

Coppelia

A Musical Play in One Act

By David Barrett

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The musical score of this show and a CD of backing tracks and dance music is available on the website.

Dramatis Personae

Dr Coppelius

2 Dwarves:

Grabbit

Grumble

4 Villagers:

Horst

Brunhilda

Mechtild

Jurgen

Girls:

Swanilda

Gretchen

Mitzi

Heidi

Helga

Stanzi

Frau Doppler (Franz's mother)

Coppelia (the doll)

Boys:

Franz

Hans

Fritz

Carl

Peter

Herr Blumenstrauss, The Mayor

Prologue

The tour guide is leading the way up the mountain path. The mother is not carrying anything. All the luggage is being carried by Dad and the children.

- TOUR GUIDE Just a little further now Madam, and we'll be at the hotel.
- BOY Mummy, why do we have to walk.
- MOTHER Stop asking silly questions. They don't have buses where we're going. It's an undeveloped area of the alps. You know that.
- FATHER I hope there's an English pub at least! One that serves Guinness.
- TOUR GUIDE Afraid not, Sir. But Oberhausen is the pride of the alps, every traveller's dream, you couldn't wish.....
- MOTHER Oh, alright! Cut the sales talk. Oh hurry up you three- you do lag behind so. We haven't got all day, you know.
- GIRL Why is this path so steep, Daddy?
- BOY Because it goes up the mountain, you idiot.
- FATHER I'm starving. I do hope they've got a fish and chip shop.
- TOUR GUIDE Afraid not, Sir.
- GIRL Mum did you pack my playstation 2?
- MOTHER Of course I didn't you daft child. This is an adventure holiday in a ski resort- not in an amusement arcade.
- GIRL Well, I hope you remembered to pack our skis then.
- MOTHER But, surely we can hire them, can't we?
- TOUR GUIDE There wouldn't be much point, Madam. It's summer and there's no snow on the mountain.
- GIRL This gets worse by the minute!
- FATHER I don't mind that as long as they've got Sky Digital in every room.
- TOUR GUIDE Not in any room at all, I'm afraid, Sir. But you'll love Oberhausen. You see – it's a medieval village and it's sort of caught in a time warp. They know nothing of the twenty-first century there. You'll see.
- MOTHER I'm not so sure that Oberhausen is our kind of town after all. Hurry up you three. Stop lagging behind ...

**Scene 1 The Village Square, Evening (and view through Dr
 Coppelius's Window)**

MUSIC *The villagers are going about their business and some are standing around, talking. It is growing dark and a light is showing in the window of Dr Coppelius's house. Music plays softly. Curious villagers stop their chat and look into the doctor's house with a mixture of curiosity and fear.*

JURGEN Come and look, Brunhilda, it's that strange man, Dr Coppelius, and his two dwarf servants.

BRUNHILDA Don't look, Jurgen, they will cast a spell on you!

JURGEN Surely you don't believe those rumours, Brunhilda. He's just a harmless old man, even if he is a little eccentric.

HORST Eccentric! Have you seen him there night after night mixing potions? Many believe him to be practising some sort of sorcery.

MECHTILD You don't mean witchcraft?

HORST Exactly! And that infernal banging noise; all day and half the night! It never stops.

Sounds of banging from the doctor's workshop.

Lights on stage dim and light from the doctor's window brightens. We see the doctor and the two dwarves mixing chemicals.

DOCTOR Grabbit! Do hurry up with that sodium! I'm nearly ready to do the final mix.

No response from Grabbit.

(Shouting) Grabbit!

Grabbit is startled.

GRABBIT I'll get the sodium, shall I, master?

GRUMBLE Just do as the doctor says, Grabbit, you fool! The sooner this is finished, the sooner we can get home to bed.

DOCTOR You lazy creature, Grumble. You will do anything to avoid work. You should consider it a privilege to assist me in my work.

GRUMBLE Bah, privilege - my big toe!

DOCTOR What was that, Grumble? What did you say?

