

Coppélia: A Comedy with Love

Synopsis

PROLOGUE

Dr. Coppélius holds a covered box, which he explores as we see the set open up and the characters move behind him. When Dr. Coppélius steps into the “stage space” characters freeze. With light he unfreezes the characters, organizing his toy set.

ACT I - Outside

Nathanael and Klara, the betrothed couple, dance their first pas de deux. Later, alone in the square Nathanael discovers Coppélia for the first time. She is clearly different from any girl he has ever seen. Klara enters and innocently teases him. The dolls performing a Mazurka interrupt them. In full view Coppélia interrupts the festivities. Nathanael tries to convince his friends that he already met her. Klara catches Nathanael blowing a kiss to Coppélia. Filled with foreboding Klara tries to re-engage Nathanael, but he's lost in thought over what has been stirred inside him. Klara, clearly frustrated and angry eventually manages to snap Nathanael out of his trance-like state. Ridiculed by Klara, he denies any real interest in Coppélia. Appeased, Klara returns to her merry state and the two dance together with their friends. Nathanael is confronted by an alluring Harlot doll, who draws him and the others into an exuberant czardas, exposing Nathanael's new fickleness to an infuriated Klara. Nathanael, left to his own thoughts, recognizes that he is looking for something more than he has. Klara, who is doubly humiliated, watches from a distance. Recognizing that Nathaniel is smitten with Coppélia, Dr. Coppélius creates a devious plan. To complete his work and make his perfect doll real, he needs to use this boy. Nathanael is the perfect victim. When Klara sees Dr. Coppélius leaving, she sneaks into his house ahead of them to confront her rival.

PAUSE

ACT II - In Dr. Coppelius' House

Klara enters Dr. Coppélius' house and explores this strange place inhabited with peculiar creatures. Klara introduces herself to Coppélia and tries to engage her in conversation. She grabs Coppélia's mirror, which she finds to be hollow! In playing with the mirror she realizes that she is able to activate these characters and marvels at their action. Suddenly she hears a door slam. Klara scrambles to put all back in place and find a hiding place for herself. Dr. Coppélius enters with an apprehensive Nathanael. Although he has been promised a close look at Coppélia, all the creatures and the appearance of Dr. Coppélius' house unsettle him. To prevent Nathanael from escaping, Dr. Coppélius invites him sit down for a “special” drink. He casts a hypnotic spell and Nathanael collapses. Dr. Coppélius now brings out Coppélia (although she is really Klara in disguise).

Using the mirror, he gathers Nathanael's life qualities and casts them onto his beloved creation - Coppélia. Dr. Coppélius gathers the doll in his arms and hopes for signs of life. Failing to detect any change in her body he breaks down. Suddenly the doll comes to life, and Dr. Coppélius is convinced that his plan has succeeded. He declares his own passion for the doll. Klara, for the first time touched by true love is transformed. Confused by these feelings, Klara stumbles backward into the hypnotized Nathanael awakening him. Nathanael seeing who he thinks to be Coppélia, now also professes his love for the doll. Incensed, Klara now realizes that all this love is not for her, but for the image of Coppélia. She un.masks herself and rejecting both Dr. Coppélius and Nathanael flees from the house. Dr. Coppélius is devastated by the turn of events and collapses cradling his lifeless Coppélia in his arms.

INTERMISSION

ACT III - Outside

Nathanael asks Klara for her forgiveness but she ignores him. Nathanael pleads with Klara and declares to her what a fool he has been and that it is her he loves, but to no avail. Dr. Coppélius enters and begging Klara's forgiveness declares his love for her. She has opened his eyes to the meaning of life. She is momentarily swept up in Dr. Coppélius' warmth. All three struggle with their thoughts and desires. Understanding that his role is that of a father, Dr. Coppélius, urges the betrothed to make up. But Klara is no longer a mindless doll. She is a woman with a beating heart. Nathanael remains a doll with no heart. Dr. Coppélius now comprehends that he can pass the love he feels for Coppélia, to Nathanael, and to others. With a beating heart, Nathanael promises Klara his eternal love. They join together in pledging their vows. The ballet concludes with all but one, Dr. Coppélius, merrily packed away.