

Giselle

ATLANTA BALLET

GENNADI NEDVIGIN • ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

February 13–15, 2026
Cobb Energy Centre

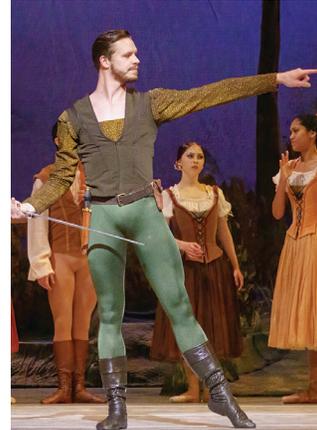
A GUIDE TO THE LEAD CHARACTERS IN THE BALLET



Giselle is a young peasant girl and the belle of the village, beloved by everyone for her sweet nature, innocent demeanor, and joyful spirit. She loves to dance, despite having a weak heart. Giselle falls in love with Albrecht, unaware that he is actually a nobleman disguised as a villager and engaged to another woman. When the truth is revealed, Giselle is overwhelmed by grief and descends into madness. She ultimately dies and crosses into the spirit world, transforming into one of the ethereal Wilis. In death, Giselle discovers newfound strength and defends her true love, demonstrating her final transformation into a tender and forgiving spirit.



Albrecht, a young nobleman looking for adventure, disguises himself as a villager named Loys. He meets and becomes infatuated with Giselle, and so enamored by her youthful and innocent beauty, forgets about his engagement to Bathilde, a lady of the court. When his true identity is revealed, Albrecht finds himself torn between his infatuation for Giselle and his duty to his fiancée. Ultimately, he chooses Bathilde. Heartbroken, Giselle dies, leaving Albrecht consumed by guilt and sorrow. He returns to her grave, and instead of facing a tragic fate at the hands of the Wilis, Giselle's love spares him. He is forever changed and repentant.



Hilarion, the village huntsman and gamekeeper to the court, also loves the pure-hearted Giselle. He grows suspicious of the newcomer Loys and eventually uncovers evidence of the handsome stranger's true noble status. Hilarion denounces Albrecht as an impostor, but instead of seeking comfort from him, Giselle loses her will to live. While mourning at her graveside, Hilarion is frightened by ghostly visions and flees to the forest, where he falls victim to the vengeful Wilis, who command him to dance to his death.



Myrtha is the Queen of the Wilis, reigning over a kingdom of ghostly spirits composed of maidens whose lovers betrayed them before marriage. The Wilis rise at night to haunt the forests, luring men to their doom. Regal, terrifying, and merciless, Myrtha leads this group of vengeful spirit maidens and forces their victims to dance until they die. When she demands the same fate for Albrecht, her magical strength is weakened by Giselle's power of eternal love, which protects her true love from his demise.



The Wilis are the vengeful spirits of scorned maidens. Like Giselle, who becomes one of them after being jilted by Albrecht, these women died from broken hearts before their wedding days. Led by the ruthless Myrtha, Queen of the Wilis, these ghostly and ethereal figures embody tragic passion and a desire for revenge. Dressed in long, tulle wedding dresses and veils, they appear as beautiful yet haunting figures in white.

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AN ILLUSTRATED SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

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ACT I — A Village in the Rhineland

Giselle, a delicate young girl who is adored by her fellow villagers, lives with her watchful mother, Berthe. Count Albrecht is bored with his noble duties and obligations and, as a distraction, he disguises himself as a villager named Loys. Albrecht has noticed Giselle and is attracted to her youthful, innocent beauty. He enjoys the simplicity of being just another villager, and as each day passes Albrecht grows fonder of Giselle. In the meantime, Wilfred, Albrecht's squire reminds the Count that he is betrothed to the noblewoman, Bathilde. Albrecht refuses to be distracted by this commitment and determines he will resolve that situation later.

Unaware of Albrecht's noble birth, yet enamored with him, Giselle is at first overwhelmed by his zeal and persistence. He expresses to Giselle his eternal love and vows he will always be faithful to her. In her joy and enthusiasm she pauses, her frail heart interrupting her. Berthe pleads with Giselle to rest and calm her excitement, reminding her that her frail heart may fail.

Hilarion, the village gamekeeper who is deeply in love with Giselle, discovers Albrecht's disguise and is consumed with jealousy. He proceeds to reveal his rival's true identity to the village. At first, Giselle refuses to believe Hilarion, but when Bathilde claims Albrecht as her fiancé, Giselle loses her mind. Overwhelmingly distraught and horrified, Giselle dies of a broken heart.



ACT II — Night in the Forest

As midnight approaches, Hilarion keeps vigil by Giselle's grave. This is the hour when the Wilis, the ghosts of young girls who were jilted and died before their wedding days, materialize. They exact revenge upon men they encounter in the night by dancing them to their deaths. Hilarion's destiny with the Wilis is realized as he is overcome with exhaustion. He succumbs to his fate as he is thrown into the lake.



Later, Count Albrecht visits Giselle's grave, laden with feelings of guilt and remorse. He sees a vision of Giselle and follows her deeper into the forest. Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, discovers them together, and orders the Wilis to enact the same revenge on Albrecht as they did on Hilarion. Giselle tries to protect Albrecht and implores Myrtha to reconsider his fate. Myrtha is firm



and orders the Wilis to pursue Albrecht in the dance of death. As the morning bells chime announcing the arrival of dawn, the Wilis vanish into their graves. As Giselle disappears, Albrecht recognizes her true love and is forever touched with the memory of his beloved — the delicate and beautiful village girl.