GRUMBLE Oh it's nothing, doctor. I merely agreed that it is a privilege. *(Scowls at audience. The lights on stage are brought up slightly for the song [preferably blue].)*

SONG 1 Hocus Pocus Fiddlesticks

After the song the villagers drift off while the music finishes and the lights dim. Move swiftly into scene 2

Scene 2

The Village Square, Next Morning

The square at Oberhausen is very busy with the hustle and bustle of shoppers at the market. Many street-sellers are offering their wares. A mischievous group of small children are stealing fruit.

SONG 2 Oberhausen, You're My Kind of Town

Enter Swanilda carrying her wedding dress.

MITZI Oh Swanilda, you have the dress! It's so beautiful.

SWANILDA Why, thank you, Mitzi. Mother made it herself to my pattern; it took her three weeks.

HEIDI Swanilda, you are so lucky to be marrying Franz. He is so dashing and handsome. Do you think the rest of us will ever be married?

HELGA You could be married tomorrow if you accepted Horst's hand. You know he's been mad about you since you were eleven years old.

Horst is pushed forward.

HEIDI But I don't want to marry Horst, he is just a peasant! I want to marry a rich nobleman with a title.

STANZI Horst has a title, doesn't he?

SWANILDA Yes, but I don't think 'blacksmiths apprentice' is the sort of title Heidi has in mind!

Girls and villagers all giggle at this. Horst looks hurt.

Enter Frau Doppler.

STANZI Look out girls, here comes that old bat, Frau Doppler, Franz's mother.

FRAU Oh, there you are Swanilda! I've been looking all over the town for you, mein Liebchen.

HELGA *(Aside)* And if Swanilda's got any sense she's been hiding from **you**.

SWANILDA *(In a sugary voice reserved for future mother-in-laws)*

Hello, Frau Doppler. How **nice** to see you!

FRAU I've sorted all the arrangements for the wedding - and I've got your dress with me. Franz will just love you in this dress.

She holds up a most revolting dress which is clearly far too big. All the villagers begin to crowd around. Gretchen snatches the dress and holds it up in front of Swanilda. All laugh.

SWANILDA Why, that's very kind of you, Frau Doppler.

FRAU Call me MUMMY, darling.

SWANILDA But you see, Frau ...er Mummy, all the wedding arrangements have

been made already and mother has made me this most beautiful dress.

Shows dress

FRAU Oh. I see. So .. you don't like the dress I've made.

Swanilda takes the dress from Gretchen.

SWANILDA Well no, it's beautiful; but it's a little too large.

MECHTILD It will make a lovely bedspread, Frau Doppler!

Frau looks angry and grabs Mechtild as if to hit her.

GRETCHEN *(Taking Swanilda to one side)* Look Swanilda, you must not let yourself be bullied by this woman. Stand up to her and tell her what you think.

SWANILDA Oh, alright Gretchen. If you say so.

(To Frau) I don't really think the dress is for me. *(Frau looks indignant)* But you would look gorgeous in it yourself on my wedding day. Wouldn't she, Gretchen?

GRETCHEN *(Trying not to laugh)* Why yes, Swanilda, she would look as pretty as a picture. *(Sniggers from the crowd)*

Frau takes the dress and holds it up in front of herself, looking pleased.

FRAU Why, Swanilda, that's very kind of you to say so.

Suddenly there are gasps of surprise from the crowd as the doors of the doctor's balcony open and he brings the most beautiful girl out. She sits on a chair and reads a book.

BRUNHILDA My goodness, what a beautiful girl! Who on earth is she?

JURGEN She's gorgeous! Surely she can't be the doctor's daughter.

HORST Or perhaps his wife?

MECHTILD Such a lovely girl as that would never marry a grumpy old man like the doctor.

HEIDI I'll tell you one thing. If she's living in this village, she'll be number one on the list for a rich and noble husband.

HELGA And where does that leave us?

HORST Girls, you must not be jealous of her beauty. We should make friends with her and find out who she is. I say, young lady! Won't you come down and meet the girls from the village. They would like to be friends with you.

