

## NEWS

For immediate release

# LES GRANDS BALLETS CANADIENS DE MONTRÉAL EMBARKS ON HISTORIC MIDDLE EAST TOUR



**Montréal, May 25, 2009** — After conquering the City of Light last summer as guests of *Les Étés de la danse de Paris* festival, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal will embark on another major tour abroad this June featuring three different programs. The company will be visiting **Tel Aviv** to join in marking the city's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bilateral relations between Canada and the State of Israel, as well as **Jerusalem** and **Cairo**, Egypt. The company will then fly to Europe to perform in **Ljubljana**, Slovenia, and in **Baden-Baden**, Germany. This is a major event for Les Grands Ballets: it is the first time since its inception that the company will perform in the Middle East. To mark this exceptional visit, invitations have been sent to the President of Israel, Shimon Peres, and to the first lady of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Suzanne Mubarak.

During its first stop, in **Tel Aviv**, Les Grands Ballets will give two performances, on **June 1 and 2**, on the outdoor stage of the **Suzanne Dellal Centre for Dance and Theatre**, as part of the Big Stage Festival. Les Grands Ballets will perform two major pieces from its repertoire: *Noces* by Stijn Celis and *Cantata* by Mauro Bigonzetti.

In *Noces*, a highly popular piece on the company's tours, 24 dancers strut and clash brutally at a delirious Balkan peasant wedding, expressionistic and intense, to the haunting music of Igor Stravinsky. "*Noces* is extraordinary," said *The New York Times*. Exploding with vitality and passion, *Cantata*, commissioned by Ballet Gulbenkian in 2001, has been part of Les Grands repertoire for two years. Set to popular Neapolitan songs performed live by the singers of the group Assurd, *Cantata*, through instinctive and visceral dance, explores the multiple facets of relations between men and women, from seduction to jealousy. "*Cantata* is an explosive work," according to the *Times* of London.

This same program will also be performed at the **Jerusalem Centre for the Performing Arts** on **June 5** during the Israel Festival and at the **Cairo Opera House** on **June 9, 10, 11 and 12**.

After touring Middle East, the company will head to Europe, where on **June 16** at **Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana**, it will perform a double program by Celis: *Noces* and *The Rite of Spring*, the latter its European première. The tour will come to a close at **Festspielhaus Baden-Baden in Germany** with three performances of a program by Bigonzetti on **June 19, 20 and 21**. In addition to *Cantata*, the company will perform *Four Seasons*, set to Antonio Vivaldi's extremely well-known score. The work was commissioned by Les Grands Ballets and premiered in May 2007 at Théâtre Misonneuve of Place des Arts; in it, Bigonzetti successfully carried off the challenge of innovating with music that's been used thousands of times, drawing out "the internal seasons of man, in all his moods and swings."



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Unquestionably, this tour will be a milestone in our history,” says **Alain Dancyger, Executive Director, Les Grands Ballets de Montréal**. “The company’s historic presence in the Middle East is significant, clearly underscoring our established international reputation.”

“I am, however, extremely upset that the Government of Canada has abolished PROMART and Trade Routes, the only two programs that support international tours,” Mr. Dancyger continues. “The decision to cut off all financial support for exporting and raising the visibility of our culture is surprising in the current economic context. Foreign demand for our company’s work is at the highest level it has ever been in our history.”

“What is particularly disappointing—and, in truth, incomprehensible,” Mr. Dancyger continues, “is the fact that the elimination of PROMART is based on the supposed inefficiency of the program, a charge that has never been proven and that contradicts the results of the internal audit carried out by the government. While companies are crying famine, \$25 million is immobilized in Ottawa waiting for projects. In light of this, I question the effectiveness of this measure at a time when, more than ever, Canada needs to marshal its energies and resources to build its economy and its international image — goals that the arts world has always attained with dynamism and flair.”

Les Grands Ballets has mobilized all its energies to make this tour possible. More than 40% of its budget comes from the private sector; the company succeeded in raising more than \$400,000. It also benefited from the significant support of the Jewish community, thanks to numerous donations from foundations and individuals, and that of the Egyptian corporate community. But the withdrawal of the federal government’s funding nonetheless leaves us with a gaping loss of \$150,000 despite the financial support of many of our backers.”

Mr. Dancyger concludes: “Les Grands Ballets remains one of today’s most dynamic cultural promoters on the international stage, exporting excellence, innovation and diversity. I hold out hope that the Government of Canada will recognize the importance of the role our company plays within the international community and for the Canadian economy.”

## THANKS

The 2009 tour of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal was made possible thanks to the special support of the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Ministère des Relations internationales du Québec.

Les Grands Ballets would like to thank Air Canada, its official airline, and Bombardier Aviation for its special contribution.

### For our shows in Israel

Les Grands Ballets also thanks the Azrieli Foundation and the Azrieli Group of Companies, Israel, the Alex and Ruth Dworkin Foundation, the Federation CJA, and the Jewish Community Foundation of Montréal. In addition, Les Grands Ballets would like to express its gratitude to His Excellency Jon Allen, Ambassador of Canada to Israel, for his support of the June 1 gala, to Michèle Ségué of the Consulate General of Israel in Montréal, and to all our individual donors.

### For our shows in Egypt

Les Grands Ballets would like to thank His Excellency Ferry de Kerckhove, Ambassador of Canada to Egypt, for his unflinching support, as well as the ARTOC Group for Investment and Development/Mohammed Shafik Gabr, Bombardier Aviation, Suez Cement/Omar A. Mohanna, Fednav, Orascom Telecom/Naguib Sawiris, Gharib Oil Fields, Canspect/Taha Qirbi, Ibrahim Kamel and TransGlobe/Albert and Noura Gress for their financial support.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal is supported by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts de Montréal.