

Queensland Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN AO

Giselle

14 - 29 APRIL 2023

PLAYHOUSE, QPAC

Every step a **iconic**
mystical story
haunting love
jealous



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QUEENSLAND'S CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

From the Artistic Director

After its unfortunate cancellation in 2022 due to the Brisbane floods, it is wonderful to present *Giselle* this year at the Playhouse, QPAC as intended.

We first performed this version in my inaugural year as Artistic Director in 2013, and it has since held a special place in my heart. *Giselle* is the quintessential Romantic ballet: it is one of the oldest from the era and has been captivating audiences for more than 150 years with its mesmerising costumes, the supernatural elements, and its heartbreaking story of passion, betrayal, and eternal love. Filled with human emotion and spirituality, *Giselle* has stood the test of time.

This production, produced and staged by the talented Ai-Gul Gaisina, follows tradition, overlaid with the Russian style, and is charming and refreshing. Ai-Gul's emphasis is as much on the characters as on technique. The set and costume designs of esteemed theatrical designer Peter Cazalet, and the atmospheric lighting created by

Ben Hughes, provide an ideal canvas on which our dancers paint this poetic and tragic story. Adolphe Adam's music is elegant and full of dramatic expression, and the overall production is visually striking.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the entire Queensland Ballet team and Camerata - Queensland's Chamber Orchestra for bringing this spellbinding story to life. Thanks must also go to the Federal and State Governments, as well as all our partners and supporters who have enabled us to share the magic of this stunning ballet.

Giselle has been danced by the best ballet companies across the world, and I'm delighted to share it with you. I hope you are as swept away by this beautiful ballet as I am.



Li Cunxin AO
Artistic Director



Credits

Produced and Staged by

Ai-Gul Gaisina

Choreographer

Marius Petipa, after Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot

Music

Adolphe Adam

Conductor and Music Arranger

Nigel Gaynor

Costumes and Sets

Based on an original design by Peter Cazalet

Lighting Designer

Ben Hughes

Guest Conductor

Alexander Rodrigues

Music Performed by

Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra



Giselle was first presented by the Ballet du Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique in Paris, France, on 28 June 1841. The choreography in this production derives from the revival by Marius Petipa for the Imperial Russian Ballet in 1884, 1899, and 1903.

Duration: Approximately two hours, including a 20-minute interval.

Orchestral services provided by Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra for this production are supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Matinee performances on 20, 23 and 27 April are performed to recorded music. Recording with Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Nigel Gaynor.

Every effort was made to ensure program details were correct at the time of printing, however details are subject to change where necessary and without notice. Please check queenslandballet.com.au for updates.

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we train and perform. Long before we arrived on this land, it played host to the dance expression of our First Nations Peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the valuable contribution they have made and continue to make to the cultural landscape of this country.

About the Producer

Born in Kazan in the USSR and educated in Leningrad at the famed Vaganova Choreographic Institute, Ai-Gul Gaisina graduated from the class of Naima Valievna Baltacheva. Travelling throughout South America, Cuba, Europe and Australasia, Ai-Gul partnered the legendary Alexander Godunov, before joining the Stanislavsky Ballet Theatre in Moscow, where she created several principal roles, the most notable being in Khachaturian's *Gaynee*.

In 1973, Ai-Gul left Russia and, at the invitation of Sir Robert Helpmann and Dame Peggy van Praagh, joined The Australian Ballet where, amongst other roles, she danced the title role in Ronald Petit's *Carmen*, Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Kitri in Nureyev's *Don Quixote*, Michelle in Gillian Lynne's *Fool on the Hill* and Valencianne in Helpmann's magnificent *The Merry Widow*.

In 1983, Ai-Gul joined The Australian Ballet School where she taught for 10 years before joining The Australian Ballet once more as guest teacher and coach. During The Australian Ballet's 2009 season, Ai-Gul danced the role of 'Clara – the elder' in Graeme Murphy's highly acclaimed production of *Nutcracker – The Story of Clara*. She reprised the role again in 2016. Ai-Gul staged her own production of

Don Quixote for The Australian Ballet's Dancers Company in 2010. The popular production remained in the repertoire for several years and toured Australia to sold-out houses in 2010, 2011 and again in 2012.

Ai-Gul Gaisina has, by invitation, taught and coached at The Royal Danish Ballet, the Houston Ballet, the Hong Kong Ballet and the Philippines Ballet.

In September 2011, Ai-Gul staged a new *Giselle* for Stanton Welch at the Houston Ballet. She restaged her production for Li Cunxin's Queensland Ballet in 2013.



Ai-Gul Gaisina
Producer

History of the Pointe Shoe

The Romantic era gifted us *Giselle*, along with another ballet icon: the pointe shoe. This era, which developed in the 19th century, marked a significant shift in the art of ballet, where dancers moved away from the rigid formalism of the Baroque period to express more fluid, emotional movements. Ballerinas wore white flowing tutus and an early design of the pointe shoe forming a popular convention known as The White Act, which explored supernatural themes – ideal for characters such as fairies and spirits.

By the late 19th century, Italian shoemakers had created reinforced pointe shoes with stiffened boxes made from newspaper, flour, and pasteboard. The shoes were strengthened with leather and enabled the dancers to perform sustained balances and multiple pirouettes. In the early 20th century, the design of pointe shoes was progressed by iconic ballerina Anna Pavlova, who added leather soles to the insides and hardening the box for more support.

