

## POINTE



Bloodgood and Ashley Lynn Sherman in "Giselle." Photo by Tony Spielberg, courtesy Ballet Austin.

# Paul Michael Bloodgood Says Goodbye to Ballet Austin and Hello to His Next Career: Directing Films



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### [Paul Michael Bloodgood](#)

, a longtime leading man at Ballet Austin, ends his 19-year career with the company this weekend in Paul Vasterling's [Peter Pan](#). But in between layoffs and after rehearsals, he's been steadily working towards his next phase: creating a full-length feature documentary called [Trenches of Rock](#). The movie, which focuses on his father's Christian heavy metal band and the challenges they faced in the music industry, has been enjoying screenings at film festivals around the world—and winning awards along the way. *Pointe* spoke with Bloodgood about how he's feeling as he ends his dance career and transitions into filmmaking.

## What's on your mind as you wrap up your final performances at Ballet Austin?

I just want to be in the moment as much as I can and savor the time onstage with my coworkers. Upon reflection of the past 20 years, the moments of honest emotion and connection with others are what I will cherish the most. There are so many aspects of humanity to explore, and I am so grateful to have had so much time to cogitate what dance has to offer to the human condition.

### TRENCHES OF ROCK [OFFICIAL TRAILER] HD



## Do you recall a threshold role, where you felt like you really arrived in your dance career?

Performing a principal role in Balanchine's *Episodes* when Ballet Austin partnered with the Suzanne Farrell Ballet was in many ways the penultimate achievement, after having studied in the "Balanchine method" for so many years. Albrecht in *Giselle* was also a highlight, in terms of how I felt physically throughout the experience. But Stephen Mills' [\*Light / The Holocaust & Humanity Project\*](#) has been the pinnacle of my career. The universal themes concerning bigotry, hatred, and no longer being a bystander have as much meaning now as they did when the work was created in 2005.

## What role really fit your skill set?

Stephen Mill's *Hamlet*. It's a great mix of contemporary movement, floor work, partnering, martial arts, fencing and acting. I had the privilege of understudying Desmond Richardson in the title role my first time around and I rehearsed the ballet in full swing for weeks until he arrived. It was a great way for me to get my feet wet before jumping into the deep end years later.



In Stephen Mill's "Hamlet." Photo by Anne-Marie

Bloodgood, courtesy Ballet Austin.

### **What will you miss most about dancing?**

Performing. The heightened sense of it all, the fact that you're just laying everything on the table—there's nothing like it and nothing can take its place. I will miss it terribly, which is why I'll probably find myself onstage again in some capacity down the road.

### **You've**

**acted in several movies, including *Transformers*. Can you talk about your transition into filmmaking?**

I caught the acting bug while dancing with Ballet Pacifica (now defunct) in California. My first time on television was actually a "Bill Nye, the Science Guy" episode titled "Bones and Muscles" while I was a student at Pacific Northwest Ballet School, so the film industry and I have been courting each other for some time. I love acting, but my attention of late has been focused on the creativity behind the camera versus in front.



Bloodgood in "Light / The Holocaust & Humanity

Project." Photo by Amitava Sarkar, courtesy Ballet Austin.

**You recently made a documentary about your dad's Christian heavy metal band called *Trenches of Rock*. How did it come about?**

I'd read that for your first big film project, you should stick with a subject that you know. I didn't feel I could offer something unique enough on the subject of dance, so I shifted my focus to music. I came close to following a local Austin band's struggle to "make it" in the industry, and then it hit me: BLOODGOOD, my father's band, had an incredible story and dealt with a bizarre combination of subject matter (a spiritual context and heavy metal) that hadn't really been told as a feature-length documentary. In their early years, BLOODGOOD had both Christian and Satanist protesters at the same shows. They had multiple death threats made on their lives. People like to laugh it off and dismiss their relevance, but bands like BLOODGOOD are some of the bravest musicians you'll ever encounter.

I didn't set out to make a "Christian film." I made a music documentary that just happens to be about a band with faith-based lyrics. My goal was to make the film as entertaining as possible, whether you're a religious person or an atheist. My wonderful executive producer James Moll mentored me for years throughout the process, and words can't express my gratitude toward him.



With the band BLOODGOOD and his wife Anne-Marie at the Hollywood INdependent Film Festival. Photo courtesy Paul Michael Bloodgood.

### **What have the reactions been like?**

The reception has been overwhelmingly positive—but it wasn't easy! I spent 5 years creating this film, and when we began submitting to festivals, we were turned down everywhere for over a year. It made me question whether I had the goods to continue pursuing film as a secondary career. We finally received our big break with our official selection at the Atlanta Film Festival in 2017. I then emailed hundreds of festivals all over the world—and here we are! *Trenches of Rock* has been an official selection of 17 festivals and received 11 accolades, including multiple Best Feature Documentary, Best Director and Best Editing awards. I couldn't be more honored and thankful.

### **What's next for you?**

I hope for film to be a part of my future career path. I recently received a distribution offer for *Trenches of Rock* from a very reputable company, so who knows where that might lead. I'm grateful that I've already found another passion (in film) to replace the void that dance will leave when I retire.