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CHICAGO DANCING FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FREE PROGRAMMING

By Hedy Weiss

As it heads into its third season this summer, the Chicago Dancing Festival -- that series of free performances held in Millennium Park and at the Museum of Contemporary Art Theatre -- has already become something of a rite of summer for this city's dance lovers. The showcase for some of the most high-profile dancers, choreographers and companies in Chicago and on the national scene has attracted enormous audiences (last year's Pritzker Pavilion crowd was estimated at more than 8,000). It also has demonstrated that dance is a widely popular art, especially when the ticket price is no barrier to attendance.

The lineup for this summer's festival, which runs Aug. 18-22, is complete. And while programming for the biggest of the events -- "A Celebration of American Dance," the free outdoor performance at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 22 at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park -- suggests co-artistic directors Lar Lubovitch and Jay Franke are aiming for a bit more razzle-dazzle, no one will be able to complain about a lack of eclecticism.

That concert will include the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company in Ulysses Dove's starkly powerful "Vespers"; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater guest artist Linda Denise Evans performing Ailey's acclaimed solo work "Cry"; the Houston Ballet in William Forsythe's neoclassical showpiece "The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude"; Hee Seo and Cory Stearns, guest artists with American Ballet Theatre, performing the flamboyant "Le Corsaire" pas de deux; the Chicago Human Rhythm Project in a collaboration with Step Africa; the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company in Lubovitch's "Coltrane's Favorite Things," and the all-male Les Ballets Grandiva performing "Star-Spangled Ballerina."

No advance reservations are required for this free public event. Seating opens two hours before curtain.

The indoor events include:

-- The "New Voices" program (7:30 p.m. Aug. 18 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph), featuring works by a new generation of choreographers. On the program will be Baryshnikov protegee Aszure Barton's "Ah! Cruel," performed by dancers from her New York-based Aszure Barton and Artists troupe; Jessica Lang's Elysian movement poem "To Familiar Spaces in Dream," performed by Virginia's Richmond Ballet; Robert Battle's percussive "Train," performed by River North Chicago Dance Company; Edwaard Liang's Victorian Age-inspired "Age of Innocence," performed by the Joffrey Ballet, and Trey McIntyre's lush "Just," performed by dancers from Oregon Ballet Theatre.

-- The "Modern Masters" program (7:30 p.m. Aug. 20 at the Harris Theater) will feature a free performance of repertoire by contemporary choreographic masters. The

evening will feature William Forsythe's "Slingerland," a pas de deux performed by dancers from Aspen Santa Fe Ballet; Nacho Duato's sensual and mystical "Gnawa," performed by Hubbard Street Dance Chicago; Jose Limon's "There Is a Time," inspired by the great Ecclesiastes passage, performed by Chicago's Luna Negra Dance Company; Lar Lubovitch's lyrical and kinetic "Jangle (Four Hungarian Dances)," performed by the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company; Jerome Robbins' haunting "In the Night," performed by the Joffrey Ballet, and Christopher Wheeldon's bold and emotion-filled pas de deux "After the Rain," performed by New York City Ballet guest artists Wendy Whelan and Craig Hall.

Though both Harris Theater programs free, reservations/tickets are required and will be available beginning at noon June 12 at the Harris box office, or by calling (312) 334-7777 . Limit two tickets per performance. Tickets are subject to availability. Reservations and seating will be accommodated on a first-come, first-served basis.

All programming is subject to change. For updates or more information about Chicago Dancing Festival 2009, visit www.chicagodancingfestival.com.

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Also part of the festival will be "Artists Up Close," a lecture-discussion event at 6 p.m. Aug. 19 at the Museum of Contemporary Art Theatre, 220 E. Chicago. It will feature many of the choreographers and performers appearing at the festival. Tickets are available at 10 a.m. June 12 by calling the MCA box office at (312) 397-4010 or by visiting www.mcachicago.org. Limit two tickets per reservation. Tickets are subject to availability, and allseating is general admission.