

Lincoln Center Festival 08

Date: May 8, 2008

Press Contact: Marian Skokan
212.875.5386, mskokan@lincolncenter.org

WILLIAM FORSYTHE'S *IMPRESSING THE CZAR*,
PERFORMED BY THE ROYAL BALLET OF FLANDERS,
TO BE PRESENTED AS PART OF
LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 2008
JULY 17—20

PERFORMANCES TO TAKE PLACE IN THE ROSE THEATER

One of the highlights of this summer's Lincoln Center Festival (which runs from July 2 through July 27) is *Impressing the Czar*, an evening-length contemporary dance by choreographer **William Forsythe** that will be danced by the **Royal Ballet of Flanders** in its *Lincoln Center Festival* debut. In the virtuosic masterwork, Forsythe, who was last represented at the *Festival* in 2006 when the San Francisco Ballet performed his *Artifact Suite*, uses dance to reflect on itself. The action, infused with wit and humor, the "action" focuses on nothing less than the history of Western civilization. An impressive variety of dance genres and styles, ranging from ballet en pointe to break-dancing, combined with dazzling feats of athleticism and hilarious spoken passages, combine to create a witty parody of classical ballet. These performances of *Impressing the Czar* will be the first in New York since the work's U.S. premiere by Forsythe's Frankfurt Ballett in 1989.

Impressing the Czar includes music by Thom Willems, Leslie Stuck, Eva Crossman-Hecht and Ludwig van Beethoven. There will be five performances in the Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, July 17, 18, 19, and 20.

Tickets for *Impressing the Czar* are \$30, 45, 60, 75 and 90. Tickets for all *Festival* 2008 events are on sale now via CenterCharge 212-721-6500, online at www.LincolnCenter.org and at the Avery Fisher Hall Box Office, 65th Street and Broadway.

For information about Festival performances visit www.LincolnCenter.org. You may also register on-line for "My Lincoln Center" to receive a *Festival* brochure, updates, and special offers.

*Lincoln Center Festival*08 is sponsored by Altria Group, Inc. and American Express.

Impressing the Czar

Choreographed by William Forsythe

The Royal Ballet of Flanders

Kathryn Bennetts, Artistic Director

Music by Thom Willems, Leslie Stuck, Eva Crossman-Hecht and Ludwig van Beethoven

Scenic Design by Michael Simon

Five performances:

Thursday-Saturday, July 17-19 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, July 19 at 2 p.m.

Sunday, July 20 at 3 p.m.

Running time: 2 hours, 11 minutes (including 2 intermissions)

The Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, 60th St. and Broadway

Tickets: \$30, 45, 60, 75, 90

Friday, July 18 at 6 PM

Pre-Performance Symposium

Impressing the Czar

Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse, Lincoln Center's Rose Building, 165 West 65th Street, 10th Floor

No tickets required. FREE

Lincoln Center Festival 2008 will present *Impressing the Czar*, an evening-length contemporary dance work performed by the **Royal Ballet of Flanders**, Belgium's only classical dance company, in its *Lincoln Center Festival* debut. Choreographed by **William Forsythe**, *Impressing the Czar* includes music by Thom Willems, Leslie Stuck, Eva Crossman-Hecht, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

William Forsythe's choreography is celebrated for re-energizing classical ballet as a dynamic 21st-century art form. In his post-modern masterwork, *Impressing the Czar*, Forsythe uses dance to reflect on itself. The action focuses on—with a great sense of humor—nothing less than the history of Western civilization. A wide variety of genres and styles, ranging from ballet *en pointe* to break-dancing, combined with virtuosic feats of athleticism and often outrageous spoken passages, make for a wild, theatrical, and witty parody of classical and contemporary culture.

