



Bob Sklar editor / 591-2300

Monday, March 4, 1991 (AGE)

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## 'Coppelia'

# 3 Michiganders star with Cleveland Ballet

By Corinne Abatt  
staff writer

**T**HERE WILL BE A STRONG Michigan connection to Cleveland San Jose Ballet's production of "Coppelia" at Masonic Temple, Detroit, Friday-Sunday, March 6-10.

Melissa Mitchell, who will be dancing the lead role of Swanilda, in the Saturday and Sunday evening performances lived in West Bloomfield and Farmington and graduated from Seaholm High of Birmingham in 1975.

Dennis Nahat, the company's artistic director, who choreographed this production of "Coppelia," grew up in Detroit and Grosse Pointe and launched his career from here.

Nahat will dance the role of Doctor Coppellus in the Thursday student matinee, the Friday evening and Sunday matinee performances. Flint native Mark Otloski will also be dancing the role of Milorad on Saturday and Sunday evening.

Dancing opposite Mitchell in the romantic male lead will be Peter Dibonaventura.

The roles of Swanilda and Franz will be performed by Karen Gabay and Raymond Rodriguez at the Friday evening and Sunday matinee performances and by Karyn Connell and Olivier Munoz for the student matinee at 11 a.m. Thursday.

Mitchell said, "It's a hard role. It takes a lot of stamina. I have six variations, two pas de deux, lots of mime and feats requiring technical ability. I do a lot of hopping around on point. I don't know any ballerina



Dennis Nahat, artistic director of the Cleveland San Jose Ballet Company, grew up in Detroit and began his study of dance here. He has given up performing except for character roles such as Doctor Coppellus in "Coppelia."



Melissa Mitchell, Rudolf Nureyev and Olivier Munoz take a curtain call after the Cleveland Ballet presentation of "Coppelia" in Dublin, Ireland. Mitchell, a Birmingham Seaholm High School

who likes to hop around on point. Yes, it's a hard role, but it's challenging and fun. It's light comedy, not heavy stuff."

AS SWANILDA, THE BAKER'S daughter, she finds that her rival for Franz's attention is Coppelia, the beautiful doll with the enamel eyes created by Doctor Coppellus. While the lonely doctor tries to discover a way to bring the doll to life, Swanilda helps him out by sneaking into the workshop and masquerading as the doll. Nahat's version ends happily, but not before lots of dancing, deception and near tragedy.

While growing up in Michigan, Mitchell studied ballet with Evelyn Kresson and danced with Kresson's Michigan Ballet Company. Mitchell was born in Dearborn, lived in West Bloomfield and Farmington and graduated from Seaholm in 1975. She studied ballet here with Evelyn Kresson and performed with Kresson's Michigan Ballet Company. She joined the Pennsylvania Ballet right out of high school and was there for four years.

She dropped out of the dance world for several years and managed a Mexican restaurant in Los Angeles.

"Then, one day I had the desire to go to a ballet class," she said.

Her teacher there called Nahat of the Cleveland San Jose Ballet to tell him about her suggesting she was a dancer whom he would like to see.

*"It's a hard role. It takes a lot of stamina. I have six variations, two pas de deux, lots of mime and feats requiring technical ability. I do a lot of hopping around on point. I don't know any ballerina who likes to hop around on point. Yes, it's a hard role, but it's challenging and fun. It's light comedy, not heavy stuff."*

—Melissa Mitchell  
ballerina

Nahat followed up on a trip to California in the spring of 1983 and hired her immediately.

Mitchell's parents live in Ann Arbor. Her mother, Elizabeth, was li-

bration at West Bloomfield High for 20 years. Her father, Charles, retired from Chrysler is now a full-time sculptor.

The Cleveland San Jose Ballet

graduate, and Munoz will be in the show in Detroit, but Nureyev will not.

marked a milestone in its 15-year history with its first European tour last year. Rudolf Nureyev toured with the company, taking the role of Doctor Coppellus with Mitchell as Swanilda and Olivier Munoz as Franz at the Point Theatre in Dublin, Ireland. After that the company was featured at the Edinburgh International Festival. Last fall "Coppelia" was on the bill for the company's performances at its second home, San Jose, Calif. Performances are 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 8-9, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, March 10.

