

## Cinderella Science

by Chi Sherman – April 21, 2014

Take a look at any dictionary and you'll be told, in one variation or another, that physics is focused on the study of matter and motion. Butler University recently married the science of energy and force with dance, music, spoken word, and theater with its second annual Artsfest, whose theme was Fables, Fairy Tales, and Physics. Though the primary run ended on April 13, interested persons can attend an encore weekend of events from Friday, April 25, to Sunday, April 27.

One of the key performances during the encore weekend will be a production of Cinderella, which is staged on rotation by the Butler Ballet, along with Swan Lake, Giselle, Coppélia, and Sleeping Beauty. The show will feature Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev's score, played by the Butler Orchestra and conducted by [Stanley DeRusha](#). If you're like most people, the version of the story you're most familiar with includes industrious mice, oversized gourds, and a pair of sisters in desperate need of a seminar on kindness. The story has been retold numerous times, perhaps most notably by French author Charles Perrault in the 17th century and, several hundred years later, by Walt Disney.



*Photo Courtesy Marc Allan. Butler's ballet season started with "The Nutcracker," and ends on Cinderella's whimsical note.*

Butler Ballet will dance a lesser known version of the story, which finds Cinderella extending sympathy to a beggar woman when no one else will help her. The woman turns out to be the fairy godmother who spirits Cinderella off to the ball with the familiar caveats about watching the clock. At the stroke of midnight, the stage springs to life and the heat is on when Cinderella panics, ditching half her fragile footwear, represented on stage by a bejeweled toe shoe. Following the ball, the prince journeys to Spain, Morocco and Arabia in search of his true love.

[Larry Attaway](#), chair of the Butler University department of dance and executive director of Butler Ballet, states the family-friendly

performances will include "all the components you're looking for -- the stepsisters are awkward and without grace (instead of being ugly), and the libretto will follow the music of the countries the prince visits."

Attendees will see three basic settings -- the family's house with the famous fireplace, the lavish ball and scenes from the world travels. Attaway explains that the scenery is static, but "perspective makes things seem different -- that's how we create the magic." The ballet is two hours long with two intermissions and described as a good show for children. Acts are 30 minutes long each and include enough comedy to keep the action going.

Butler Ballet performances include all students enrolled in the dance program so everyone gets a chance to perform during the year. Seniors tend to be cast in principal roles because they have more experience. Students on four-year programs have the opportunity to dance in four different ballets as they pursue their degrees. The spring ballet is a full-length classical piece and the last performance of the school year. There are very few dance offerings in summer, which gives the students the chance to pursue intensive workshops with other dance companies and enhance their education.



*Photo: Brent Smith. The Butler Ballet is run like a professional company, but it's all part of the Department of Dance's curriculum.*

The performance of Cinderella complements the ArtsFest theme nicely, a serendipitous bit of scheduling that happened to favor the dance department and its rotation of ballets. Attaway describes it as a "fully mounted complete production of the classic ballet" with performances at 8 p.m. on Friday,

April 25 and Saturday, April 26, as well as a 2 p.m. show on Sunday, April 27.

As for the connection of dance to physics, it's more direct than most would think. "[We] deal with physics of movement in dance classes all the time -- we just don't talk about it," says Attaway. "[Dancers] need to properly align their bodies to do moves. We rarely stop to talk about the science. We rarely make a direct connection."

Those interested in the scientific aspect of dance are likely to enjoy companion lectures prior to the first two encore performances of Cinderella. Both talks, like the ballet, will take place at Clowes Memorial Hall (4600 Sunset Ave.). The first is [Cinderella and the Physics of Dance](#) on Friday, April 25, at 7 p.m., and the second is [Physics Beyond Fairy Tales: Modern Projection Techniques for Dance and Theatre](#) on Saturday, April 26 at 6:30 p.m. Both are free with the purchase of a ballet ticket. Attaway entices arts enthusiasts to attend one of the encore performances by explaining that "we treat the Butler Ballet as a professional company -- the production values are incredible -- it's quite a lovely evening."

For more information about the final weekend of the Butler ArtsFest, visit <http://butlerartsfest.com/>.