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TITLE INFORMATION

THE TALE OF THE CAT AND THE BALLET MOUSE

Anne Krohley

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BOOK REVIEW

In Krohley's illustrated children's book, a shared passion for dance unites unlikely allies at the famed Metropolitan Opera House in New York City.

Two mice arrive in America aboard a ship from France and make a home in a Manhattan department store—an exciting place, but “no place to raise a family.” While fleeing a storm in Central Park, the mice rush inside the Metropolitan Opera House: “‘Oh, what a lovely home this would make,’ they said, and decided then and there to settle down in this wonderful place.” Their daughter, Mimette, is born and raised there, surrounded by musicians and dancers. One night, while Mimette is watching a performance of *Swan Lake*, the dancer sees the young rodent and, frightened, leaps offstage. Management now knows that there's a mouse in the House. Meanwhile, Mimette is inspired to become a ballet dancer; she trains while secretly watching the humans: “She did plies, grand battements, adagios, and learned all the French names of the ballet steps.” Unable to catch Mimette on their own, the management brings in a cat, Hobart, with world-famous mousing skills. Hobart spots Mimette dancing, pounces, and takes her to the basement. However, the feline then kindly releases her and explains: “now that I have seen you dance, I could never harm you. Your arabesques are the most exquisite I have ever seen.” Hobart devises a plan to allow Mimette to go on dancing at the Opera House. The uncredited full-page illustrations are colorful throughout. They depict a tiny, cartoon-style anthropomorphic mouse in her white leotard and tutu dancing alongside the comparatively giant performers, who are portrayed realistically. Throughout, the protagonist is effectively shown to dedicate herself to learning and perfecting her art. The text contains numerous multiple references to famous operas and ballets, including *La Bohème*, *Aida*, and *Swan Lake*, which may stir curiosity about such classics among its young readership. The work also proves its case that dance and music can be practiced and enjoyed by everyone, and the story rewards Mimette's dedication in a most unexpected way.

A well-illustrated, animal-centered celebration of dance.

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