

NEWS

For immediate release

PENSER GRAND !

LES GRANDS BALLETS CANADIENS DE MONTRÉAL WILL HAVE A NEW HOME IN DOWNTOWN MONTREAL BY 2014

Montreal, August 19, 2011 – With great pride, **Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal** (GBCM) welcomes today's official announcement of its relocation to the heart of the **Quartier des spectacles**, near Place des Arts, the company's principal stage. Les GBCM is also glad that **LADMMI, l'École de danse contemporaine de Montréal** and **Tangente - Laboratoire de mouvements contemporains** are also moving and will be sharing the space.

"This is a red-letter day for the institution," enthused **Constance Pathy**, President of Les GBCM. "Thanks to the Endowment Fund of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, owner of the new building, the company will finally have its own building, along with the necessary infrastructure to pursue its mission and ensure its development. By moving into these new premises, specifically designed to meet the company's needs, Les Grands Ballets will begin a new chapter in its history and view the future with great optimism."

In the words of Artistic Director **Gradimir Pankov**, "Les Grands Ballets will finally have a space designed for dance, one that will allow its dancers and collaborators to create under optimum conditions. Our work will be greatly facilitated, which will have an extremely positive impact on our productions and audiences, as well as on our image both here and abroad."

A CULTURAL HUB IN DOWNTOWN MONTREAL

For Executive Director **Alain Dancyger**, this downtown relocation project of Les Grands Ballets is the result of a long process begun ten years ago, the concrete realization of a vision with three aspirations: to provide optimal working conditions in a site matching the standards of the world's major ballet companies; to draw the public to the downtown area and to take an active role in the community by broadening the company's sphere of activities, rooted in the realities of the city; and to give Montreal a prominent architectural statement, part of the city's downtown development objectives.

"These new headquarters will allow Les Grands Ballets not only to continue to expand, but also to work in a building that is in keeping with its reputation. It will further foster interactions with artists and community groups, and help to consolidate Montreal's position as a major cultural centre on the national and international stage."

A COVETED SITE IN THE QUARTIER DES SPECTACLES, WITH A PORTION OF THE LAND DONATED BY TD BANK GROUP

The GBCM building will be constructed on the vacant lot between the Blumenthal Building (home to the Montreal International Jazz Festival) and the Wilder Building, which will also house **LADMMI** and **Tangente**. One side will face west, onto Bleury Street, across from the Imperial Cinema, and another to the east, overlooking the Place des Festivals of the Quartier des spectacles.

TD Bank Group generously donated its land valued at **\$450,000**, situated behind its branch on St. Catherine Street, to the GBCM Endowment Fund, which made this project viable. In addition, **TD Bank Group** will donate the sum of **\$250,000** to Les Grands Ballets over a five-year period. As a token of gratitude for this major contribution from **this valued partner**, the Bleury entrance will bear the name "**TD Door**."



Les Grands Ballets is particularly pleased to have **LADMMI** and **Tangente** as their new neighbours. Their proximity gives this project a special flavour, increasing the opportunities for collaborations and shared services and activities.

OUTLINE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PLAN

The new home of Les Grands Ballets will be designed by architect **Michel Lapointe** from the consortium of **Lapointe, Magne + Ædifica, architectes**. Five major sectors will be incorporated into the 5-storey building.

The ground floor includes all the public spaces: a multi-use concourse with a reception desk, ticket office, shop, showcases, exhibition/activity spaces and waiting areas. A **restaurant** seating 150 people, located at the Place des festivals in the Wilder Building, will enliven the entire site and allow the company to offer additional services to the public.

A **creative centre** lies at the heart of the project. It will include a large production studio and three rehearsal studios, as well as the offices of the Artistic director, a greenroom for the dancers, a training room, production and costume studios and storage space for point shoes.

The **administrative spaces** also has a reception area, offices of the directors, meeting rooms, and offices of the marketing, communications, finance, accounting and touring departments.

Finally, **communal spaces** will offer the entire GBCM team the various services required for its work and social interactions. This will include changing rooms, archives, cafeteria, meeting rooms, audiovisual library, a multi-use room to welcome the some hundred children who take part in *The Nutcracker*, etc.

ACADEMY

In addition, the new site will house the **Academy of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal**, a new entity that will incorporate four studios, change rooms and administrative offices.

