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Pacific Northwest Ballet Principal Dancer Elizabeth Murphy Announces Retirement.

**15-year career with PNB will be celebrated at
Season Encore Performance, June 7, 2026.**

March 5, 2026 — Pacific Northwest Ballet principal dancer Elizabeth Murphy has announced that she will be retiring at the end of PNB’s 2025-26 season. Murphy joined Pacific Northwest Ballet as a member of the corps de ballet in 2011, was promoted to soloist in 2013, and principal in 2015.

Said Murphy, in her announcement: “My earliest memories of dance are: 1. Not liking the butterfly stretch, and 2. Being hopelessly enchanted with the world of ballet. At the ripe old age of two I loved being on the stage and dressing up in costumes. It completed a part of me. As I grew, all of my closest friends were from ballet, and it was in the studio that I’d find my deepest sense of belonging. Fast-forward 20+ years and it should be no surprise that I met my husband backstage [Reed Nakayama, PNB’s resident Lighting Designer] and built a life and family around this beautiful art form. For countless reasons PNB will forever hold a special place in my heart. Thanks to Peter Boal I’ve had the incredible opportunity to work with world-renowned choreographers, dance some of my favorite ballets, and become inspired by works that challenged me and changed the way I view the art of dance. As my 20-year career begins to come to an end, I’m overwhelmed with gratitude for all the people who have led me here. To those I’ve had the privilege of dancing alongside and learning from, to those whose thoughtful care has held me together, to the many talented departments that make up PNB, and to all those who chose to invest and believe in me – I am forever grateful and blessed to be a part of this community.

“It’s with love and a full heart that I take my final bow and step into a new era. I take with me all this career has taught me and a deep respect for the craft and community surrounding it. I’m moving towards a time with much unknown but thankfully some things never change, and I’m still hopelessly enchanted by the art of ballet.”

Murphy is scheduled to perform in all three of PNB’s remaining season programs, **FIREBIRD**, **Giselle**, and **ALL LANG** (specific performance casting to be announced), and her career will be celebrated at PNB’s **Season Encore Performance** on Sunday, June 7, 2026, at McCaw Hall. Tickets to the rest of PNB’s 2025-26 season programs as well as the Season Encore are now available through the PNB Box Office, 206.441.2424, online at PNB.org, or in person at 301 Mercer Street. (The Season Encore performance will not be available for streaming by digital subscribers.)

“Elizabeth Murphy has always had the unique ability to draw us into her world as an artist,” said PNB Artistic Director Peter Boal. “She takes us on a shared and nuanced journey. From Juliet’s first blush to

Odetta's unwavering devotion or Giselle's fatal mistake, we are riveted. Liz imbues characters with flesh, blood, and breath. Her performances in abstract ballets can prove even more transcendent. In Alejandro Cerrudo's *Little mortal jump* opposite Dylan Wald, Benjamin Millepied's *Appassionata* opposite Karel Cruz, or as the solitary figure carrying the magnitude and grace of Jessica Lang's *Her Door to the Sky*, Liz represents human emotions with unbridled joy, vulnerability, and rawness. A favorite of visiting choreographers, staggers, peers, and audiences, it's hard to imagine Liz taking a final bow on our stage, but we will cherish all she has given us and savor the many moments of a beautiful career.”

“Unbeknownst to her, Liz nurtures us all through her passion” added principal dancer Christopher D’Ariano, a frequent onstage partner of Murphy’s. “She has a luminous quality that touches everyone around her and leads with her heart both on and off stage. I’m so lucky to have learned from her every day – she has taught me what it means to be a great partner, a curious creator, and a more genuine artist. It’s been an honor to have danced with a ballerina as pure as Liz.”

