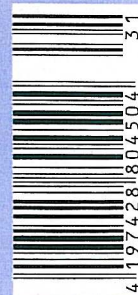


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DANCE FEST SKOPJE
RISIMA RISIMKIN

CHAN HON GOH
DER ABSCHIED IN TORONTO

ROLAND GAWLIK
SANDLAND IST JETZT
MEIN ZUHAUSE

LIUDMILA KONOVALOVA
GRAND JETÉ VON OST
NACH WEST

MULTI-MEDIAL:
JIRI KYLIÁNS ZUGVÖGEL



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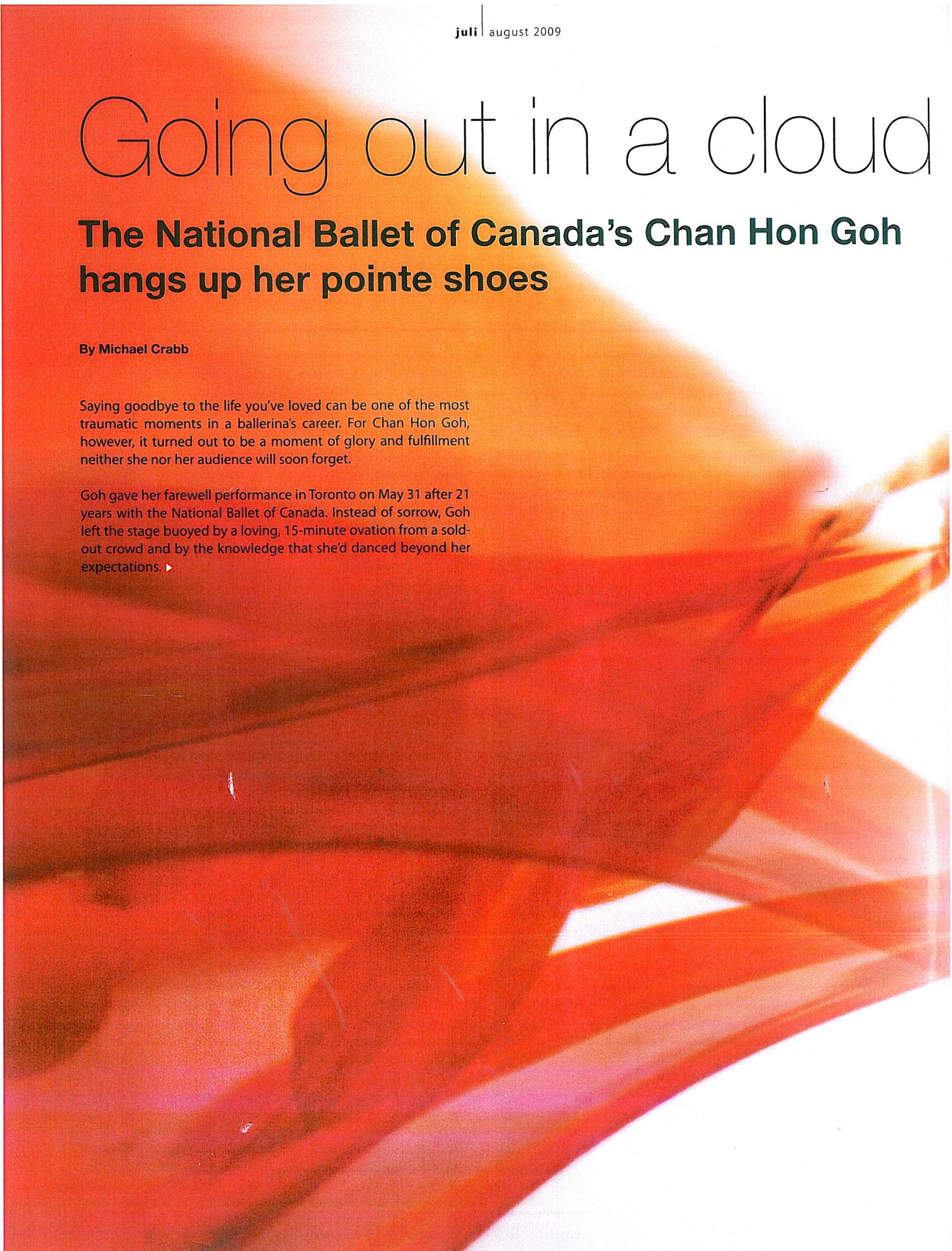
Going out in a cloud

