



Dancer turns full circle to end his career where he began – in Perth

LINDSAY McPHEE

More than 25 years after he started dance lessons in Perth, Grant Aris has returned home to perform in one of the highlights of the Perth International Arts Festival and to conclude his dancing career on the WA stage.

A principal dancer with the Geneva Ballet, Aris started lessons at seven with Renate Cumalkovs, who remembers him as a dedicated student with natural talent.

“He was hard-working and pretty focused. He was probably one of the most disciplined students I have ever had and I have been teaching for a long time,” Ms Cumalkovs said.

“You just knew. He was one of



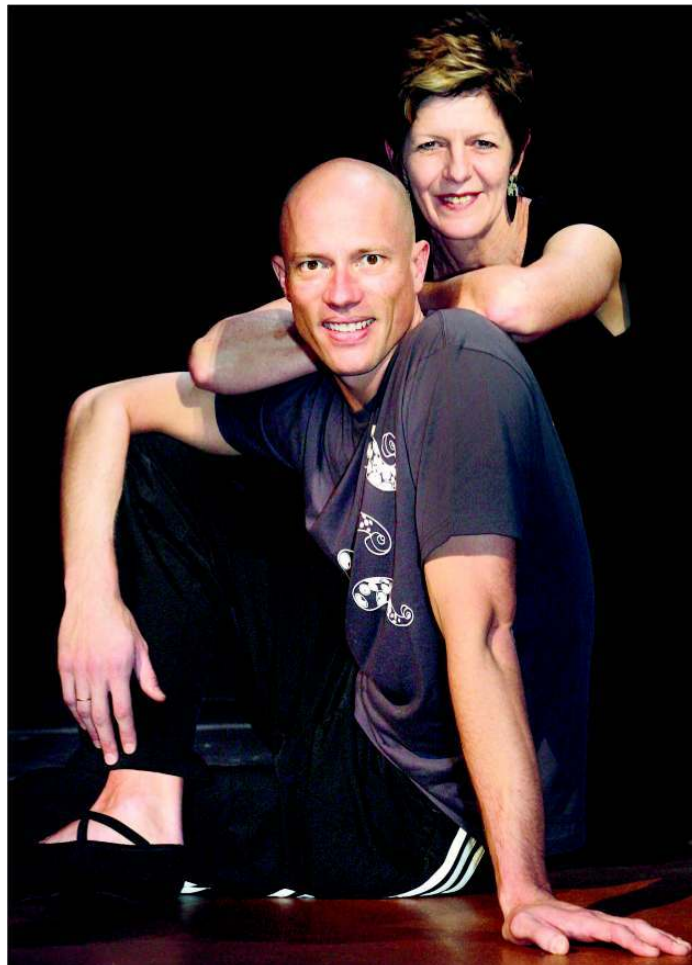
these kids you get that you know you don't really have to do that much for because he was always going to be a dancer. He is very tall so he is a unique dancer, not your run-of-the-mill, and just amazing to see on stage with his height and length.”

At 11, Aris joined the Royal Ballet School in London but returned to Australia after two years of being homesick, and joined the Australian Ballet School and later the Australian Ballet.

He has spent 10 years at the Geneva Ballet, considered one of the best contemporary dance companies in the world. In July he will take up the position of ballet master; directing, teaching and rehearsing dancers for new productions.

“It's a fantastic opportunity, and it is a rare one for a dancer but the director has a lot of faith and confidence in me and to finish my career with the Geneva Ballet here in Perth where it all started is just amazing,” Aris said. “I couldn't have hoped for a better moment.”

The Geneva Ballet's Mixed Bill runs until February 20 at His Majesty's Theatre.



Dedicated: Geneva Ballet principal dancer Grant Aris with his former teacher, Renate Cumalkovs.

Picture: Diene Davidson