

[AXS ENTERTAINMENT](#) / [ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT](#) / [PERFORMING ARTS](#)

# 'Coppélia' blends the best of both worlds

November 18, 2015

9:16 PM MST

[View all  
5 photos](#)

Coppélia  
*Ewa Figaszewska*

## Coppélia by Ballet Ireland

Rating: ★★★★★

In Ballet Ireland's latest production, "Coppélia," highbrow meets lowbrow as ballet meets B-movie horror, all told with a 50's classic musical twist. Hints of "Oklahoma," "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers," "Carousel," and even a touch of "Grease" merge in this comic tale of young lovers and a mad scientist with Pygmalion like ambitions. Like a donut burger, or a parcel of deep fried beer at a State Fair, these contradictory ingredients really shouldn't work together. But in "Coppélia" opposites most certainly do attract, complimenting each other wonderfully to create a thoroughly enjoyable and utterly refreshing production.

In Ballet Ireland's reimagining of the 1870 classic, choreographer Morgann Runacre-Temple, and librettist, Stella Feehily, move the action to a State Fair in 1959 in Mid-west America. Here soap maker, Doctor Coppélius, and his perfect model, Coppélia, are greeted by adoring fans, including young lovers Hildy and Frank. Hildy's admiration for Coppélia diminishes almost as quickly as

Frank's infatuation with her grows. Risking losing more than just her camera, Hildy and her friends set off at night to Doctor Coppélius laboratory, unaware that Frank has decided to do the same. Inside the forbidden mansion strange creatures emerge from the shadows and secrets are revealed, and as Eddie Fisher sings "I'm Walking Behind You" Hildy must **dance** to save them before it's too late.

Morgann Runacre-Temple's delightful choreography convenes all at her disposal to the task of telling "Coppélia's" comic tale. Beautifully executed, technically excellent sequences are married to a rich gestural vocabulary by dancers Kesi Olley-Dorey as Hildy, James Löffler as Frank, Anthony Maloney as Doctor Coppélius, Laurine Muccioli as Coppélia, Duncan Anderson as Milton, Carlos Martin Garcia as Kit, Maria Ledesma as Faye, Steffi Thomas as Wanda, Clare Bassett as a Stall Holder, Richard Bermange as Master of Ceremonies, Emanuele Del Celo as Cowboy and Celine Le Grelle as Candy Floss Girl. Signature patterns of movement, coupled with excellent costume designs by Louise Verity, cleverly layer and convey character, with the creature from the closet being particularly note worthy. Solos and duets are wonderfully realized, with Kesi Olley-Dorey outstanding throughout. Original music by Léo Delibes is wonderfully coupled with additional compositions, arrangements and sound design by Tom Lane and Rob Maloney.

If "Coppélia" excels for the most part, not everything was as tight as it might have been. Groupings, particularly during the final sequence, lacked synchronicity at times, looking untidy in places, lacking the sharpness and precision of the duets and solos. Movement by Laurine Muccioli, while excellently performed, restricted Coppélia to her mechanical dimension and the opportunity to convey her captivating appeal was less than it might have been. Similarly, gestural language by James Löffler as Frank referenced the pretty boy posturing of Danny Zuko a little too obviously and an opportunity was lost for deeper connection and comic possibilities. Set design by Lorna Ritchie was clever and effective, and with lighting design by Kevin Smith, wonderfully conveyed "Coppélia's" sense of 1950's B-movie horror meets 1950's musical, being particularly impressive during Act Two. But the sight of Coppélius' company name hanging in the sky during the final sequence detracted from what was an otherwise cleverly realized staging.

If "Coppélia" has moments where it might have done more, these are far outweighed by those where it hits the mark. Unapologetically charming and unashamedly entertaining "Coppélia" is a joyous, delightful experience. Marrying some beautifully choreographed and wonderfully executed sequences with a warm, fun playfulness, "Coppélia" is an utterly entertaining and enjoyable production well worth braving the weather for.

"Coppélia" by Ballet Ireland runs at The Gaiety Theatre until November 21st before continuing its national tour until December 20th.

For further information on times and tickets visit [The Gaiety Theatre](#)

For further information on tour dates and venues visit [Ballet Ireland](#)



**Chris O'Rourke**  
Theatre Examiner

© 2006-2015 AXS Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com