The National Ballet of Canada's Chan Hon Goh hangs up her pointe shoes

By Michael Crabb

Saying goodbye to the life you've loved can be one of the most traumatic moments in a ballerina's career. For Chan Hon Goh, however, it turned out to be a moment of glory and fulfillment neither she nor her audience will soon forget.

Goh gave her farewell performance in Toronto on May 31 after 21 years with the National Ballet of Canada. Instead of sorrow, Goh left the stage buoyed by a loving, 15-minute ovation from a sold-out crowd and by the knowledge that she'd danced beyond her expectations. ▶



of glory



Three years ago, Goh was in a car accident. She was driving to a ballet class, reconditioning her body after the birth of her son Aveary. Goh suffered what she calls "a whiplash type" injury. Her doctor thought she'd recover easily. He was wrong. From then on Goh experienced a nagging pain that decreased the mobility of her neck and shoulders. Only gutsy determination and a great deal of physiotherapy kept her going. Even so, Goh knew it was time to start planning the end of her dance career.

"Without the injury," says Goh, now 40, "I might have continued a few more years but dealing with the pain and going for therapy was cutting into my family time and I knew this could not go on."

Goh's impending retirement was officially announced in February. She admits that once the news was made public the reality of what she was confronting did cause some emotionally difficult moments. "I had some crippling moments dancing Juliet in March. I really crumbled emotionally."

A bigger challenge awaited her. Goh had chosen to end her National Ballet career in her favorite role, Giselle. It is both emotion-



Chan Hon Goh and Aleksandar Antonijevic in *Olegin* © Cylla von Tiedemann

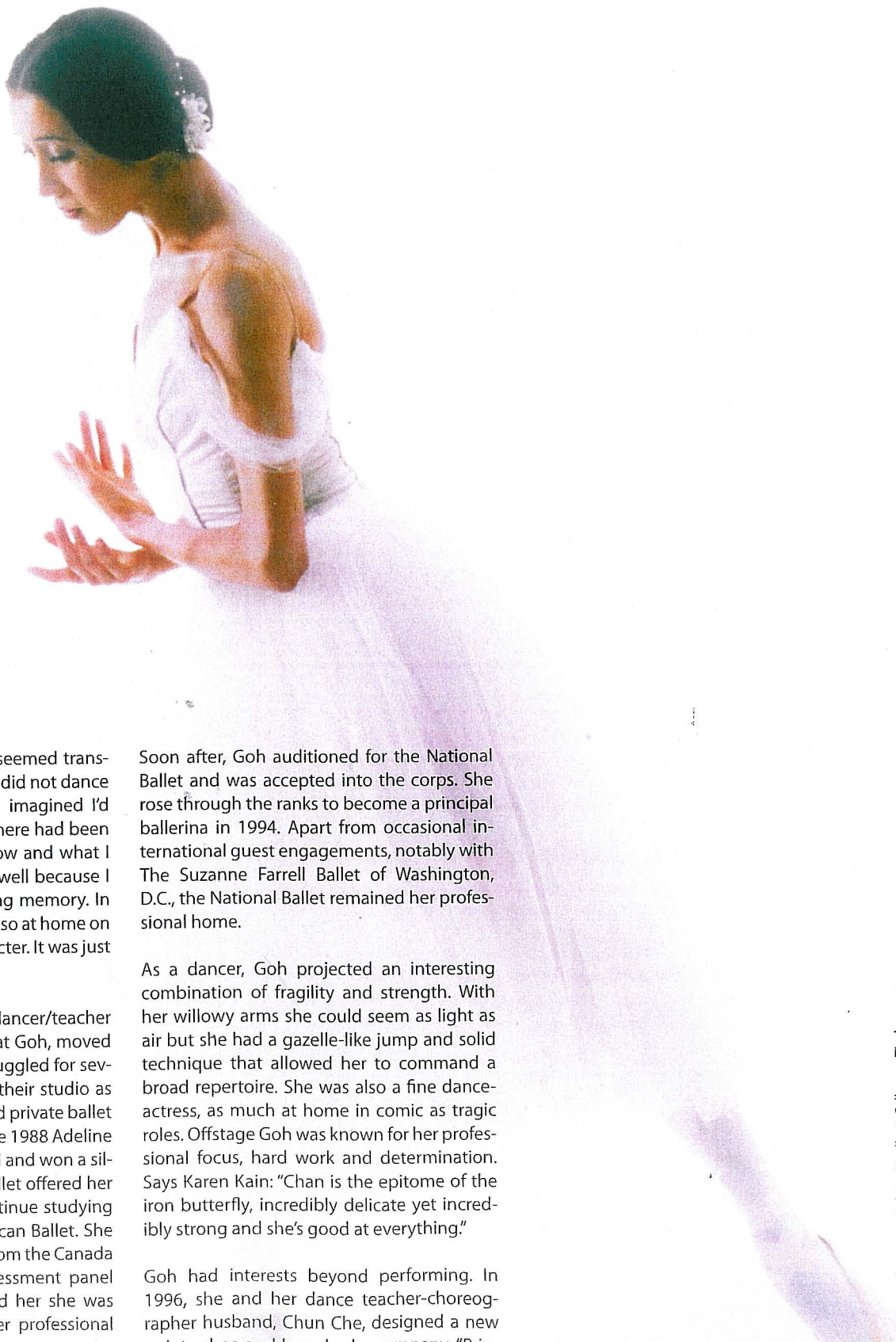
ally and physically grueling. The company's artistic director, Karen Kain, was worried—considering Goh's injury—whether she could manage it. Certainly, no one expected Goh to