First of all, the company plans to create a public recreation centre, offering ballet courses to all dance-lovers, as well as other classes in physical fitness, open to all. The aim is to promote the practice and appreciation of dance, together with a general sense of well-being.

Second, given its priorities with regard to training and emerging artists, GBCM plans to set up a professional training and development program, which is often standard in the world of ballet. Examples include the Opéra de Paris, San Francisco Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, Boston Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. The goal is to build a bridge spanning the professional training schools in Quebec and Canada and to help young professional dancers integrate the company.

The total area of the new building will cover approximately 5,000 square meters.

SUPPORT FOR LES GRANDS BALLETS

MAJOR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN OF \$19 MILLION

The Société immobilière du Québec (SIQ) will oversee the relocation project, whose total cost to GBCM is **\$35.7 million**. The **expected** contribution of the government of Quebec is around **\$10.5 million**, while the federal government has promised **\$6 million**. Les Grands Ballets has already raised **\$13 million** from its major donors. The target of the company's fundraising campaign is **\$19 million**, which includes **\$6.2 million** for its Endowment Fund, required for the move. The balance will go towards the company's Academy and Creation Fund and to the purchase of all the technical equipment needed for the site's daily operations.

REASONS FOR THE MOVE

Having operated in cramped quarters since 1980, GBCM has dreamed of relocating to a structure more suited to its needs since 2001. For many years, its current premises have been unable to properly house a full-time staff of 70, to which some hundred children, their families and 20 additional dancers are added during the rehearsals for *The Nutcracker*. The gap between the stature of the company and the poor quality of its premises was becoming too wide, harming its image and development.



Other important reasons for acquiring a new home include: a full calendar of activities; seasons that have been completely renewed over the past 10 years, based on new creations; a desire for increased international visibility; the need to offer proper supervision and health care to the dancers so as to maintain their level of excellence; the need to develop educational activities and related services to increase public awareness of dance and to make the discipline more accessible.

Like other ballet companies, including the National Ballet of Canada, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and other American and European troupes of similar stature, and like other Montreal institutions such as the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and the city's major museums, Les Grands Ballets needed a site commensurate with its activities, projects and aspirations, in line with the standards of the profession.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Newly arrived from Europe, Ludmilla Chiriaeff formed the Ballets Chiriaeff in 1952, which was renamed Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in 1957. The young founder was the company's sole director until 1965, then co-director with Fernand Nault until 1974. Brian Macdonald directed the Montreal institution from 1974 to 1978, the triumvirate of Daniel Jackson, Colin McIntyre and Linda Stearns from 1978 to 1985, Jeanne Renaud and Linda Stearns from 1985 to 1987, then Linda Stearns and Colin McIntyre again from 1987 to 1989. Lawrence Rhodes was the artistic director from 1989 to 1999, the year in which a new name was adopted: Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal. That same year, Les Grands Ballets changed directions by inviting **Gradimir Pankov** who had extensive experience in Europe and the United States, to take the reins of the company as Artistic Director.

The company's headquarters were initially located on Union Street, and then St. Catherine. In 1966, the organization moved to Queen Mary, near Coolbrook. In 1980, with the creation of the Maison de la danse, Les Grands Ballets took possession of a disused garage at 4816 Rivard, owned by the École supérieure de ballet du Québec (formerly the École supérieure de ballet contemporain de Montréal). Under the recent direction of Anik Bissonnette, the ÉSBQ plans to occupy the building's entire space after the departure of GBCM.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The relocation of Les Grands Ballets to the heart of Montreal's Entertainment District is the result of a long process of reflection and dialogue, to which numerous institutions and individuals contributed. The company would like to extend its sincere thanks to: the **Government of Quebec; the Honourable Christine Saint-Pierre**, Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women; **the Honourable Raymond Bachand**, Minister of Finance, Minister of Revenue and Minister Responsible for the Montreal Region; **the Honourable Michelle Courchesne**, Minister Responsible for Government Administration and President of the Treasury Board; the **Federal Government; the Honourable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages; Société immobilière du Québec; TD Bank Group**; architect **Michel Lapointe**; all **members of the GBCM's Board of Directors and Relocation Committee**; all **members of the GBCM staff**, and all **donors and sponsors** for their invaluable support, confidence and generosity.

- 30 -

Information: Francine Arsenault, Communications Director
Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal
514-849-8681, ext. 227
farsenault@grandsballets.com

www.grandsballets.com