

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TERRENCE S. ORR
PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE

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Long-time Principal Dancer to Take Final Bow Oct. 29, at 'Giselle'
Giselle Marks Farewell Performance for Christopher Budzynski



Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre's October production of "Giselle" with the PBT Orchestra marks both the beginning of a season and the end of an era.

After 10 seasons with PBT and 22 as a professional dancer, Principal dancer Christopher Budzynski has announced that he will retire following the company's October season opener.

Next weekend at the Benedum Center, he'll dance his last leading role: the tragic role of Albrecht in the company's 2016-2017 Season opener, "Giselle" with the PBT Orchestra. Budzynski will star in the 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 29, performance opposite his wife, Principal Alexandra Kochis, as the duo takes on one of the most famous love stories in the repertoire. The

haunting love story runs from Oct. 28-30.

Although he is retiring from the stage, Budzynski will remain an active part of PBT. Starting this fall, he'll join the full-time faculty of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School, the company's official training institution, where he'll play a leadership role in the Men's Division in addition to instructing student dancers of the Pre-professional Division and Student Division in variations, pas de deux, repertoire and other curriculum.

Beloved among fans for his powerful technique, elegant presence and insightful acting, Budzynski joined PBT in 2006 as a soloist with his wife Alexandra Kochis, now a fellow principal dancer. Before joining PBT, Budzynski danced for 12 seasons with Boston Ballet, where he met Kochis, making his main-stage debut at age 19 as the lead Russian dancer in "The Nutcracker." From Swan Lake's Prince Siegfried to the lead in Balanchine's "Theme and Variations," his first season in Pittsburgh brought him opportunities to shine in several starring roles, which impressed audiences and earned him a promotion to principal the following fall.

Since then, his principal roles have spanned ballet's great story ballets: Prince Siegfried in Swan Lake, Prince Desire in "The Sleeping Beauty," Albrecht in "Giselle," Solor in "La Bayadère," the title role of "Romeo and Juliet," Basilio in "Don Quixote" and Conrad in "Le Corsaire."

His contemporary credits encompass many of ballet's modern masterworks, including Jiří Kylián's "Sarabande" and "Petite Mort;" Paul Taylor's "Company B;" Twyla Tharp's "Known by Heart ("Junk") Duet" and "In the Upper Room;" Mark Morris' "Maelstrom," "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" and "Up and Down;" and Christopher Wheeldon's "The Four Seasons" and "Corybantic Ecstasies."

"Chris combines impeccable technique with a true mastery of each character he portrays and each role that he dances. His artistry and experience have enriched our work for a decade," said Artistic Director Terrence S. Orr. "He will be greatly missed on our roster, and we feel fortunate that he'll now put his talents toward guiding the next-generation dancers of our school."

Originally from Erwinna, Pennsylvania, Budzynski began training at a young age with his mother at Budzynski Studios located near Philadelphia. He later studied at the North Carolina School for the Arts, The School of American Ballet in New York City and Hungarian National Ballet School in Budapest. He joined Boston Ballet in 1995, and was promoted to first soloist in 1999.

For Budzynski, the opportunity to dance leading roles in the Russian classic "Le Corsaire" and the romantic masterpiece "Giselle" will crown a more than 20-year ballet career.

"It has been a wonderful journey dancing here at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. There are many moments and people that I will hold close to my heart," Budzynski said. "I am excited to begin

making my transition towards working within other facets of the organization at this point in its growth."