[Elizabeth Murphy](#) is from Chelmsford, Massachusetts. She studied at Academy of Ballet Arts and the Rock School for Dance Education, and attended summer courses on scholarship at Pacific Northwest Ballet School and Chautauqua Summer Program, where she was an apprentice with North Carolina Dance Theater. She also performed with Pennsylvania Ballet before joining Ballet West II in 2006 and Ballet West in 2007. Murphy joined Pacific Northwest Ballet as a member of the corps de ballet in 2011, was promoted to soloist in 2013, and principal in 2015.

Murphy has danced leading roles in George Balanchine’s *Agon*, *Apollo*, *Coppélia*, *Diamonds*, *Emeralds*, *George Balanchine’s The Nutcracker*®, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *La Source*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, and *Symphony in C*; Andrew Bartee’s *arms that work*; Peter Boal’s *Giselle*; Alejandro Cerrudo’s *Little mortal jump* and *One Thousand Pieces*; David Dawson’s *Empire Noir* and *A Million Kisses to My Skin*; Ulysses Dove’s *Dancing on the Front Porch of Heaven*; Nacho Duato’s *Rassemblement*; William Forsythe’s *In the Middle*, *Somewhat Elevated*, *New Suite*, and *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*; Kiyon Gaines’ *Sum Stravinsky*; Ronald Hynd’s *The Sleeping Beauty*; Jiri Kylian’s *Forgotten Land*; Jean-Christophe Maillot’s *Cendrillon* and *Roméo et Juliette*; Benjamin Millepied’s *Appassionata*; Annabelle Lopez Ochoa’s *Before After*; Justin Peck’s *Year of the Rabbit*; Crystal Pite’s *Emergence*, *The Seasons’ Canon*, and *Plot Point*; Alexei Ratmanský’s *Don Quixote* and *Pictures at an Exhibition*; Jerome Robbins’ *The Concert* and *In the Night*; Kent Stowell’s *Carmina Burana*, *Cinderella*, *Nutcracker*, and *Swan Lake*; Price Suddarth’s *Signature*; Twyla Tharp’s *In the Upper Room*, *Nine Sinatra Songs*, and *Waiting at the Station*; and Christopher Wheeldon’s *Carousel (A Dance)*, *Polyphonia* and *Tide Harmonic*. She originated leading roles in Cerrudo’s *Memory Glow*, Jessica Lang’s *Ghost Variations*, *Let Me Mingle Tears With Thee*, and *Her Door to the Sky*, Mark Morris’ *Kammermusik No. 3*, Miles Pertl’s *Wash of Gray*, and Penny Saunders’ *Wonderland*.

At Ballet West, Murphy danced leading and featured roles in Balanchine’s *Agon*, *The Four Temperaments*, *Serenade*, and *Stars and Stripes*; William Christiansen’s *Nutcracker*; Nicolo Fonte’s *Bolero*; Jiri Kylian’s *Sinfonietta*; Helen Pickett’s *But Never Doubt I Love*; and Adam Sklute’s *Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*.

Murphy designed costumes for Ezra Thomson’s *Measure Twice, Cut Once* (2016) and Kyle Davis’ *Make It So* (2016), both for PNB’s NEXT STEP. In 2018, she designed costumes for Kyle Davis’ *A Dark and Lonely Space*, her first designs for PNB’s mainstage. She designed costumes for PNB’s digital releases of Davis’ *Las Estrellas* (2021), and Price Suddarth’s *The Intermission Project* (2021). She is the founder of [LABL Active](#) (formerly [Label Dancewear](#).)

Start-up funding for Murphy’s Label Dancewear business was provided, in part, by Second Stage, PNB’s career transition program for its company dancers. Conceived in 1999, Second Stage supports PNB

dancers and PNB School Professional Division students in achieving their goals following a career in dance. Its resources allow dancers to take classes, get subsidized tuition at Seattle University, access mentors and vocation counseling, and receive grant monies. At its inception, only a handful of dancers actively planned for their career after ballet. Since that time, Second Stage has provided over \$1.5 million in grants to over 220 dancers. For more information, visit PNB.org.

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