



Alana Griffith in Milwaukee Ballet's 'Coppélia'

NATHANIEL DAWAUER

Milwaukee Ballet Mounts a 'Coppélia' for All Times

BY JOHN SCHNEIDER

I HOPE TED KIVITT TOOK GREAT PRIDE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF *COPPELIA* that opened Milwaukee Ballet's 50th season last weekend. Kivitt, a star of American Ballet Theater in the 1960s and '70s, danced the male lead in *Coppélia* when it was this company's first-ever full-length production 50 years ago. In fact, he'd come to town some months before that to help birth Milwaukee's first professional ballet with a showcase of dances at UW-Milwaukee. Then, from 1980-1986, he oversaw the company's growth as its artistic director. Now, as an honored audience member for the company's newest *Coppélia*, I trust he saw and felt the value and importance of all that work, for Milwaukee Ballet surely stands among the nation's greats.

The joy, skill and warmth of the performers, the fullness of the characterizations and the clarity of the storytelling in this laugh-out-loud comic classic created for me a kind of enchantment in this dark time. I was blissfully lost in it. The intoxicating music by Léo Delibes played a big role in that, much thanks to conductor Pasquale Laurino's perfect tempos and the rich playing of the orchestra. Anyone who's taken ballet lessons as a child will have that heart-lifting signature mазurka from Act One sewn into their soul.

The fairy-tale scenery and costumes were borrowed, and I hope the Richmond and Louisville Ballets will forgive me for saying that our man David Grill's lighting greatly heightened their effectiveness. The spooky doll workshop in Act Two appeared like a hallucination, an effect enhanced by the fact that the valiant dancers playing life-size dolls—today, they might be androids—held so still for such long periods I thought they were mannequins. Their sudden mechanical movements, when called for, were spectacular. Of course, it was Michael Pink's choreography and staging and the all-around terrific performances that turned this ballet from 1870 into something truly immediate.

I can't say enough about Marize Fumero's tireless performance in the central role. Whether balanced on the point of one foot with the other above her head or executing strings of spins and leaps, she was fully in character, her face and body a perfect expression of Swanhilda's inner life at every moment. In the Kivitt role, Davit Hovhannisyan surely pleased his forerunner with his power, grace and humor. And in the crucial role of the doll maker, Timothy O'Donnell made this outsider complex and tragic.

'The Great Cathedrals' Honored by Master Singers of Milwaukee

BY JEAN-GABRIEL FERNANDEZ

"MUCH OF THE WORLD'S MOST BELOVED CHORAL MUSIC WAS WRITTEN FOR CATHEDRAL CHOIRS," the choral group Master Singers of Milwaukee (MSM) write about their season opener, "The Great Cathedrals." Pulling from the half-century-long experience as a premier Milwaukee choir, the singers aim to transport the audience to cathedrals across the world, where and when the history of music was made.

The concert, which spans nearly 500 years of music history, from the 16th century to modern times, was conducted by MSM music director Eduardo Garcia-Novelli. Most of the songs are contemporary—eight out of 13 are from the 20th century alone—but the concert features some great names in the history of music, including Johann Sebastian Bach's *Magnificat* and Felix Mendelssohn's *Hear My Prayer*.

The setup is such that the audience is entirely surrounded by sound. There is a large organ behind and the choir ahead—but most importantly, the perfectly appropriate All Saints' Cathedral, where the show is performed, provides an echo chamber that enhances it all. The voices are powerful and envelop the audience instantly, bouncing off the walls of the cathedral and giving the songs a surreal, almost angelic quality.

Beautiful singing is a staple of such a show, but soprano Beth Lambrecht's solo in the Mendelssohn was a high point of the evening. Although this show mainly brings to the fore the vocal prowess of the choir members, the instrumental work of organist Jayne Latva truly stood out, playing no little part in the final result. Allison Schafermak's clarinet part in Paul Halley's *Agnus Dei* did a fine job complementing the instrumental backdrop of the show, as well.



Master Singers of Milwaukee
PHOTO BY KATE KEEGAN PHOTOGRAPHY

A 'Kaleidoscope' of Complex Emotional Survival

BY RUSS BICKERSTAFF

COOPERATIVE PERFORMANCE EXPLORES CYCLES OF ABUSE AND RECOVERY IN *KALEIDOSCOPE*, a dance theater piece in the cozy space at Danceworks. The white frame of a doorway rests between two implied rooms. Kaitlyn Moore and Dana Leone Strothenke bring the complexities of emotional survival to the stage as a couple of women simultaneously recover from abusive relationships in a journey which feels considerably more expansive than its 50-minute runtime.

The doorway is all that's on stage. Costuming is casual. The production doesn't weight itself down with anything other than motion, emotion and the pulse of the narrative. The two rooms inhabited by the two survivors serve as prisons. The only way out of one is into the other. Their abusers can enter and exit freely.

Thom Cauley and Maelen Kloskey play the antagonists in relationships that gracefully bristle with emotional gravity. Creator-director Emily Elliott allows the relationships on both sides of the door enough time to develop a real sense of emotional connection between each pair, which gradually mutates into abuse. This serves as a firm foundation for the emotional pain and loss that follows when the abusive relationships are finally dissolved.

Sandra Hollander and Caitlyn Nettesheim play to the emotional support dynamic that survivors of abuse struggle within the course of recovery. The relations between survivors, supporters and abusers on both sides of the door reverberate against each other in beautifully bittersweet echoes. By the end of the hour, abuse and recovery cycles back in on itself in a strikingly powerful narrative that concisely breathes insight into the nature of human connection. It's only 50 minutes onstage, but it's an experience well beyond the movements of any clock.

Through Oct. 26 at Danceworks Studio Theatre, 1661 N. Water St.