

Contact:
Beth Silverman/Farah Malik
312-932-9950
beth@silvermangroupchicago.com
farrah@silvermangroupchicago.com

For Immediate Release

**Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum presents
Luna Negra Dance Theater
at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Saturday, October 8, 2005**

**Among Highlights are two World Premieres:
Quinceñera by Luna Negra Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro and
Chicago Debut by Washington Ballet's Septime Webre**

August __, 2005 – **Luna Negra Dance Theater**, Chicago's premier professional dance company devoted to the creation and performance of Latino contemporary dance will make its debut at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance with a full-evening program featuring two World Premieres: *Quinceñera*, Luna Negra Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro's contemporary interpretation of the Latino traditional "coming of age" ceremony, and a currently-untitled piece by Washington Ballet Artistic Director Septime Webre, marking his first work for a Chicago company. Also on the bill is a reprise of Vilaro's enchanting *Don Quixote Dances*, which premiered at the Ravinia Festival this summer; Pedro Ruiz's *Sonetos de Amor* (Love Sonnets) that explores the themes of romance and passion; and Gustavo Ramirez Sansano's *Flabbergast*, a brilliant depiction of how surprising and bewildering an encounter with a foreign culture can be.

Luna Negra will perform one night only at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 Randolph Drive in Millennium Park, **Saturday, October 8, 2005 at 8:00 p.m.** This engagement is presented by the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum as part of its 2005 Sor Juana Festival.

Vilaro's *Quinceñera* celebrates the traditional "coming of age" party (quinceñera) for 15-year old girls, a rite of passage common to all Latino countries. From a girl's last doll to her first pair of high heels, *Quinceñera* takes an introspective look at the path from childhood to womanhood and translates the range of emotions into dance. For this work, Vilaro has collaborated with Chicago-based Mexican visual artist Luis De La Torre, who has created a moving triptych backdrop depicting a larger-than-life floral gown typical of those worn by girls celebrating their own quinceñera. This dance, for the entire Luna Negra Company is performed to a diverse range of music from Latin America from the traditional bolero to a contemporary score by Mexican composer Ana Lara.

Also receiving its World Premiere will be a new work by Septime Webre, charismatic Artistic Director of the Washington Ballet. Although rooted in ballet, Webre, who is Cuban-born, is interested in exploring his cultural background through dance and welcomes the opportunity to work with a contemporary company such as Luna Negra. Marking his first work for a Chicago company, this new piece (currently untitled) promises to be attention-getting.

Vilaro's *Don Quixote Dances* will receive its Chicago debut, having premiered at Ravinia Festival this summer. Inspired by Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, *Don Quixote Dances* explore Don Quixote's images of Dulcinea, reflecting on how fantasy and dream transform reality. A suite of dances is set to songs by Maurice Ravel, Jacques Ibert and Mexican composer Ana Lara, performed live by baritone Stephen Salters and Ravinia CEO and President Welz Kauffman at the piano.

Sonetos de Amor (Love Sonnets) was choreographed for Luna Negra by Pedro Ruiz in 2004. This lyrical and romantic piece, inspired by the words of poet Pablo Neruda "We had only to love one another: with all the confusions, the men and the women, the earth that makes carnations rise, and makes them bloom!" is

set to music from Latin America, from the Tango to the Rumba, and blends popular dance with ballet.

Flabbergast by Gustavo Ramirez Sansano completes the program. Inspired by the choreographer's experience of coming to America for the first time, *Flabbergast* depicts in a wonderfully funny and exuberant way how surprising and bewildering it can be to encounter a foreign culture.

Luna Negra Dance Theater creates, performs and teaches contemporary dance by Latino choreographers. It is the only professional dance company in the U.S. solely devoted to provide contemporary Latino dance artists with a vehicle to tell their own stories and carry the culture of their communities.