Everyone watches for a reaction. Coppelia sits absolutely still.

GRETCHEN Well, I must say, Horst, you have a real way with the ladies!

(All laugh)

MITZI Look, Swanilda, here comes your gorgeous Franz with his friends.

All look. Enter Franz and the boys in high spirits.

FRANZ Good day to you ladies. Good day, mother. Ah, my beautiful bride.
What brings you here?

SWANILDA Oh, I just came to show the girls my wedding dress.

GRETCHEN *(Trying to change the subject. Coughs - ahem!)*

Now Franz, have you met the new girl in the village yet? She is staying with Dr Coppelius. See her on the balcony there!

Franz and the other boys turn to look and Franz is astonished by Coppelia. Everyone freezes apart from Franz. There is a lighting change to highlight just Franz and the balcony. Coppelia is immobile. Soft music plays.

FRANZ My goodness. Such beauty, such grace, such charm, such...such...
I am lost for words to describe such a beautiful creature. In her presence, time stands still. I am only conscious of **her**, to the exclusion of all others.

My princess, do me the honour of acknowledging my presence. Grant me just one smile.

Coppelia gives a stiff wave of one hand.

If all the world could be captured in a gesture, this must surely be it.

But I don't even know your name - whisper it to me. *Silence!*

(FRANZ) You're a friend of Dr Coppelius - so I shall call you - Coppelia.
Come to me, Coppelia. I must meet you face.....or perhaps I will come to you - tonight when all is quiet. Wait for me Coppelia.
Wait for me....

The lighting changes back to normal. Everyone unfreezes and, for a while, Franz is very still, staring at Coppelia and muttering to himself.

The music stops.

SWANILDA *(Very loudly)* FRANZ! FRANZ! Why do you stare so? Is it the girl?

FRANZ *(Without taking his eyes off Coppelia)*

Oh Swanilda, have you ever seen such beauty? How can any man not stare at her. She is the prettiest girl in the whole world.

HANS Steady on old boy! What about Swanilda?

SWANILDA Yes, what about me? Have you forgotten we are engaged to be married? Are you going to run off with the first pretty girl you see?

FRITZ *(Shaking Franz by the shoulders)*

Come on, Franz, snap out of it.

SWANILDA Well Franz? You haven't answered my question? FRANZ?
No reaction!
Well, I'm not staying here to be insulted like this. How could you do this to me? *(starts sobbing and is about to exit when)*
Enter the Mayor.

MAYOR Good day to you citizens of Oberhausen, and well met.

MECHTILD *(Aside)* Did he say **good** day?

MAYOR Do not be down-hearted. *(Swanilda sobs again)* Remember, life is like a game of chess! Plan your moves carefully and the game will be yours. Now, your jolly Mayor is here with a proposition of personal financial gain which will be of profit to several beneficiaries - should they decide to make a long-term personal investment.

KARL Has he been reading the Financial Times again?

PETER Perhaps he has bought us all a lottery ticket!

MAYOR To pre-empt any speculation I shall clarify the situation. I, Herr Blumenstrauss, your generous Mayor, have decided that I will mark the occasion of the presentation of a new bell for the church, in three days' time, by an extra-ordinary donation.

FRAU Speak plainly, Mayor. We can't understand your jargon.

MAYOR As you wish, Frau Daimler.

FRAU Doppler, you idiot.

MAYOR In short, our new church bell has been cast and will be delivered in three days. To mark that auspicious occasion, I will present one bag of gold to every couple who, on that day, do become married.
He looks around seeking approval. Some of the boys and girls applaud. Swanilda wails loudly and exits dramatically, slapping Franz in the face and pushing others out of her way.

FRANZ Swanilda, wait...please wait. I can explain everything. *(Exits after her)*

FRAU Franz, come back here, you ungrateful brat. I'll do more than slap your face when I get hold of you! *(Exits after him)*

MAYOR Well, there we are then! What a happy village we are....

BLACKOUT