Impressing the Czar was given its world premiere in 1988 by the Frankfurt Ballett, and was immediately acknowledged as a groundbreaking work that challenges standard definitions of dance and theater. The previous year Forsythe had created *In the Middle, somewhat elevated* for the Paris Opera Ballet and this became Act II of *Impressing the Czar*. The Frankfurt Ballett performed the U.S. premiere of *Impressing the Czar* in 1989 at the PepsiCo Summerfare festival in Purchase, New York. This summer's *Lincoln Center Festival* performances by the Royal Ballet of Flanders mark the work's first U.S. appearances since 1989. Performances will take place on July 17, 18, 19 (matinee and evening) and 20 (matinee) at the Rose

Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Kathryn Bennetts, appointed Artistic Director of the Royal Ballet of Flanders in 2005, worked with Forsythe at the Frankfurt Ballett for 15 years as teacher and ballet mistress. *Impressing the Czar* was one of the first works she acquired upon her arrival at the helm of the Flanders company. The Royal Ballet of Flanders first performed *Impressing the Czar* in December of 2005. The company has won international recognition for its performances of the work, well as for its newly reinvigorated style and precision in a wide range of repertoire.

Impressing the Czar is a spectacular theatrical and intellectual examination of classical culture, the *ballet blanc*, and, in its chaotic final scenes, the sale and dismantling of Western culture. Deliberately non-linear, the work proceeds in five scenes over three acts. *Impressing the Czar* takes its name from the need of an aristocratic art form such as ballet to please its patron; composers and choreographers such as Tchaikovsky and Petipa had to create works that they hoped would delight the ruler, whose support was essential to their art. In the first act, *Potemkin's Unterschrift (Potemkin's Signature)*, elaborately costumed dancers move through stately tableaux and stage designs that evoke Renaissance painting. A collage musical score by Beethoven, Leslie Stuck, and Thom Willems accompanies dancing that shifts from academic ballet to modern dance to up-to-the-minute styles for kaleidoscopic effect. References to legendary figures speed by, while movement styles are as likely to suggest *Swan Lake* as break dance. The central section, *In the Middle, somewhat elevated*, sets its streamlined dancers moving to Thom Willems' surging score. Although the dancers wear chic black leotards and tights, the act is pure dance, visceral and exciting—a contemporary answer to traditional ballet's "white" act, which jettisoned narrative. The third act, *La Maison de Mezzo-Prezzo*, is an auction of this cultural heritage by a pushy, clownish woman who gleefully lets the hammer fall on what civilized society holds most dear. The penultimate section is an absurdist twist on a schoolgirl's spoken report, in which dozens of dozens of dancers (male and female) wearing pleated schoolgirls' skirts stage an aggressive tribal dance, while the final section, *Mr. Pnut Goes to the Big Top*, serves as an energetic, hectic finale.

The Royal Ballet of Flanders was founded in 1969 Antwerp, Belgium, as an initiative of Frans Van Mechelen, Minister for Culture, with Jeanne Brabants as the company's first Artistic Director. Though established as part of the state opera company, the Ballet soon built an international profile and became an independent ensemble. The company's first performance, in 1970, was a new work, *Prometheus*. In 1976, the company performed as part of the national celebrations marking King Baudouin's 25th jubilee, gaining its "Royal" title. In 1984, Brabants was given the title of Director, and Russian émigré dancer and choreographer Valery Panov became Artistic Director. Panov was succeeded three years later by Robert Denvers, a Flemish choreographer who also enjoyed a long career as an eminent ballet teacher. Kathryn Bennetts was appointed Artistic Director in June of 2005, and Jan Nuyts was named Artistic Advisor, with responsibility for educational projects. Since Bennett's arrival, the 49-member company has won widespread attention with a repertoire that embraces world premieres, enduring classics, and masterworks by contemporary choreographers. The company's most recent area appearance in New York was at City

Center's 2007 Fall for Dance festival, where select dancers performed excerpts from Nicolo Fonte's *Cornered*.

Born in Sydney, Australia, **Kathryn Bennetts** was a member of the Australian Ballet for three years. She joined the Stuttgart Ballet under the direction of Marcia Haydée, where she rose to the rank of soloist performing many leading roles during her nine years with the company. An injury ended her dancing career, but Bennetts built a career as a noted teacher of ballet. She has taught at the John Cranko School in Stuttgart, spent several years as senior teacher at Canada's National Ballet School, and has given classes at numerous companies, among them National Ballet of Canada, Australian Ballet, Nederlands Dans Theater, Stuttgart Ballet, Zurich Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Houston Ballet, and at La Scala. In 1989, William Forsythe invited Bennetts to become Ballet Mistress at the Frankfurt Ballett (where he served as Director from 1984 to 2004) and she remained there for 15 years. In addition to her responsibilities at the Frankfurt Ballett, Bennetts was an in-demand teacher and set many of Forsythe's ballets on companies including the Paris Opera Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, England's Royal Ballet, New York City Ballet, Boston Ballet, Houston Ballet and the Kirov Ballet. She became Artistic Director of the Royal Ballet of Flanders in 2005.

