

**PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

## STRAVINSKY EVENING with *Les Noces* and *The Rite of Spring* by Stijn Celis A BREATHTAKING TWO-FOR-ONE

**Montreal, April 5, 2011** – Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal is presenting a spectacular double bill set to the music of Igor Stravinsky, choreographed for the company by Stijn Celis. With his personal interpretation of scores that have inspired numerous choreographers, *Noces* and *The Rite of Spring* are stinging criticisms of a society that binds its members in the shackles of tradition, sacrificing them to the interests of the community. Two works of immense vitality, not to be missed on **March 22, 23, 24, 29, 30 and 31, 2012** at the **Théâtre Maisonneuve of Place des Arts**.

### ***Noces (The Wedding)***

In 1913, Igor Stravinsky drew inspiration from the irregular rhythms of Russian folksongs in composing his four-act dance cantata on the forced marriage of two young people. Ten years later, the impresario Diaghilev, the founder of the Ballets Russes, asked him for an orchestration for a four-voice choir, four soloists, four pianos and percussion for a choreography by Bronislava Nijinska. Over the years, dozens of choreographers would offer their versions of this masterly work, including Merce Cunningham, Angelin Preljocaj, Maurice Béjart, Jiří Kylián, as well as Ludmilla Chiriaeff, just before she founded Les Grands Ballets.

Created in 2002 in Montreal, Stijn Celis version pushes the criticism of the institution of marriage to its limit, transforming the celebration of a forced wedding into a sombre, sacrificial ritual performed at breakneck speed to Stravinsky's thundering score. Twelve female dancers with deathly pale faces, wrapped in tulle like shrouds, resolutely oppose the destiny that awaits them with the twelve male dancers, resigned in their three-piece suits. The choreography's broken gestures, spasmodic movements and frenzied rhythms correspond to the ebullient and violent score. The tension in the bodies, and the weight that roots them to the ground, vividly express the story's dramatic theme. Everywhere it has played, this radical, expressionist choreography has been hailed by public and critics alike.

### ***The Rite of Spring***

In 1910 Nicholas Roerich, a painter and designer with the Ballets Russes, shared his idea with Stravinsky, a fleeting vision of a pagan ritual in which a young girl dances herself to death. A short time later, Diaghilev asked the two to realize the project, with Nijinski as choreographer. Presented in Paris in 1913, the work came as a lightning bolt, shattering all aesthetic codes and sparking one of the biggest scandals in the history of music and ballet. Now a staple of the choreographic repertoire and cornerstone of 20th century dance, *The Rite of Spring* has inspired countless choreographers, including Léonide Massine, Raimund Hogue, Jérôme Bel, Hans van Manen, Saburo Teshigawara, Pina Bausch, Marie Chouinard and James Kuldelka, who created the GBCM's first *Rite of Spring* in 1987.



Photo : Damian Siqueiros Dancers : Émilie Durville & Jérémy Galdeano



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A year after creating a choreography based on the version for two pianos for the Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet of New York, Stijn Celis began working on the orchestral version of *The Rite of Spring* with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal. Straying slightly from the original libretto, in which a young virgin is sacrificed in a ritual celebrating the arrival of spring, he underscores the stultifying aspects of social pressure by focusing on the themes of difference and exclusion. It is individuality that is here sacrificed, yielding to the power of the group and norms of society. Clearly establishing the differences between the sexes, he matches the complexity of the musical structure with a choreographic complexity based on such oppositions as tension and release, shadow and light. From the impressive group dynamics emerge duets of rare intensity. This highly visceral choreography, in keeping with Stravinsky's harmonically and rhythmically adventurous score, embodies the power and violence of the life force.

### Stijn Celis

Born in Belgium in 1964, Stijn Celis danced for 15 years with such major companies as the Royal Ballet of Flanders, the Zurich Ballet, the Ballet du Grand Théâtre in Geneva and the Cullberg Ballet. In 1997, he began to devote himself to set design, which he studied in Antwerp, and to choreography. In 2001, *Ballet-Tanz International* named him "the most promising choreographer of the year." Five years later, the same magazine judged his production of *Swan Lake*—created for the Bern Ballet during his time as Artistic Director—the year's "most innovative production." Among the most active choreographers in Europe, he has created over 35 works for some 10 ballet companies on both sides of the Atlantic. *Les Noces* was his first commission from Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, in 2002. An updated version of *Cinderella* was next in 2003, followed by *The Rite of Spring* in 2009.

**STRAVINSKY EVENING**  
with *Noces* and *The Rite of Spring* by Stijn Celis  
performed by **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal**  
Music by Igor Stravinsky

**March 22, 23, 24, 29, 30 and 31, 2012, at 8 p.m.**  
**Théâtre Maisonneuve, Place des Arts**

#### Pre-show talks

Pre-show talks will be held at the Théâtre Maisonneuve before each performance.

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### Sponsors and partners

Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal would like to thank **Cinémas Guzzo**, season sponsor. The company is also grateful to the **Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec**, the **Canada Council for the Arts** and the **Conseil des arts de Montréal** for their financial support.

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