

Dancers take turns to play Giselle

Three ballerinas have been cast as the star in Singapore Dance Theatre's latest production

magdalen ng

When Korean ballerina Rosa Park moved to Singapore three years ago, she could not audition for the Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT) because she found out that she was pregnant.

Now the proud mother of 21-month-old twin girls, she is also one of the principal dancers at the dance company and has been cast in the leading role of *Giselle*, the classic romantic ballet the company is staging.

"After I gave birth, I attended adult ballet classes by SDT and my instructor asked me to audition," says the petite 28-year-old, who has been dancing for 17 years. "I did so immediately and I have been dancing with the company since last July."

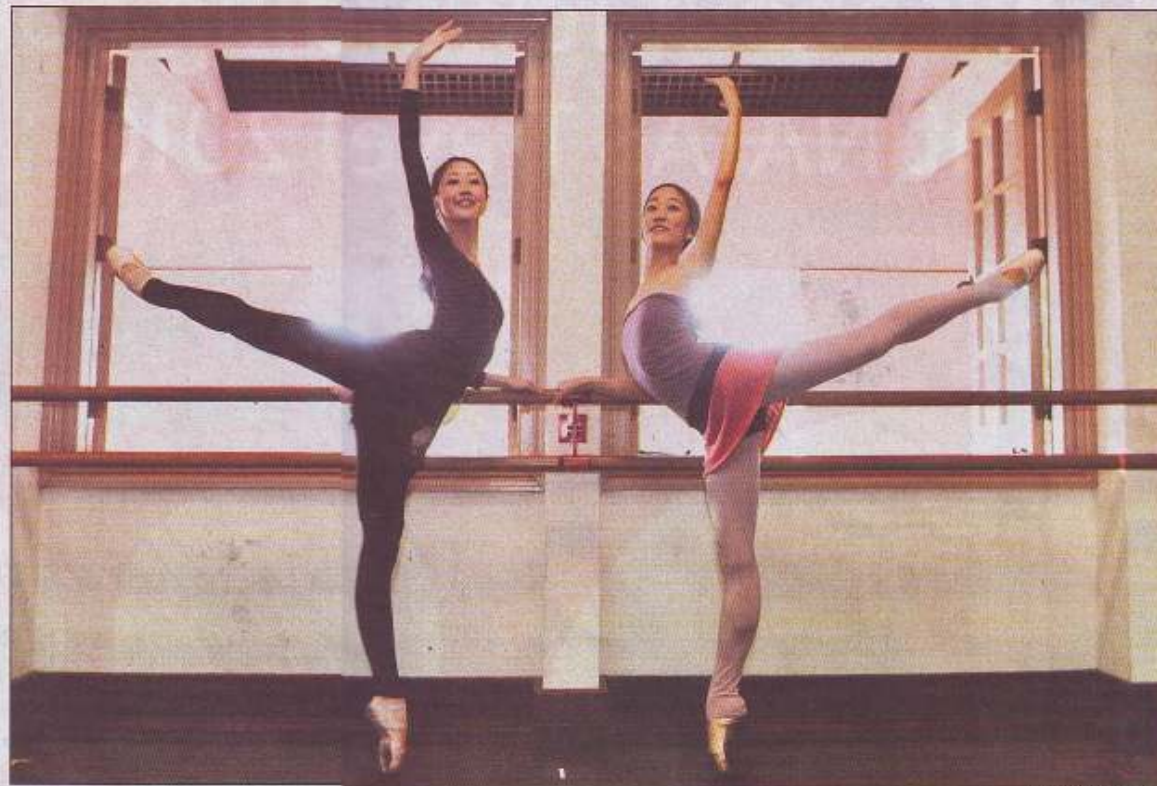
Before moving here with her husband, who works for a Korean bank, she was the soloist at the Korean National Ballet for six years.

In the SDT production, she takes turns to play *Giselle* with prima ballerinas Chihiro Uchida and Xia Hai Ying. It is Xia's third time playing *Giselle*, while the other two dancers are playing it for the first time.

Giselle was created by French writers Jules-Henri Vernoy and Theophile Gautier, and French composer Adolphe Adam in the 1800s.

The ballet, which will kick-start SDT's 2010 performance season, is a tale of tragic love between the eponymous lead, a village maiden, and a nobleman named Albrecht. It will be staged at the Victoria Theatre from March 11 to 14.

SDT's artistic director Janek Schergen



ST PHOTO: AJDAH RAJIF

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GISELLE

Where: Victoria Theatre
When: March 11 and 12, 8pm; March 13 and 14, 3 and 8pm
Admission: \$80, \$150, \$200, \$300 and \$500 for March 11 fund-raising gala night available only from SDT (call 6338-0611); \$48, \$68 and \$88 for March 12 to 14 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg)
Info: <http://www.singaporedance.com/performance/2010/giselle.asp>

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SDT artistic director Janek Schergen on the strengths of lead dancers Chihiro Uchida (far left), Rosa Park (left) and Xia Hai Ying

says: "The last time we staged *Giselle* two years ago, it was in a park. I feel there is a need to have it in a proper theatre."

It was also his decision to cast three lead dancers as *Giselle*, which is a first for the dance company.

The animated 57-year-old says he was impressed by Park's stellar performance as Odette in *Swan Lake*, which SDT staged last year. Originally the under-

study to Uchida, she rose to the occasion when the latter fell ill.

He says: "I think all three dancers are deserving of the role, so why should I limit myself to two?"

Each dancer also brings out a different aspect of the character.

"Hai Ying is very dramatic whereas Chihiro is youthful. Rosa combines both technique and drama. All three of them

do the exact same thing but they go through different doors," he adds.

There will be six performances and each dancer will play *Giselle* twice. Uchida, 24, and Park are particularly excited.

Uchida says: "In the previous production, I played one of the peasants from the village, I am really happy to dance as *Giselle* this time round."

Similarly, Park, who considers *Giselle* the "dream role" for every ballerina, has danced every other role in the ballet except the lead.

This time, when she is not playing *Giselle*, she will double as Myrtha, the queen of a magical sisterhood of jilted spirits. "It is really tiring and takes a lot of hard work but I am very happy," Park says.

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