dance what many felt in retrospect to have been the best Giselle of her career. Superbly partnered by Zdenek Konvalina, one of the National Ballet's most artistically refined and



Chan Hon Goh and her son Aveary with Artists of the Ballet at the curtain call for *Giselle* © Bruce Zinger

“It truly felt wonderful,” Goh confirmed a few days later.
 “Now I’m ready to move on.
 And I don’t have to practise any more!”



intelligent male dancers, Goh seemed transported into another realm. She did not dance Giselle. She became Giselle. “I imagined I’d be more nervous” says Goh. “There had been such a buildup to that last show and what I wanted was to dance it really well because I knew it would be such a lasting memory. In fact, there were no nerves. I felt so at home on that stage, really into the character. It was just a great two hours.”

Goh was born in Beijing. Her dancer/teacher parents, Lin Yee and Choo Chiat Goh, moved to Vancouver in 1977. They struggled for several years before establishing their studio as one of Canada’s most respected private ballet academies. Goh took part in the 1988 Adeline Genée Competition in England and won a silver medal. English National Ballet offered her a job but her plan was to continue studying at New York’s School of American Ballet. She applied for financial support from the Canada Council for the Arts. The assessment panel was very impressed. They told her she was more than ready to begin her professional

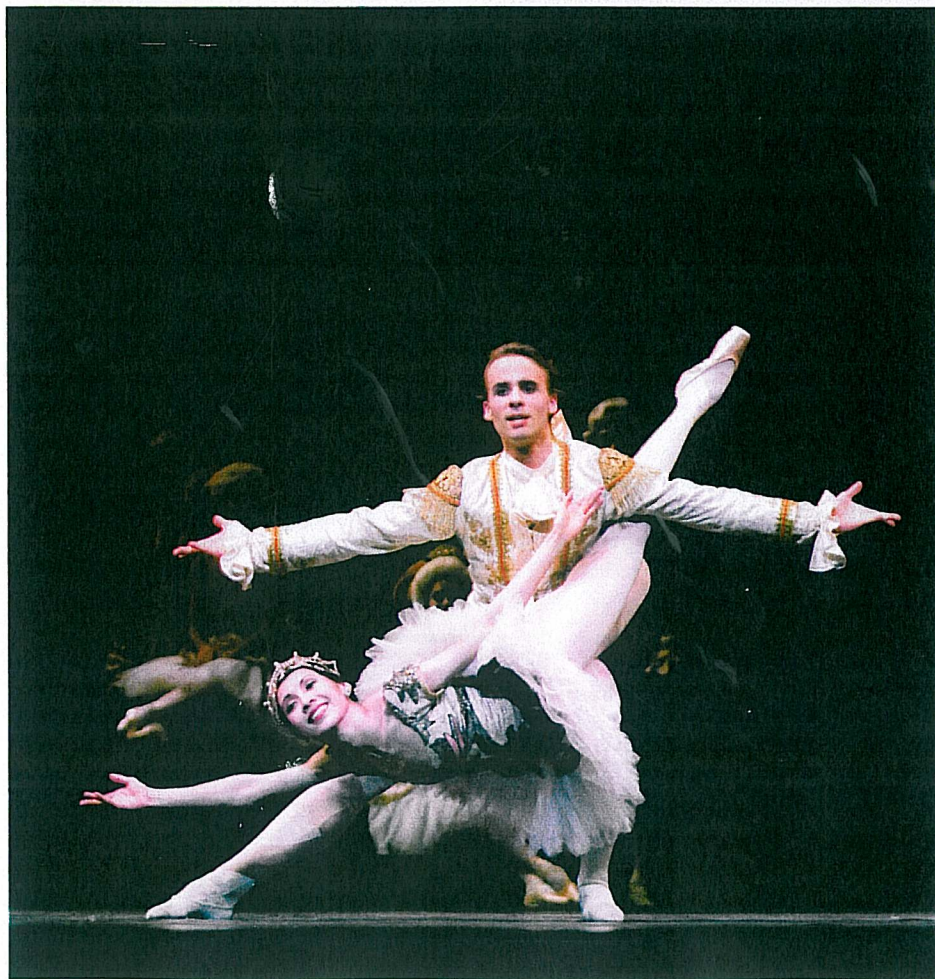
Soon after, Goh auditioned for the National Ballet and was accepted into the corps. She rose through the ranks to become a principal ballerina in 1994. Apart from occasional international guest engagements, notably with The Suzanne Farrell Ballet of Washington, D.C., the National Ballet remained her professional home.

