

Dancer leaps from Stuttgart Ballet to Toronto

Friday, November 20, 2009



Stuttgart Ballet principal dancer Jiri Jelinek is set to join the National Ballet of Canada in January. (National Ballet of Canada)

Ballet dancer Jiri Jelinek is trading in Stuttgart, Germany, for Toronto, the National Ballet of Canada announced on Friday.

Jelinek, who was born in Prague, will join the National Ballet as a principal dancer starting in January.

"Jiri's strong, dramatic stage presence will be a great addition to the company," artistic director Karen Kain said in a statement. "I am delighted that he will be joining the company in the new year."

Jelinek, who is currently dancing the title role in the Stuttgart Ballet's production of John Cranko's

Onegin — one of the company's signature ballets — trained with the Hamburg Ballet and joined the National Theatre in Prague, eventually rising to principal dancer in 1998.

"I have achieved a lot in Prague and Stuttgart, and I consider myself very lucky to be given the chance for a third career as principal with the National Ballet of Canada," Jelinek said.

In 2001, he joined the Stuttgart company — led by Canadian Reid Anderson — first as a member of the corp de ballet before gradual promotions boosted him to principal dancer status in 2004.

Jelinek's repertoire ranges from classic roles such as Romeo and Siegfried (from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Swan Lake*, respectively) to modern turns, such as Stanley Kowalski in Hamburg Ballet's current adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

The National had been expecting to welcome home ballet star Jason Reilly — also of the Stuttgart Ballet — earlier this year, but the Toronto-born dancer had a last-minute change of heart in August and decided to remain with the Germany company.

The National Ballet's 2009-2010 season began earlier this month with its production of *The Sleeping Beauty*.