

Upstate NY Ballet's 'Snow White' impressive

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JOAN E. VADEBONCOEUR

ENTERTAINMENT COLUMNIST

She is still a few months short of 2 years old. But the girl sat mesmerized in her parents' laps as "Snow White" unfolded before her wide eyes Sunday afternoon at the Landmark Theatre.

It is exactly the reaction Kathleen Rathbun wants her Upstate NY Ballet to evoke as the founder and artistic director works to create a permanent ballet troupe. The current product of her labors is impressive, with the homegrown dancers delivering solidly. The mounting is equal to the big-name companies, with choreography that emulates large troupes with Rathbun's choreographic stamp on the work.

Although the piece comes from Grimms' fairy tale, it differs from the animated Disney film, chiefly because there are four witches - the Queen and three for each attempt to kill the title character - rather than the single one of the movie. Otherwise, it follows the Grimms' story. Snow White meets and falls in love with a prince she doesn't know is royalty. But her bigger problem is the Queen, the evil witch so jealous of the girl's beauty that she orders her underlings - the Scarf, Gypsy and Apple witches - to do her bidding and eliminate her rival.

Still the Queen cannot trump the dwarfs, who are renamed from the film. With them, Rathbun had a great time, showing off their athletic skills and injecting a big dose of fun.

Morgan McEwen's Snow White was a delight. She has a piquant dance style and a sweet personality that contrasted perfectly with the theatrics of Maria Phegan's royal figure. Phegan's flexible body and long limbs served her splendidly.