



# First Lady of ballet is back on stage after her hardest performance



**SIGNATURE ROLE: ALINA COJOCARU WITH BOYFRIEND JOHAN KOBORG IN THE ROYAL BALLET'S GISELLE IN 2001**

**ISMENE BROWN**  
12 APRIL 2012

 **COMMENTS**



THE  
**STANDARD** 

[SIGN IN](#)

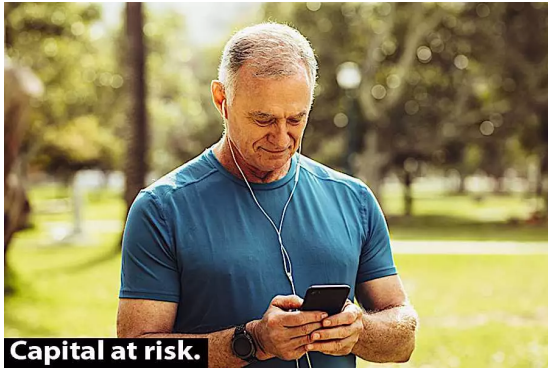
---

more international invitations than any ballerina since Margot Fonteyn.

But when she performs her signature role Giselle at Covent Garden tonight, Alina Cojocaru will shed tears of relief. The waif-like dancer has been off stage for almost a year, while rumours

circulated that she had a broken neck.

ADVERTISEMENT



**Capital at risk.**

## Things to consider when taking a lump sum from your pension

Fidelity (Capital at risk)

In fact, a whiplash injury suffered in rehearsal had threatened to end the 27-year-old's dancing career.

During last spring's performances, before she called a halt in May, Romanian-born Cojocaru was hiding blind panic: "The pain was agonising, all over. It was hurting even to breathe.

### RECOMMENDED



**Arsenal injury update: Gabriel, Havertz, Martinelli latest return dates**



**World Darts Championship 2026: Schedule, results and who is playing...**

**Claudia Winkleman and Tess Daly to host their final live Strictly show**

**David and Victoria Beckham 'devastated' as son Brooklyn blocks...**

### MOST READ

#### 1 FOOTBALL

Arsenal injury update: Gabriel, Kai Havertz, Gabriel Martinelli latest news and return dates

#### 2 CELEBRITY HOMES

Where Claudia Winkleman and her half-sister Sophie live — and their former homes, from north London to LA

#### 3 FOOTBALL

Arsenal: Mikel Arteta issues worrying Gabriel injury update as Kai Havertz closes in on return

#### 4 FOOTBALL

Arsenal XI vs Brighton: Confirmed team news, predicted lineup, injury latest for Premier League

#### 5 LONDON

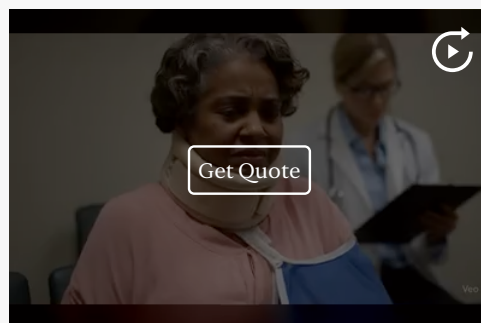
Shocking moment young thugs brawl

### Promoted Stories



The Forgotten Breakfast Habit That Kept Our Grandparents Slim

Total Vitality Secrets



Here's Why Over 50,000 Brits have

"I couldn't sleep, couldn't laugh, couldn't move, couldn't hold anything. For the past 10 years I've done so much, and it was always 'what's next?' And suddenly it was nothing, just basically sitting in a chair with a neck collar on, not knowing what to do.

"I travelled a lot to meet different doctors, I tried manipulation, trigger points, acupuncture, needles in your neck, needles in your head, but nothing was working.

TV Presenter: I Drank Olive Oil For A Month - I Had No Idea It Would En...

