

A Fairytale with a real-world Fairytale ending!

Ballet Society of Colorado Springs students turn a miracle at Opera Theatre's Hänsel and Gretel

By David Sckolnik

Cinderella is arriving on May 18 and 19 for the **Ballet Society of Colorado Springs** and their performing ensemble **Colorado's Classical Youth Ballet** – a charming fairytale with but a few dark twists. *Hänsel and Gretel* has come and gone! In a season in which the Studio's dancers have been a part of collaborations with the **Colorado Springs Philharmonic, Conservatory, and Dance Theatre** as well as the **Chamber Orchestra of the Springs**, it was the organization's first performances with **Opera Theatre of the Rockies** and their Pikes Peak Center offerings of Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hänsel and Gretel* on March 2 and 3 in which their young dancers found themselves ensnared in a treacherous plot!

After numerous rehearsals and then Friday performances for elementary and high school students, the seven ballet dancers – angels in the opera's first-half-ending dream sequence – were primed and ready for the all-important public presentations on Saturday.

Patricia Hoffman, the founder and co-artistic director of Ballet Society and the Youth Ballet, had been with the ensemble through the entire process and was confident her troupe of 15 and 16 years olds – Melody Hoffman, Susanna Hoffman, Paige Hupy, Hannah Kovach, Sarah Turner, Hannah Johnson and Sarah Kovach – were totally prepared to dance her choreography for Saturday's matinee. She and co-artistic director Holly Marble had a full schedule of classes to teach back at their studios across town at Woodmen and Rangewood.

“It was about 45 minutes until we were to go on stage when we received the message from Miss Patty (Hoffmann) that Sarah Turner was too sick to dance,” said 16-year-old Hannah Johnson, who has studied at Ballet Society for four years. Hoffman's message asked the girls to re-stage the ballet sequence on their own. “My first thought was ‘uh oh’ then ‘poor Sarah’ and then ‘let's hurry up and get to work.’”

There was no time for nervousness; no one to run to for help – the show had to go on! “My thought was ‘I guess we'll have to change things’ but after all of her hard work, I felt so bad for Sarah,” said Sarah Kovach, a two-year student at Ballet Society.

So on their own, the six girls worked in their dressing room and came up with new staging to make sure that their ballet would show no obvious holes. Ready just in time, they weren't even able to tell the seven other angels provided by the **Colorado Children's Chorale**. The ballerinas did their performance and no one noticed the change!

“In a way,” said Johnson, “we wanted people to know so they could say ‘wow!’ But other than that, we didn’t want them to know because if they saw the change, then we didn’t do a good job of it. That would have been the worst thing.”

With one miraculous success under their belts, the ensemble had to repeat the feat that evening. Kovach admitted she was still nervous. “You’ve only done it once- you practice a million times the other way and now you have to change it.” Although Hoffman was at that performance, she left the girls alone to continue their process. “I think she just didn’t want to make us more nervous,” said Kovach.

“When we had finished, Miss Patty came back and she was absolutely beaming,” said Johnson. “She said ‘you guys did so great’ hugged us and said ‘oh I’m so proud of you.’ Then finally I was able to say to myself ‘yes! We did it right!’ It was our best performance.”

“I’m not glad Sarah got sick, but we all grew so much as a team,” said Kovach. “So anytime we dance together we’re so much in tune with each other.”

The Ballet Society of Colorado Springs and Colorado’s Classical Youth Ballet will present the full-length ballet Cinderella Friday, May 18 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, May 19 at 2:30 pm at Rampart High School Theatre, 8250 Lexington Drive. For information on the performances or any of the programs of Ballet Society, call 272-7078 or email info@danceinthesprings.com.