

## NEWS

For immediate release

# VAUDEVILLIAN ROMP, GERMAN-STYLE

## Christian Spuck's *Leonce and Lena*



Photo: Regina Brocke, Aalto Ballett Theater Essen

**Montreal, September 20, 2010** – To kick off its 2010-2011 season, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal is offering a masterpiece of buffoonery, *Leonce and Lena*, the most sought-after ticket of the 2008 dance season in Germany. The work was choreographed by **Christian Spuck**, a trailblazer in new European dance. Presented in its North American premiere, *Leonce and Lena* is an action-packed extravaganza set in a realm of fantasy. Not to be missed, at the **Théâtre Maisonneuve** of Place des Arts on **October 21, 22, 23, 28, 30, and November 4, 5, 6, 2010 at 8 p.m.**

### Welcome to the kingdoms of Popo and Pipi!

Christian Spuck's fifth full-length ballet was inspired by the comic political satire *Leonce and Lena* (1838) by Georg Büchner, author of *Woyzeck*. It premiered at the Aalto Ballett Theatre in Essen, Germany, in April 2008.

Prince Leonce of the Kingdom of Popo is languishing in never-ending boredom; Princess Lena, from the neighbouring Kingdom of Pipi, acutely feels the insularity and absurdity of the world around her. Before a romance can blossom between the unsuspecting royal pair, the two must escape from the farcical conventions of their respective microstates. Well aware that their marriage has been arranged since childhood, they each decide to flee their homeland. At a bustling inn just beyond their borders, they meet and fall in love incognito. Can the court, reduced to an absurd "puppet show," finally celebrate their union?

It is the satiric elements, employed by Büchner to criticize the absolutist, end-of-reign society in which he lived, that are highlighted in this choreography. Among other pieces, Christian Spuck uses the ethereal—and at times grotesque—compositions by the Waltz King, Johann Strauss, to galvanize this tragicomic tale and underscore its parodic aspects.

### A chorus of praise

*Leonce and Lena* proved to be a major success, earning a chorus of praise since its premiere in Germany. The work was nominated for Best Choreography at Germany's Der Faust theatre awards. "The Aalto Theatre audience was literally gushing with enthusiasm at the premiere of this entertaining ballet by Christian Spuck [...] The director of the Essen Ballet wanted 'something amusing' from the resident choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet. What he got was a masterpiece" (*Ruhr News*). "Comedy, gaiety and even bitter sarcasm pervade 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 than can make his world-weariness so entertaining [...] Spuck repeatedly creates original movements to express the author's scintillating ironies, not to mention the ready-to-burst languidness in which the characters evolve" (*Nord-Rhein-Zeitung*). "Never before has German theatre seen a comic ballet of such magnitude—not in my memory, at least—whether it be from Cranko, Neumeier or Spoerli" ([www.tanznetz.de](http://www.tanznetz.de)).



## Christian Spuck, a rising star of the new generation

Born in Marburg in 1969, Christian Spuck graduated from the John Cranko School in Stuttgart. As a dancer, he worked for Needcompany (Jan Lauwers) and Rosas (Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker) in Belgium. From 1994 to 1996, he worked as a choreographic assistant to Marco Santi. In 1995, he joined the Stuttgart Ballet. The following year, he made a sensational choreographic debut with the pas de deux *Duo/Towards the Night* for the Noverre Society's Young Choreographers, which was so successful that it was taken into the repertoire of both the Stuttgart Ballet and Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Since 2001, the year in which he became the resident choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet, Christian Spuck has created fourteen productions for the company, giving it a highly contemporary profile in the process. He clearly has the wind in his sails: his reputation now extends well beyond the borders of his native Germany. Numerous companies in Europe and North America have also called upon his choreographic skills, including Aterballetto, New York City Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance II Chicago, and the Royal Ballet of Flanders. He derives inspiration, in particular, from the classics of German and European literature. In 2006, he received the German dance prize "Zukunft" (Future). In 2012, he will become the artistic director of the Zurich Ballet in Switzerland.

## Activities revolving around *Leonce and Lena*



### 8 X Germany

With its production of *Leonce and Lena*, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal joins the group of Montreal cultural institutions presenting a unique multi-disciplinary program designed to showcase German artists. Performances and connected events will take place from September 2010 to March 2011. Special discounts and packages are available. Information: [www.8xgermany.com](http://www.8xgermany.com).

## Visages de la danse

Come and meet Christian Spuck on Tuesday, October 5 at 7 p.m. at the **Goethe-Institut**, as part of the second edition of **Visages de la danse**, a series of friendly encounters with many of dance's leading lights, hosted by writer and journalist Aline Apostolska.

### Sponsors and Partners

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal would like to thank the **Goethe-Institut** for its generous support. The company would also like to thank **Cinemas Guzzo**, its season sponsor, as well as **Radio-Canada** and **La Presse**, media partners.

The production of *Leonce and Lena* was made possible through the collaboration of the **RBC Foundation**. Invaluable contributions were also made by **Kinatex Sports Physio**, the Evening Sponsor for the performance of October 22, **SNC-Lavalin**, the Evening Sponsor of October 23 and **Ernst and Young**, the Evening Sponsor of November 4.

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal receives the financial support of the **Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec**, the **Canada Council for the Arts**, and the **Conseil des arts de Montréal**.

### *Leonce and Lena* by Christian Spuck

performed by **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal**

with L'Orchestre des GBCM conducted by **Florian Ziemer**

Assistant Choreographer: **Raimondo Rebeck** / Original music composed by **Martin Donner**,  
with additional music by **Léo Delibes, Amilcare Ponchielli, Alfred Schnittke, Johann Strauss (Elder and Younger),  
Bernd Aloï Zimmermann** / Musical arrangements: **Florian Ziemer** / Sets and costume design: **Emma Ryott** /  
Assistant Designer: **Christopher Giles** / Lighting: **Marc Parent** / Dramaturge: **Esther Dreesen-Schaback**

**October 21, 22, 23, 28, 30 and November 4, 5 and 6, 2010 at 8 p.m. at Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts**

#### Pre-Show Chat Sessions

Hosted discussions will be held at the Théâtre Maisonneuve prior to all performances, from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.

## For all details regarding subscriptions

For information regarding our subscription formats, group discounts and other exceptional offers and privileges, the public is invited to call **514-849-0269**, to consult the season brochure or to visit [www.grandsballets.com](http://www.grandsballets.com). Subscriptions are also available on-line at [www.grandsballets.com](http://www.grandsballets.com). The "Je me pointe" card, available for those 30 years of age and under, is on sale at the Place des Arts box office for only \$10. This card provides 40% off the price of tickets for all of the season's performances. Individual tickets are now on sale at Place des Arts: **514 842-2112 / [www.laplacedesarts.com](http://www.laplacedesarts.com)**.