New Vitality Secrets

## Shopping Best Buys

The nightmare began two years ago when Cojocaru hurt her neck rehearsing a new ballet. She had had two injuries in performance in 2003 - crashing on her chin and twisting her foot.

"That was a dark time. I had just started learning to be less perfectionist and enjoy my performances more. So when the neck bothered me again, I panicked. I felt, oh, no, I'm not ready to go through this again."

Surgery on a disc in her back was

suggested by many specialists.

"My god, one can go really almost insane, it goes round and round your head, that it's only you who can find that right decision. For a long time I didn't want to hear that word [surgery].

"But when I did actually see this doctor [Hans Obermüller in Munich], I felt good about having it, and I had the operation last September. Just minimally invasive, scraping around the disc. Suddenly I really felt healed."

However, inactivity had brought muscle loss and weight gain. "But not much. I thought, okay, cool. At least I won't be a big fat lady when I stop dancing."

She praises Birmingham Royal Ballet's specialist Jerwood Centre, which helped her get ready to return to the barre at the Royal Ballet in February.

This year is Cojocaru's tenth at Covent Garden, following a dazzling career that worried many by the frenzy of her schedule. She says she's wiser now.



Best Christmas wreaths to ring in the festive season



25 of the best Christmas stocking fillers for adults 2025



Harvey Nichols' early Black Friday deals



Best personalised gifts for a memorable Christmas



Best Travel Christmas Gifts: Top Picks for Fliers

"I see now I've often let my instincts down. Many times I've done things I know I shouldn't have, pushing, pushing, pushing. Ballet is actually much harder than most people think. People say about me, 'oh, she's made it'. What is it to 'make it'? I only ever thought about getting better at what I do. I knew that however long it could take, I would come back to the stage.

"But I've also realised from this amazing journey that I will be okay when I'm not dancing, because there are so many other things out there - watching plays, reading, cooking, getting to know my family again, having time to connect with them. I've loved that."

Her comeback puts her in the arms of Kobborg, London's great Danish star. Cojocar, who lives in Clerkenwell, said: "Giselle is the ballet we've done the most, everywhere, from Kirov to Bolshoi to Paris to South Africa to Japan." To cheer her up Kobborg, 36, built her a website ([alinacojocar.com](http://alinacojocar.com)), where a photo shows her in hospital, smiling in a T-shirt reading "I'm Fine!"

What about the ballet that gave her the injury? Cojocar won't name it, but it was an accident, and she will face it again if she needs to.

"I am different now - suddenly you see the end of one journey and the beginning of the next more beautiful journey. There is nothing I could wish for myself right now. I'm only 27 and



Swipe left for  
next article

Dismiss

still have half my career ahead of me. And I am so glad to be back. Today we were working on Giselle and I heard that music and thought, I'll cry from the first step I take on stage. But I'll probably laugh like crazy too."

### **Life of a world-class ballerina**

May 1981 - Born in Romania, youngest daughter of a Bucharest grocer.

1991 - Enters Kiev ballet school, Ukraine.

1998 - Wins Prix de Lausanne, goes to Royal Ballet School, London, for six months. Rejects Royal Ballet offer of corps de ballet contract to become Kiev Ballet principal for a season, aged 17.

1999 - Joins Royal Ballet corps de ballet.

2000 - Leading role in Symphonic Variations at Covent Garden.

2001 - Brilliant debuts in Romeo and Juliet and Giselle — aged 19, becomes Royal Ballet principal.

2001/02 - More than 50 Covent Garden performances, most of any ballerina.

From 2003 - Guests with ballets including the Kirov, American Ballet Theatre, Paris Opera, Bolshoi, Royal Danish, La Scala, national ballets of Romania, Cuba, China, Hungary, South Africa and Japan.

2004 - Awarded the Nijinsky and Benois de la Danse international prizes.

🗨️ HAVE YOUR SAY...

VIEW COMMENTS

