

NEWS

For immediate release

GERMAN VAUDEVILLE EXPLODES

Leonce and Lena by choreographer Christian Spuck



Photo: Regina Brocke, Aalto Ballett Theater Essen

Montréal, March 16, 2010 – Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal opens its 2010-2011 season with Germany's must-see choreography of 2008, *Leonce and Lena*, a comic masterpiece by one of the principal figures of European dance, Christian Spuck. The North American premiere of *Leonce and Lena* offers an evening of twists and turns against a backdrop of fantasy. This treat comes to **Théâtre Maisonneuve** of Place des Arts on **October 21, 22, 23, 28, 30 and November 4, 5 and 6, 2010**.

Welcome to Popo's and Pipi's kingdoms!

Christian Spuck found the material for his fifth full-length ballet in the 1838 comic, political satire *Leonce and Lena*, by Georg Büchner, author of *Woyzeck*. The ballet had its premiere in April 2008, at the Aalto Ballett Theater in Essen, Germany.

Leonce, the prince of the kingdom of Popo, is languishing in utter boredom. Lena, the princess of the neighbouring kingdom of Pipi, suffers miserably from the confines and absurdity of the world. Before the two royal misfits can begin their romance, they must first remove themselves from the self-serving, petty conventions of their respective tiny kingdoms. Betrothed to each other in infancy, they flee their kingdoms instead of facing the prospect of an arranged marriage. But, in a bustling inn just beyond the border, the two meet and fall in love. Will the court, reduced to an absurd "puppet show", rejoice at the union?

The choreography underscores the work's satire. Büchner used satire to criticize his society, which was held prisoner by an end-of-reign absolutism. One of the ways that Christian Spuck illustrates this is by using the music of Johann Strauss. The Waltz King's light-hearted, occasionally amusing tunes whip this tragicomic tale along, underlining the parody.

A chorus of praise

Spuck's *Leonce and Lena* was a great success and received a chorus of praise when first staged in Germany, earning him a nomination for "best choreography" at Germany's Der Faust theatre awards. "The audience in the Aalto Theatre literally gushed with enthusiasm on the opening night of Christian Spuck's entertaining ballet. ... The director of the Essen Ballet wanted 'something amusing' from Stuttgart Ballet's resident choreographer. He got a masterpiece." *Ruhr News*. "Comedy, gaiety and even bitter sarcasm dominate this dance version of *Leonce and Lena*, an electrifying merry-go-round of music and images. ...



Rarely does one see a stage version of Büchner's work that can make his world-weariness so entertaining. ...Spuck creates an infinite number of original moves to express Büchner's brilliant irony as well as the almost freewheeling languor of his characters." – *Nord-Rhein Zeitung*. "Until now, never has a German stage seen a comic ballet of such magnitude..." www.tanznetz.de

Christian Spuck, a groundbreaker of the new generation

Born in Marburg in 1969, Christian Spuck graduated from the John Cranko School in Stuttgart. He danced in Belgium with Jan Lauwers' Needcompany and with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's Rosas. From 1994 to 1996, he served as assistant choreographer for Marco Santi. Spuck joined the Stuttgart Ballet in 1995. The following year, he made a splash in the choreographic world with his duet, *Duo/Towards the Night*, at the Société Noverre matinees. It was such a success that both the Stuttgart Ballet and Berlin's Deutsche Oper decided to add it to their repertory.

In 2001, Spuck was appointed resident choreographer at the Stuttgart Ballet, where in subsequent years he created 14 works that put a markedly contemporary stamp on the company. Spuck is at the top of his game. Today, his reputation extends far beyond Germany. Spuck is a much sought after choreographer by many European and North American companies, notably Aterballetto, the New York City Ballet, Hubbard Street 2 in Chicago and the Royal Ballet of Flanders. Spuck finds inspiration for his choreography largely in German and European literary classics. He received the German Dance Prize "Future" in 2006. In 2012, he will act as Artistic Director of the Zurich Ballet in Switzerland.

***Leonce and Lena* by Christian Spuck**

with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal
accompanied by the Orchestra of Les GBCM under the direction of Florian Ziemer
on October 21, 22, 23, 28, 30 and November 4, 5 and 6, 2010, at 8 p.m.
Théâtre Maisonneuve of Place des Arts

Pre-show talks

Pre-show talks take place from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. at Théâtre Maisonneuve prior to each performance.

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