Today, pointe shoes are still mostly made by hand and require a high level of skill and craftsmanship to create. With an improved design to meet the physical demands of ballet, most are still constructed with simple materials such as leather, cardboard, satin, and glue. But to dancers the pointe shoe is not just a piece of equipment, rather it is an extension of their bodies that allows them to express the beauty of their art.

Please consider supporting our
Pointe Shoe Appeal – your generosity
will ensure that our dancers can
continue floating across our stages
in flats and pointes tailored to their
individual needs, striving towards
their best possible performances.



Synopsis

Act I

Young, innocent and passionate about dancing, the peasant girl Giselle is in love. She is courted by Albrecht, Duke of Silesia, who disguises himself as a peasant lad and visits her in the village. Hilarion, a gamekeeper, is secretly in love with Giselle. He witnesses their meeting and becomes jealous and suspicious. Giselle's mother, Berthe, is superstitious and over-protective of her daughter, concerned for her delicate and fragile health. She warns Giselle that too much dancing could be dangerous, and that young girls who die before marriage

are destined to become Wilis – vengeful, ghost-like creatures. The unexpected arrival of a hunting party led by the Prince of Courland and his daughter Bathilde – who is the real fiancée of Albrecht – brings more dancing to the autumn harvest celebration. Amidst the joyous festivities, Hilarion reveals Albrecht's true identity. The shock of Albrecht's betrayal causes Giselle to lose her reason. She dances as if in a trance. Devastated, she collapses and dies of a broken heart.

Interval

Act II

In the gloomy village cemetery, Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, holds her mystical and supernatural powers over the magical sisterhood. Each night between dusk and dawn, the Wilis seek male prey who they force to dance until their hearts give out, or they are so weak they can be thrown to their deaths in the nearby lake. Hilarion mourns by Giselle's grave, but flees in terror when he is visited by the ghostly forms. Albrecht, sad and remorseful, brings field flowers to Giselle's grave.

He senses her spirit around him. Hilarion falls victim to the Queen of the Wilis. He succumbs to her powers and to those of her spirit helpers, and drowns in the lake. Giselle defies Myrtha and dances with Albrecht all through the night until he is at the very point of exhaustion. The sound of the church bell heralds the dawn. The Wilis vanish and the spirit of Giselle disappears with the soft morning light. Albrecht is saved and is left with only her memory to cherish.



Queensland Ballet performing *Giselle*, 2020.



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backstage stories
and cast sheets

Our Dancers

Principal Artists



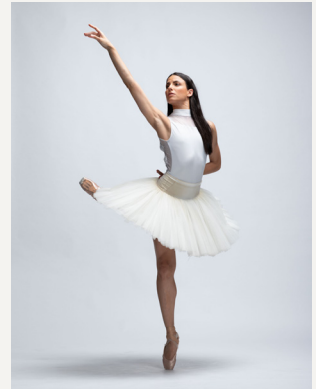
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Soloists



Vito Bernasconi



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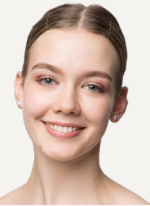
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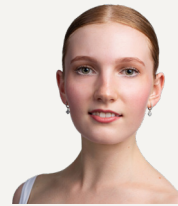
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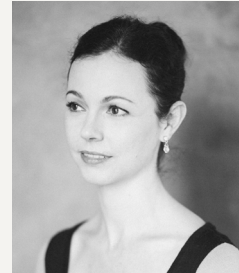
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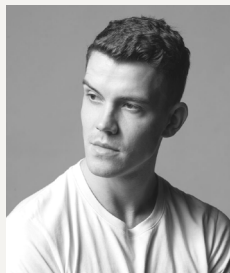
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Nigel Gaynor
*Music Director &
Principal Conductor*

About the Music

Adolphe Adam, born in Paris in 1803, was a composer passionately focused on producing music for theatre. He composed more than 80 works including operas, ballets, music for vaudeville shows, as well as piano arrangements. Adolphe's most successful ballet *Giselle* was composed in just three weeks, and premièred on 28 June, 1841. He wrote simple yet effective melodies with uncomplicated harmonies, which were immediately understood and comfortable with dancers of his time. His extensive use of motifs (reoccurring themes associated with main characters) in *Giselle* is certainly a contributing factor to its great success and longevity.

Today, most companies choose to perform with orchestrations with more drama and intensity than Adolphe's original scoring. Having conducted many arrangements, I've created this orchestration to suit our production and the venues it will be performed in.

It's a relatively standard size orchestra, and I've upheld many traditions, including the famous viola solo in Act II. The priorities are to bring a full symphonic sound with elegance and brilliance, while not losing a credible connection to the early Romantic 19th century music when it was created.

Nigel Gaynor

Music Director & Principal Conductor

Live Music Partner

Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra is a two-time Helpmann Award nominated ensemble and has established itself as a chamber orchestra of national significance. Known for innovative and adventurous programming, Camerata thrives on collaborations with artists across a range of artforms.

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QUEENSLAND'S CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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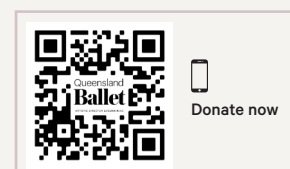
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Director-General, Department of Communities and Housing and Digital Economy: Ms Clare O'Connor.

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors – our First Nations Peoples – gives strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, towards creating a better Queensland.

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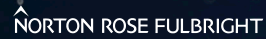


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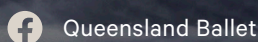
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