Dancers kept on their toes in ‘Coppélia’

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Scene Editor

Ballet isn’t always tutus, pink shoes and men in tights. Though you can expect a little of that at the Dance Company’s production of Coppélia this weekend, be prepared for Polish dancing, miming and even some humor.

Coppélia is a fantasy story of confused love, dancing dolls and one crazy German doctor.

“It’s really silly, it doesn’t make a lot of sense,” said Lisa Carter, assistant professor of dance and the show’s director and choreographer.

But Carter said she wanted the company to perform this show because it is one of the great classic comedic ballets. Carter said that life has enough stress, so she wanted a dance that she could have fun teaching and students could have fun dancing in. Plus, a lighthearted show is an easy way to get people into ballet who haven’t seen it before, she said.

“It’s more accessible; it diffuses the high drama of ballet,” Carter said.

Mary Shields, a Business sophomore who plays the part of the young German woman Swanilda, agreed that the show is easy and enjoyable to follow.

“Students at Creighton will enjoy this show because there’s something in it for everyone. There is humor, classical ballet, Spanish dances, acting, a Scottish dance, traditional dances, the costumes are bright and colorful and the ballet has a good story line,” Shields said in an e-mail interview.

This is not the first time Carter has directed Coppélia, but it is the first year that the ballet will be performed in its entirety. In the past, Carter said performances included single acts from the ballet and numbers featuring jazz and tap dancing. But because she has seen some continuity in the department, she thought a whole ballet was something they could tackle this year.

“It’s like running a half marathon, then a whole. I thought it was time to run the marathon,” Carter said.

Though the show’s 40 dancers are not actually running, Carter said they can attest that their toes are killing them. She described the production process of Coppélia as a brand new dance experience and education.

For Shields, this requires keeping up endurance and energy for the whole hour-and-a-half show.

“In the end, the audience pays to see you dance just as well in the first act as you do in the third act … they don’t want to see you tired,” she said.

Shields and the other company members have been rehearsing since the day after fall break. Carter said she was choreographing the show in her head all summer but wanted to wait on casting until she saw this year’s dancers. This three-act ballet will demonstrate the rising standard of the dance department.

“Dancing has to look like a favorite pair of old slippers — get into your bloodstream, so to speak,” Carter said.

Coppélia opens 7:30 p.m. Thursday and has performances through Saturday night and 2:30 p.m. Saturday, at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.