

Fringe review: Coppelia, South Australian Children's Ballet Company

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15 Mar, 2010 07:29 AM

Contemporary idiom replaces the classic tale, enriching the experience for the modern audience.

Swirling in St Trinian's tunics, the Senior School Girls chafe at the confiscation of their mobile phones. Sophie (Abbe Peters) has kept hers, though, and she calls in schoolboy boyfriend Luke (Tobiah Booth-Remmers) and side-kick Ben (Nathan Boemia), who help plot to recover them.

The tallest girl is, of course, the fall-girl, and she especially displays her charming comic exuberance in her set dancing with Luke. When the plan succeeds and stern librarian (Elise Bonato) flops with more grace than you can imagine into sleep, the girls frenzy through the library's exhibition of the "Dance Styles of the World".

Costuming, as it must be with Coppelia's classic doll dress, is pivotal to this production. The girls' uniforms of white shirts and black tunics (relieved by strokes of red ties) are stark, but when the students bring the dances into being, the myriad national styles and colours dazzle as a rainbow.

The twirling umbrellas of the geishas, symbolic of the cleverly choreographed movement, satisfyingly sashay across the stage. Then girls furl into veils of the Arabian, sulphur backdrop light transforming from the fuchsia for the Spanish, in which the narrator (Sanne Baltussen) gets to dance. Each exhibition dance is a chance for individual members of the corps to shine, like young Boemia with his animated face, head held steady and hands gesturing.

The Pas de Deux delights with the transformation of callous youth into grace – assured Booth-Remmers, a recent graduate of AC Arts Dance, and Peters, a balanced and poised Year 12 student. Artistic director Beverley Waters is clearly proud of her cast, as she should be, for the performers sparkle.

Bookmark in your diary – take your children to the June and November shows.

At Hopgood Theatre, Noarlunga, March 14.

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