Raised and principally trained in New York, **William Forsythe** arrived on the European dance scene in his early 20's as a dancer and eventually as Resident Choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet. During that period he also created new works for ballet companies in Munich, the Hague, London, Basel, Berlin, Paris, New York, and San Francisco, among others. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as Director of the Frankfurt Ballett where he created some of the most celebrated dance-theater works of our time, among them: *Gänge* (1982), *Artifact* (1984), *A L I E / N A(C)TION* (1992), *Eidos: Telos* (1995), *Endless House* (1999) and *Kammer/Kammer* (2000). Forsythe's choreography (and his companies' performances) have garnered audience acclaim and many awards, among them, the Bessie, Laurence Olivier Award, Commandeur des Arts et Lettres, the German Distinguished Service Cross and the Wexner Prize. Following the closing of the Frankfurt Ballett in 2004, Forsythe established a new ensemble—The Forsythe Company, founded with support of the states of Saxony and Hesse, the cities of Dresden and Frankfurt am Main, and private sponsors. The choreographer's most recent creations are developed and performed exclusively by the new company, while his previous work is prominently featured in the repertoire of virtually every one of the world's leading ballet companies including The Kirov of the Mariinsky Theatre, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, The Royal Ballet Covent Garden, and the Paris Opera Ballet. Forsythe has imparted his unique choreographic voice, as a creative collaborator on many important visual arts, architecture and interactive media projects. He has created architecture/performance installations commissioned by Daniel Libeskind (Germany), Artangel (London), Creative Time (New York) and for the City of Paris. In 2006, a major exhibition of his performance, film, and installation work was presented in Munich.

The Royal Ballet of Flanders is sponsored by Mitsui & Co. (U.S.A.), Inc. and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America, Inc.

Programs and artists subject to change.

PHONE NUMBERS/CONTACT INFORMATION

CenterCharge: 212-721-6500

Lincoln Center's website: www.LincolnCenter.org

Lincoln Center Customer Service: 212-875-5456

Lincoln Center Information Line: 212-875-5766

Lincoln Center Festival 2008 is sponsored by Altria Group, Inc. and American Express.

Lincoln Center Festival 2008 is also made possible by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Alice Tully Foundation, Nancy A. Marks, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Susan and Elihu Rose, The Starr Foundation, LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, Jennie and Richard DeScherer, The Skirball Foundation, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, The Katzenberger Foundation, Inc., The Shubert Foundation, The Geoffrey C. Hughes Foundation, Mitsui & Co. (U.S.A.), Inc., The Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, The Norman & Rosita Winston Foundation, Solomon and Blanche De Jonge Foundation, The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, The Mortimer Levitt Foundation, Inc., One Anonymous, Great Performers Circle, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center.

Public support for Festival 2008 is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Additional corporate support is provided by Sumitomo Corporation of America Foundation.

Movado is an Official Sponsor of Lincoln Center, Inc.

WNBC/WNJU are Official Broadcast Partners of Lincoln Center, Inc.

Continental Airlines is the Official Airline of Lincoln Center, Inc.

Nokia is the Official Mobile Equipment Provider of Lincoln Center, Inc.

MetLife is the National Sponsor of Lincoln Center, Inc.

"Summer at Lincoln Center" is sponsored by Diet Pepsi and RR Donnelley.

Lincoln Center Festival is a presentation of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. (LCPA), which serves three primary roles: presenter of superb artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. As a presenter of over 400 events annually, LCPA's programs include *American Songbook*, *Great Performers*, *Lincoln Center Out of Doors*, *Midsummer Night Swing*, the *Mostly Mozart Festival*, and *Live From Lincoln Center*. In addition, LCPA is leading a series of major capital projects on behalf of the resident organizations across the campus.

Lincoln Center is committed to providing and improving accessibility for people with disabilities. For information, call the Department of Programs and Services for People with Disabilities at (212) 875-5375.