

NEWS

For immediate release

ROMANTIC BALLET PAR EXCELLENCE!

AS GUEST COMPANY BY LES GRANDS BALLETS CANADIENS DE MONTRÉAL,
GUANGZHOU BALLET PRESENTS *LA SYLPHIDE*



Photo: Wengui Han

Montréal, January 19, 2010 — The sole guest company of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal this season, Guangzhou Ballet, the Chinese company directed by Zhang Dandan, will give three performances of *La Sylphide* here **in its North American première**. This memorable evening of breathtaking beauty interpreted by outstanding dancers will draw you into the realm of romanticism. Enter a different world at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier of Place des Arts on **February 18, 19 and 20, 2010**.

La Sylphide

La Sylphide premiered at Opéra de Paris in 1832. It was created by Italian dancer and choreographer Filippo Taglioni for his daughter, dancer Marie Taglioni, who danced the role until 1847 and was the first to dance a full-length ballet *en pointe*. The work marks the advent of romanticism in the world of ballet. Acclaimed by writers and artists and much loved by the public, the ballet was performed in major European capitals to great success until 1863 before slowly disappearing from view. The only surviving version is that of choreographer Auguste Bournonville, which was staged in Denmark in 1836 to different music than Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhøffer's original score. French choreographer Pierre Lacotte, after conducting extensive research, resurrected the original ballet first in a version filmed by the Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française in 1971, then for Opéra de Paris the following year. He re-created the sets and costumes before even touching the choreography.

La Sylphide tells the story of a young Scotsman, James, who is adored by a sylph that only he can see. On his wedding day, the sylph snatches the ring James is about to give his bride-to-be, Effie, and flees into the forest with the ring on her finger. James pursues her, and encounters an old witch that he once chased away. She gives him a veil to help him capture the sylph, but she loses her wings in it and dies. James, immensely saddened, sees his former fiancée in the distance with his rival.

The world première of *La Sylphide* by Guangzhou Ballet took place at Huang Hua Gang Theater in Guangzhou on April 28 and 29, 2007.



Pierre Lacotte

Pierre Lacotte, born in 1932, trained at Opéra de Paris dance school. He entered its corps de ballet in 1946 and was promoted to principal dancer in 1951. He founded his own company in 1956. When writing a book about romantic ballet in 1968, he came across documents about Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide*, which allowed him to restage this first major romantic ballet, a precursor to *Giselle*. Since then, Lacotte has in a sense become a specialist in reconstituting works from the romantic repertoire (*Coppelia*, *The Daughter of the Danube*, *La Gitana*, *Swan Lake* ...). After teaching at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris and at Opéra de Paris, Lacotte was appointed Co-director of the new Ballets de Monte-Carlo, which he left in 1988 for Verona Opera House Ballet. He was also Director of Ballet national de Nancy et de Lorraine from 1991 to 1999.

Guangzhou Ballet

Founded in 1994 by former principal dancer Zhang Dandan, Guangzhou Ballet is today the youngest of China's five professional ballet troupes. The majority of its dancers graduated from the celebrated Beijing Dance Academy. The company has earned itself an enviable reputation in China through a rich and varied repertoire that includes a dozen Western classics (*Anna Karenina*, *La Traviata*, *Coppelia*, *Swan Lake*, *La Bayadère*, *Don Quixote*, *Cinderella*, *La Sylphide* and *The Nutcracker*) and original works based on Chinese history or culture. The company, renowned for its outstanding work with China National Opera House, has toured Russia, Spain, France, the U.S., Germany, Britain, Australia and Canada, garnering awards at international dance competitions in Paris, Helsinki and Moscow. "Guangzhou Ballet clearly has a future." www.theage.com.au

Zhang Dandan

In 1978, Zhang Dandan entered the Central Ballet Ensemble of China. Over the next decade, she danced the lead roles in the company's repertoire, including *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* and *La Fille Mal Gardée*. In 1994, at the peak of her career, she returned to her hometown of Guangzhou to launch Guangzhou Ballet while continuing to perform as a dancer. In 2002, Zhang took the position of headmistress of Guangzhou Art School, which under her leadership has emerged as one of the province's leading art schools.

La Sylphide by Pierre Lacotte based on the work of Filippo Taglioni
GUANGZHOU BALLETT, Guest Company of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal
Music by Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffter
February 18, 19 and 20, 2010, 8 p.m.
Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts
Box office: **514 842-2112 / www.laplacedesarts.com**

Talks will take place from 7 to 7:30 p.m. at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier prior to every performance.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal would like to thank **Cinémas Guzzo**, the season's sponsor, **Air Canada**, associated sponsor, **RBC Foundation**, supporting *La Sylphide* presentation, the **ministère des Relations internationales du Québec** for its special support to the February 18, 2010 reception, **SNC Lavalin**, evening sponsor for February 19, 2010 and **Seven Days**, media partner for February 19, 2010.

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