March 7. There will be a free pre-performance party 12:30-2 p.m. Sunday with face painters, story tellers and entertainers for children of all ages.

The opening night performance is dedicated to the memory of flight attendant Heidi Joost who died in the airline accident in Detroit last December. She was a life-long student of dance and studied at the Richard Studio in Detroit where Dennis Nahat started.

Her parents, Cleveland residents, have established a scholarship in her memory at the school's dance studio.

For ticket information and to learn about the special family ticket, call 874-5183.

THE STUDENT SENIOR MATINEE will be at 11 a.m. Thursday.

This painting of one of the costumes for "Coppelia" is done by the company's resident designer, David Gutierrez. It was reproduced on greeting cards sold to benefit the company.

### exhibitions

This column runs weekly in the Living. Send news items about regional County events to The Observer, 505 E. Maple, Farmington, 48029. Send items about Wayne County events to The Observer, 20251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Attention: Creative Living editor.

**C RUBINER GALLERY**  
Tuesday, March 5 - "Landscapes and Gardens: Antiquating Spring" includes in all media on these themes by the impressive lot of gallery regulars. Continues through April 2. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 7001 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

**SUMMIT PLACE MALL**  
Wednesday, March 6 - Spring Arts & Crafts Show continues through Sunday, March 10. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, Elizabeth Lake and Telegraph, Waterford.

**THE ARTISTS' GALLERY**  
Thursday, March 7 - "Illusions in Black and White" continues through April 18. Reception 5:30-8 p.m. Thursday. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, until 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Applegate Square, Northwest-tenth between 12 and 13 Mile roads, Southfield.

**AMERICAN POLISH CULTURAL CENTER**  
Thursday, March 7 - "Needleworks '91" presented by the Guilded Needle Chapter of the Embroiders' Guild of America presents its 7th

juried needlework show through Sunday. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, until 8 p.m. Friday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, 15 Mile and Dequindre, Troy.

**HOLIDAY INN**  
Friday, March 8 - Michigan wildlife art and custom bench knives by Dick Greenwood are on exhibit and for sale through Sunday, March 10. Featured artist is James Campbell of Saginaw along with many other award-winning wildlife artists. Hours are 4-9 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, 25655 Telegraph, Southfield.

**CENTER GALLERIES**  
Friday, March 8 - "Leonard Cave Sculptor in Wood" continues through April 19. Reception 4:30-7 p.m. Friday. He will give a slide presentation of his work at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, March 21 at Center for Creative Studies Institute of Music and Dance Auditorium, John R. at Kirby, Detroit. This will be followed by an informal talk at the Center Galleries at 3 p.m. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sunday, 15 E. Kirby, Suite 104, Detroit.

**DOMINOS FARMS**  
Saturday, March 9 - Spring Fling, arts and crafts fair with 50 juried artists continues through Sunday, March 10. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Take US-23 to exit 42 (Plymouth Road) east to Earhart Road and north to the exhibition hall, Ann Arbor Township.

**KINGSWOOD LOWER GALLERY**

"Together Again," ceramic table ware by Diana Kalsbeik and Paul Kutula, is on display through March 13. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday, Cranbrook Kingswood School, 500 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.

**OCC ORCHARD RIDGE**

Fifth annual "Women in Art Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" continues through March 24. This interdisciplinary multi-media celebration of the arts coincides with Women's History Month. Smith Theatre, 27055 Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills.

**OAKLAND COUNTY GALLERIA**

Juried photograph exhibit by county employees continues through March 14. Monte Nagler was the judge. Jim Clapp won best of show and Michael Hothenberg took first place. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, Executive Office Building, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

**ROUTE 10 GALLERY**

Instructured acrylic paintings by Anita Woodlaver are on display through March. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, until 9 p.m. Thursday, 32430 Northwestern, Farmington Hills.

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