

**Christian Spuck's *LEONCE AND LENA* opens the new season of Les Grands Ballets
In the realm of comedy and irony, a marvellously entertaining ballet**

We're off! In its North American premiere, the GBCM is presenting *Leonce and Lena*, an incisive, exhilarating and action-packed production by German choreographer Christian Spuck, a trailblazer in European dance. Based on the satirical comedy by Georg Büchner (1836), this enthralling ballet created a sensation in Germany. Restaged for the dancers of the Les Grands Ballets, who are now working with the choreographer in the company's studios, this new acquisition is a masterstroke of invention. A perfect way to get the new season off on the right foot! **Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts, October 21 to November 6, 2010.**

Love versus politics?

The languishing Prince of the Kingdom of Popo meets the disenchanting Princess of the Kingdom of Pipi

Once upon a time, there were two faraway palaces... Leonce, Prince of the Kingdom of Popo, suffers from endless boredom and melancholy; Lena, Princess of the neighbouring Kingdom of Pipi acutely feels the absurdity of life. Never having met, they are destined to be united for political reasons. To escape this arranged marriage, they both decide to flee. As fate would have it, the pair end up at the same inn, meet each other, desire each other. The marriage will take place after all, but only under their terms...

A comedic political satire

Büchner settles a few scores with society

The eventful life of Georg Büchner is reflected in his short stories and plays (in addition to *Leonce and Lena*, *Woyzeck* and *Danton's Death*, Büchner adapted Victor Hugo's prose plays in *Lucretia Borgia* and *Maria Tudor*), which explore a number of socio-political themes. In each work, he mercilessly lampoons romanticism and idealism, while depicting social drama in new and innovative ways. For Büchner, the characters of Leonce and Lena embody an idle, self-centred youth ensconced in wealth; but after leaving the nest and gaining their freedom, will the pair be any better than their parents at governing?

Georg Büchner, German playwright

A man devoted to liberty and social justice

Georg Büchner (1813–1837), the author of *Leonce and Lena* and *Woyzeck*, distinguished himself early on as a revolutionary activist. Among other projects, he founded the secret Society for Human Rights, inspired by the socialist theories of Blanqui and Saint-Simon. He grew up in the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, where the revolutions of 1789 and especially 1830 were to have lasting repercussions. His criticisms of the regime and class society forced him into exile in 1835. He died of typhus two years later, in Switzerland, at the age of 23.

The choreographer's vision

An expressionist ballet

Christian Spuck's interpretation of *Leonce and Lena* leans more towards comic satire than political parody. Never before adapted for ballet, Büchner's work is here staged in the spirit of German Expressionism. The choreographer ascribes particular importance to the costumes and set, which are crafted in red, white and black, displaying striking pictorial beauty. The ethereal waltzes of Johann Strauss create a time-lag vis-à-vis the historical satire. This large-scale expressionist ballet, first performed in April 2008 at the Aalto Ballet Theater in Essen and hailed everywhere thereafter, is now part of the repertoire of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal.

Over 30 choreographies to his credit

Christian Spuck, a leader in new German theatre

The reputation of Christian Spuck extends well beyond the borders of his native Germany. After studies at the John Cranko School in Stuttgart, he established himself as a choreographer in 1996 with *Duo/Towards the Night*, a magnificent pas de deux that was taken into the repertoire of both the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Stuttgart Ballet, for which he has been the resident choreographer since 2001. He has created some fifteen productions for the company, giving it a highly contemporary profile in the process. Such prestigious companies as the New York City Ballet, Aterballetto, Hubbard Street Dance 2 and the Royal Ballet of Flanders have also called upon the talents of this innovative and inspired artist, who will become the artistic director of Zurich Ballet in 2012.