

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2009

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**LES BALLETS JAZZ DE MONTRÉAL PERFORMS THE NORTH AMERICAN
PREMIERE OF MAURO BIGONZETTI'S *ROSSINI CARDS* AND THE PHILADELPHIA
PREMIERE OF RODRIGO PEDERNEIRAS' *MAPA*
FEBRUARY 19-21**

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal performs *Rossini Cards*, a North American premiere and *MAPA*, a Philadelphia premiere, February 19-21, Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA as part of the Dance Celebration Series. Edmonton Journal exclaims, “The dancers hit the stage full-on translating technique into passion and a desire to communicate... wowing audiences with their innovative contemporary programs.”

In *Rossini Cards* two maestros - Italian superstar choreographer Mauro Bigonzetti's and 19th Century innovative opera composer Gioacchino Rossini - join forces in a rousing full-ensemble comic work. *MAPA*, choreographed by the eminent Rodrigo Pederneiras, Brazil's Grupo Corpo's artistic director, is a celebratory homage to Brazilian composer, musician and longtime collaborator Marco Antonio Pena Araujo, hence the title.

Louis Robitaille, Les Ballet Jazz de Montréal's artistic director, notes “*Rossini Cards* is literally an immersion into Italian culture! Sumptuous, sensual, quirky at times, divinely Latin, this splendid ballet is the highlight of our 2008-2009 season.” Robitaille adds, “Our deepest gratitude goes to Mr. Swartz for giving us the privilege to present this performance at the Zellerbach Theater.”

Performances will take place on Thursday, February 19 at 7:30 pm; Friday, February 20 at 8 pm; and Saturday, February 21 at 2 pm and 8 pm. Ticket prices are \$48, \$42 and \$38 (evening) and \$42, \$36, \$32 (matinee). Tickets may be purchased by calling the Annenberg Center Box Office at 215-898-3900 or by visiting www.pennpresents.org. **Dance Celebration is presented by Dance Affiliates and Penn Presents. Its 27th season under the artistic direction of Randy Swartz salutes *The Dancemaker*.**

Rossini Cards is a 50-minute work performed by 14 dancers featuring international ballerina and guest artist Celine Cassone. Ms. Cassone, known for her impressive extensions and winsome beauty, has danced with Bejart Ballet, Deutch Opera of Berlin, Ballet Du Grand Theatre and Christopher Wheeldon's Morphoses. First performed in 2004 by Mauro Bigonzetti's Compagnia Aterballetto, *Rossini Cards* is built on scenes of parallel lives: images, cards, dramatic icons and comic situations. The set includes a long table and opens with a man jumping into the orchestra pit. Bizonzetti employs the pressing rhythms, geometry and precision of Rossini's music building to an unexpected captivating finale.

MAPA (2005) reflects Rodrigo Pederneiras' unique choreographic vision that fuses xaxado, samba, capoeira and modern dance. The piece is a tribute to Araujo's music played by Uakti ensemble who builds their own instruments creating unusual sounds. Fernando Velloso's stunning black and white checkered set, matched by the dancers' slinky white and black Anne-Marie Veevaete costumes, complement Pederneiras' painterly aesthetic. Pederneiras employs the dancers at lightning speeds in various configurations who swivel their hips, kick, leap and spin, moving with fierce intensity and childlike esprit-de-joie. The Boston Globe notes, "The dance is buoyant and full of fun."

Established in 1972, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal was founded by Genevieve Salbaing supported by cofounders Eva Von Gencsy and Eddie Toussaint. Madame Salbaing, a grande dame of the cultural scene and member of the Order of Canada is the Founder Emeritus of Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal. After the departure of her two cofounders, she assumed the task of the artistic direction, experiencing both the successes and challenges. Under her direction the company was renewed and transformed into an internationally-recognized touring ensemble. In 1998, Louis Robitaille was appointed Artistic Director. Robitaille studied at the Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal School in 1973 and danced in Eddy Touissant's Company. He later joined Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and performed in major works by William Forsythe, Jiri Kylian, Hans van Manen, Nacho Duato, Eduard Lock and James Kudelka. An outstanding soloist, he distinguished himself in several works such as *Carmina Burana* by Fernand Nault, Massine's *Tricorne* and Nijinski's *L'après-midi d'un faune*.

In addition to the performances, the company will conduct a free master class, Friday, February 20 at 1 p.m. and Student Discovery Series Performance for Schools Friday, February 20 at 10:30 am. For Dance Celebration Outreach information, contact Dance Affiliates 215-636-9000 ext.110 or visit www.danceaffiliates.org

Significant funding for the 2008-2009 Dance Celebration season is provided by the William Penn Foundation and also in part by Business Friends of Dance (Affiliates), The Connelly Foundation, Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation, Samuel S. Fels Fund, Friends of Dance (Affiliates), Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Pennsylvania Presenters, The Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Virginia C. Mulconroy Fund of The Philadelphia Foundation.

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