ballets most worthy and continuing traditions, personal to The State Ballet of RI and The Marsden Family.