CBT's 'Giselle' is a bittersweet farewell

Show honors injured Pacylowski-Justo

By Paul Hyde
ARTS WRITER
phyde@greenvillenews.com

Anita Pacylowski-Justo's performance of "Giselle" was to be a grand farewell for the longtime principal ballerina with Carolina Ballet Theatre.

Then, a few weeks ago, tragedy struck during rehearsal in the form of a ruptured Achilles tendon that forced Pacylowski-Justo into surgery and a leg cast for several months.

"This is the worst nightmare for a dancer," says Hernan Justo, CBT artistic director and Anita's husband. "Everybody was heartbroken."

Would the performance go on without its star?

For Pacylowski-Justo, there was no question: "She said to me: 'Hernan, the ballet is beautiful. It doesn't need me,'" says Justo.

CBT presents "Giselle" this Saturday at the Peace Center. Madeline Jazz, a rising star with the company, will take over the title role.

For the past few weeks, Pacylowski-Justo has been coaching Jazz in the role.

Although Pacylowski-Justo is expected to regain

See BALLET on page 3D

YOU CAN GO

- **What:** "Giselle" – a tribute to Anita Pacylowski-Justo
- **When:** 7 p.m. Saturday
- **Where:** Peace Center Concert Hall
- **Tickets:** $15-$50 for adults, $20 for students
- **Information:** 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org



Madeline Jazz, who will perform the title role in "Giselle" Saturday at the Peace Center, dances in an earlier production by Carolina Ballet Theatre.



Madeline Jazz partners with Samuel Chester in a scene from Carolina Ballet Theatre's "Giselle," to be performed Saturday at the Peace Center.

BALLET

FROM PAGE 1D

complete walking ability, it's uncertain whether she will be able to dance in the future.

There'll be a special tribute to Pacylowski-Justo during the performance.

"Now we are doing this show for her," says Justo.

Jazz had been schedule to perform a supporting role in the ballet.

"She was doing such a great job during rehearsals that I thought, 'She'll be a great Giselle herself one day,' " Justo says.

It seemed natural to ask Jazz to step in for Pacylowski-Justo.

The Justos say they were overwhelmed with the support they received from the community, particularly from often-competitive local dance companies, after the injury.

"When this happened, all of the local dancing organizations called and said, 'What can I do for you?' " Justo says.

International Ballet and the Governor's School sent dancers to add to the 35-member cast. Greenville County Schools' Fine Arts Center helped promote the performance.

"It was so laudable, so fantastic," says Justo. "It shows that Greenville's dance companies are interested in the success of dance more than anything else."

The 1841 "Giselle" is one of the cornerstones of classical ballet. With music by Adolphe Adam, the ballet tells the story of a peasant girl named Giselle whose ghost, after her premature death, protects her lover from the vengeance of a group of evil female spirits known as the wilis.

Justo is choreographing the ballet. He says Giselle is the perfect role for a dancer who possesses not only a strong technique but exceptional acting ability.

"Giselle is all about acting," says Justo. "She is a young girl in love at the beginning. Later she has a mad scene, then reappears as a dead spirit. It's a true challenge."

The role, he says, captivates an audience not merely with dazzling pyrotechnics but with beauty.

"Giselle has bravura, but it's not about that," says Justo. "It's about grace. For a director, there is no better ballet. The more I study about it, the more I work on it, the more I learn about how well it is done."

CBT will be performing on the Peace Center's concert hall stage, rather than on the smaller Gunter Theatre stage where CBT often performs. Justo promises a suitably lavish set for the new production as well.

"Giselle" also will feature several of the Justos' former colleagues at North Carolina Dance Theatre.

"The ballet is a beautiful piece of art, but the emotions on the stage will make it an even more special evening," says Justo.

Though the Justos admit to shedding some tears when they learned of the extent of Pacylowski-Justo's injury, they're not a couple who mourn the past, Justo says.

"This will sound corny, but our life is fantastic," he says. "We have a wonderful family. Anita is going to be fine. We're going to be fine."