As a dancer, Goh projected an interesting combination of fragility and strength. With her willowy arms she could seem as light as air but she had a gazelle-like jump and solid technique that allowed her to command a broad repertoire. She was also a fine dance-actress, as much at home in comic as tragic roles. Offstage Goh was known for her professional focus, hard work and determination. Says Karen Kain: “Chan is the epitome of the iron butterfly, incredibly delicate yet incredibly strong and she’s good at everything.”

Goh had interests beyond performing. In 1996, she and her dance teacher-choreographer husband, Chun Che, designed a new pointe shoe and launched a company “Prin-



Chan Hon Goh in Giselle © Cylla von Tiedemann



derek Konvalina and Chan Hon Goh with Artists of the Ballet in The Sleeping Beauty Cylla von Tiedemann

principal by Chan Hon Goh™, of which Goh is president, has a head office in Vancouver and expanding manufacturing plant in China. Goh describes it as a "boutique operation." It sold about 20,000 pairs of "Principal" shoes last year.

Goh and her family will now be moving their home base to Vancouver where Chun Che will teach at the Goh Academy and concentrate on expanding the shoe business, but Chan Hon Goh plans to keep a small apartment in Toronto.

"I'd like to keep connected to the National Ballet somehow," she explains. "I'd like to contribute artistically as a teacher and coach. I know the repertoire so well. And I'd like to help in building a bigger audience for the company, specifically within the Asian community."

Goh will also be testing her artistic management skills, acting as the co-coordinator of a new Goh Academy Nutcracker production this December. The project will involve talented students from many Vancouver ballet schools and for opening night will feature a principal couple from the National Ballet.

Chan Hon Goh's dancing days may now be over but her life in dance is beginning a new chapter. ■