

## National Ballet's Chan Hon Goh to bow out in June



*Chan Hon Goh and Zdenek Konvalina in The Sleeping Beauty. (Cylla von Tiedemann/National Ballet of Canada)*

Principal dancer Chan Hon Goh is to retire in June after dancing with The National Ballet of Canada for more than 20 years.



An emotional Karen Kain, artistic director of the National Ballet, announced the retirement on Monday at a press conference to outline the 2009-10 season.

"I've danced next to her, I've shared dressing rooms with her, I've watched her career as a dancer over the last 20 years," Kain said. "One of the hardest things for a dancer is saying goodbye."

Kain praised Goh for her "humility, courage and capacity to push herself."

*Chan Hon Goh with artists of the National Ballet in Giselle. (David Cooper)*

She recalled her performances in ballets such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Merry Widow*, and as an "incredibly touching Madame Butterfly."

Goh, 40, will dance the role of Juliet in *March* and *Giselle* in May, then finish her career with a special performance as part of the National Ballet gala.

"I have lived out my dream of becoming a ballerina and I feel so fortunate," Goh said. "I constantly find my inspiration in choreographers and my fellow dancers."

Goh joined the dance company in 1988 and became principal dancer in 1994.

### **Injuries seal retirement**

Born in Beijing, she moved with her family to Vancouver and studied at the Goh Ballet Academy, which is run by her father. She was the first Canadian to receive the silver medal at the Genée International Ballet Competition in London, England, and is much in demand as an international soloist.

She said she had been considering her retirement for more than a year. An accident that left her with painful injuries helped her make up her mind, Goh told CBC News.

"I was in an accident three months after the birth of my son, and I had neck and upper spinal injuries," said Goh.

"I thought as a dancer we always bounce back from injuries. But I'm still in therapy now for it and it's taking a long time. I'm still not 100 per cent and I'm dancing in a lot more pain because of this," she said.

Goh is the mother of a three-year-old boy and has written her autobiography, *Beyond the Dance: A Ballerina's Life*. She also runs a business selling point shoes.

She has been thinking a lot about what she'll do next in the next year, she said.

"I haven't made up my mind completely. I definitely want to stay in the arts and share my experiences with others, perhaps in the studio or introducing dance to new audiences."

Goh said she is not interested in choreography, but is considering more involvement with her father's dance school.

### **Remembers breakthrough roles**

In a dance career filled with highlights, she has strong memories of her first time in *Sleeping Beauty* and of taking on non-classical roles with the Suzanne Farrell ballet. Goh is noted for her interpretation of choreographer George Balanchine.

"I think of certain breakthrough roles and partnerships — I think dancing my first *Romeo and Juliet* with Rex Harrington was a breakthrough for me artistically," she said.

She said she will miss interpreting classical heroines.

"Leaving the lives of women like *Giselle*, and *Tatiana* and *Juliet* — that will be the hardest part for me whenever I hear the music."