

2024/2025 SEASON

Ludmilla Chiriaeff's 100th anniversary



Les Grands Ballets Canadiens is thrilled to announce an exceptional event for their 2024-2025 season. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of its founder, the company will pay a vibrant tribute to Ludmilla Chiriaeff, born on January 10, 1924, in Berlin, Germany. This program, featuring works by both local and international artists, is intended to be a captivating exploration of her legacy, and will be presented at Place des Arts in Montreal from October 24 to 26, 2024.

Ludmilla Chiriaeff's story is marked by remarkable resilience, from her early training in Berlin, through the turmoil of World War II, to her immigration to Canada and the founding of the École supérieure de ballet du Québec in 1966 and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in 1956. Her life and work, adorned with numerous awards and honors, illustrate her essential role in the development of ballet and dance education in Quebec and across Canada.

The program, simply titled 'Ludmilla,' will offer a rich panorama of North American dance, highlighted by a masterful work by George Balanchine. It will also feature the rediscovery of creations by Ginette Laurin and James Kudelka, showcasing the richness and choreographic diversity of this region. The precise details of this unique program will be revealed during the launch of Les Grands Ballets' 2024-2025 season on March 14, 2024.

LUDMILLA

October 24 and 25 at 8:00 PM, and October 26 at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM

Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier at Place des Arts

With Les Grands Ballets Orchestra

Subscription tickets go on sale: March 14

ABOUT LUDMILLA CHIRIAEFF

Born in Berlin in 1924, Ludmilla Chiriaeff took her first dance lessons with Alexandra Nicolaieva from the Bolshoi Ballet at the age of six. She made her debut with Colonel de Basil's Ballets Russes, where she worked with well-known personalities such as Léonide Massine, David Lichine and Michel Fokine, who became her spiritual mentor, encouraging her to take up choreography and teaching.

The outbreak of World War II interrupted her career at the Berlin Opera Ballet. From there she fled to Switzerland where she founded her first company, Le Ballet des Arts de Genève. In January 1952, Ludmilla Chiriaeff settled in Montréal. Thanks to some 300 Radio-Canada programs, she subsequently founded Les Ballets Chiriaeff, which gave its first performance in 1955.

In 1957, encouraged by various public figures such as Mayor Jean Drapeau, she transformed Les Ballets Chiriaeff into a permanent company and created Québec's first professional ballet troupe - Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Shortly afterwards, she established a school, the Académie des Grands Ballets Canadiens, designing both the program and the teaching methods. During the 1966/67 season, at the request of the Québec Minister of Cultural Affairs, Madame Chiriaeff founded the École supérieure de danse des Grands Ballets Canadiens, which was a logical extension of the Académie. This school became the École supérieure de danse du Québec in 1980.

As early as 1963, Ludmilla Chiriaeff began working with gifted collaborators such as Fernand Nault, Anton Dolin and Brian Macdonald. Linda Stearns, Jeanne Renaud, Daniel Jackson, Colin McIntyre and Lawrence Rhodes, have all subsequently served as Les Grands Ballets Canadiens' artistic director.

In 1971, Madame Chiriaeff created Les Compagnons de la danse, a small touring troupe designed to present performance/lectures in the schools and cultural centres in order to promote public awareness of dance.

In 1975, Ludmilla Chiriaeff established a "ballet major" program at the Sainte-Croix School Board's École Pierre-Laporte. Unique in Québec, this program combines the professional teaching of classical ballet with the academic training. In 1979, this program was extended to the Cégep du Vieux-Montréal. Madame Chiriaeff also founded a ballet course for sixth-grade and secondary school pupils attending the Montréal Catholic School Board's École Laurier. These courses are given at the École supérieure de danse du Québec.

These schools have helped to ensure the future of dance in Québec by providing training free of charge, for all young Québécois who meet the entrance requirements. In 1981, the creation of the Maison de la danse - a cornerstone of the integrative approach to training, creation and production - was the culmination of a 25-year dream.

Since 1957, Ludmilla Chiriaeff has received many prestigious honours and awards. In 1980, she received the Prix Denise-Pelletier for the performing arts, awarded by the Québec government. She has also been a Companion of the Order of Canada since 1984 and a grand officer of the Ordre national du Québec since 1985. In addition, Madame Chiriaeff holds three honorary doctorates, from McGill University (1982), Université de Montréal (1982) and Université du Québec (1988). In 1992, she was awarded the Nijinski Medal honouring her significant contribution to the world of dance and, in November 1993, the Governor General's Performing Arts Award. She was also named a Historical Figure by the Quebec Government in 2022.

Thanks to her boundless enthusiasm and perseverance, Madame Chiriaeff, who passed away on September 22, 1996, succeeded in significantly changing the image of dance in Quebec. Her drive is at the heart of the intense activities that continue to this day.

ABOUT LES GRANDBALLETS

As a creation and production company, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens is devoted to the development of dance in all its forms, building on the discipline of classical ballet. Under the artistic direction of Ivan Cavallari, some forty-five Canadian and international dancers - accompanied by Les Grands Ballets Orchestra – bring the great classics of ballet to the stage, as well as the creations and repertoire of established and emerging contemporary artists.

Located in the heart of Montréal's Quartier des spectacles, Les Grands Ballets is wholly committed to give to as many people as possible access to dance, whether through the Nutcracker Fund for Children, leisure activities in the Grands Ballets' Studios GB or with the National Centre for Dance Therapy (NCDT), which is devoted to greater wellbeing through the benefits of dance. Through the excellence of its productions and the scope of its cultural and social actions, the company seeks to inspire discovery and conjure emotions, stimulate the imagination, convey a passion for dance and create a lasting impact.

PRESS CONTACT

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