COPPÉLIA
Full-length Ballet in Three Acts
Music by Leo Delibes
Choreography by Arthur Saint-Leon
Premiere: May 25, 1870 Opéra, Paris

ACT ONE
In a small picturesque village in 19th Century Central Europe, doctor Coppelius is a toymaker who makes wonderfully life-like mechanical dolls and dreams of one day giving them real life. His crowning achievement is 'Coppelia', a doll so life-like he passes her off as his daughter, placing her in a chair on his balcony reading a book. Swanilda enters the village, and upon seeing her fiance Franz approaching, hides in order to surprise him, but is angered when Franz notices the beautiful Coppelia and begins to flirt with her. Coppelius notices Franz's interest in his doll, and activates her so that she waves back at him. The mayor arrives in the village square to announce a festival the following day to mark the Lord of the Manor’s gift of a new bell for the town clock. Additionally, the Lord will provide handsome dowries to any young girls who marry on that day. The mayor asks Swanilda if she will marry Franz tomorrow but she replies she does not know if he still loves her. He suggests the local custom of shaking a stalk of wheat near the ear-if the grains rattle it means true love. Swanilda follows the advice but whilst Franz claims to hear a noise she hears nothing and breaks off their engagement. Franz is annoyed but soon consoles himself that he is now free to pursue the beautiful Coppelia. Later that day, as doctor Coppelius is leaving his house he is jostled by a party of revelers and drops his key in the street. Swanilda finds the key and lets herself and her friends into the house where she intends to confront her rival. Franz then returns with a ladder in order to climb into the house via the balcony. Coppelia returns home to see his front door open, and rushes inside to search for intruders.

ACT TWO
Swanilda and the girls explore Coppelius' darkened workshop, which is filled with strange figures in various poses. Marveling at Coppelius' wondrous creations, they discover the mechanisms that animate the dolls, and are delighted at their jerky, comical movements. Swanilda finds Coppelia behind a screen, and is greatly amused to find that her 'rival' is a doll too. Just then Franz climbs in through the window, the girls hide and Swanilda decides to teach Franz a lesson by trading places with Coppelia. Quickly changing into Coppelia's costume behind the screen, she sits perfectly still waiting for Franz to discover her. But then Coppelius bursts in, and the frightened girls are scared from their hiding places and chased from the house--all except Swanilda who is now posing as Coppelia. Finding Franz also in the room, Coppelius sets about him with his stick, but as he dodges the blows Franz protests that he meant no harm and only wished to meet Coppelia’s beautiful daughter. Coppelius appears to relent and promises to introduce Franz to the object of his desire. However he offers Franz a poisoned drink and then attempts to use his magic to transfer some of Franz's life-force into Coppelia to bring the doll to life. Not knowing that Swanilda has switched places with Coppelia, he waits
anxiously to see the results of his magic. Coppelia (Swanilda) begins to move mechanically at first but her movements become less and less jerky and soon she is dancing perfectly around the workshop, and attempting to revive Franz whenever Coppelius is not looking. Satisfied with the results of his machinations, Coppelius attempts to push the reviving Franz out of his house. But Swanilda reveals her identity and shows Coppelius the lifeless Coppelia doll behind the screen. Devastated, Coppelius drops to the floor as the lovers escape.

**ACT THREE**
Franz now realizes that through a foolish mistake he has become infatuated with nothing more than a doll; it is Swanilda whom he has truly loved all along. They join the other couples in the village square to be married and benefit from the Lord of the Manor's generosity. The village pastor marries each couple in turn, and they all dance happily, with Franz and Swanilda the happiest of them all. Coppelius makes an appearance, demanding compensation for the insult perpetrated against him. Swanilda offers her dowry, but the Lord steps in, telling her to keep her gift, and gives Coppelius another bag of gold from his own pocket. Satisfied, Coppelius leaves and the festivities continue, everyone joining in the dancing to celebrate the union of all the young couples.