This performance is presented by the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum as part of the 2005 Sor Juana Festival. Continuing a tradition that began in 1994, the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum presents the *2005 Sor Juana Festival*, a celebration of Sor Juana, the first feminist of the Americas, and the accomplishments of women. This festival, which runs from September to November 2005, honors Sor Juana Ines de La Cruz, a sixteenth century Mexican nun who valued the education of women. Sor Juana was a celebrated playwright and poet in her own time and considered as the first feminist in the Americas. In this 12th anniversary year, the Sor Juana Festival is the most ambitious to date with a free concert by Lila Downs, a dance performance by Luna Negra Dance Theater featuring the world premiere of *Quinceñera*, the celebrated Ballet Folklorico de Guadalajara, a special return engagement by Spain's Fangoria featuring Mexican vocalist Alaska, and much more.

This concert is made possible thanks to the generous support of LaSalle Bank. Additional support is provided by Strategy and Beyond. In addition, Quinceñera has been created thanks to the generous support of The Boeing Company and the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

Tickets for Luna Negra Dance Theater's one-night-only performance at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance Saturday, Oct. 8, range from \$15-\$35. The Harris Theater for Music and Dance is located at 205 Randolph Drive in Millennium Park, Chicago. For tickets, call the Harris Theatre Box Office at 312-334-7777 or visit www.harristheaterchicago.org. For more information about Luna Negra Dance Theater visit www.lunanegra.org.

###

Choreographer Biographies:

Eduardo Vilaro (*Luna Negra Artistic Director*) was born in Havana, Cuba, and grew up in New York City. He received his training at the Alvin Ailey American Dance School and the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and then received his BFA from Adelphi University in 1988. He was a principle dancer with Ballet Hispanico of New York where he created and performed roles for choreographers such as George Faison, Graciela Daniele, Christopher Giles, Alberto Alonso and Ramon Oller. He has taught and toured throughout the United States, Europe, Central and South America, and the Middle East. In 1999 Mr. Vilaro received a Masters degree from Columbia College and founded Luna Negra Dance Theater for which he has created over 20 original works. He has also received commissions to create works for Ravinia Festival, Chicago Sinfonietta, Lexington Ballet, New Jersey Dance Theater Ensemble, Civic Ballet, and Same Planet, Different World. Eduardo was a recipient of a 2001 Ruth Page Award in choreography and was honored at Panama's II International Festival of Ballet for his choreographic work. In 2004 he was honored with a grant award from the Cuban Artists Fund and a Choreography Fellowship from the Illinois Arts Council. He has been on the faculty of the Dance Center of Columbia College and the Chicago Academy of the Arts and currently serves on the board directors of Dance USA .

Septime Webre (*Washington Ballet Artistic Director*) was appointed artistic director of the Washington Ballet in June 1999 following a successful six-year term as artistic director of American Repertory Ballet. He has created works that appear in the repertoires of Pacific Northwest Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Dayton Ballet, Ballet Austin, Atlanta Ballet, Aspen Ballet, Sacramento Ballet,

Cincinnati Ballet, Colorado Ballet, Louisville Ballet, Memphis Ballet, and The Washington Ballet. As a dancer, Webre was featured in works by Balanchine, Taylor, Tudor, Ailey, and Cunningham as well as in principal and solo roles from the classical repertoire. His recent projects include the Washington Ballet's highly successful trip to Cuba in Fall 2000; a collaboration with Artistic Director Molly Smith at Washington's Arena Stage (*Coyote Builds North America*); and *Journey Home*, a collaboration with Sweet Honey In The Rock, visual artist Sam Gilliam and playwright Norman Allen. A member of the board of directors of Dance/USA, Webre has been honored by Young Audiences of the District of Columbia and received fellowships and recognition for his choreography. He graduated from the University of Texas with a B.A. in History/Pre-Law.

Pedro Ruiz (*Choreographer*) has been a principal dancer and choreographer with Ballet Hispanico for 16 years. He received New York's most prestigious dance award, the Bessie Award, for outstanding achievement in 1998. He has choreographed critically-acclaimed ballets inspired by his native Cuba. In 2004 Luna Negra commissioned *Sonetos de Amor* (Love Sonnets) that premiered on March 5 and 6, 2005.

Gustavo Ramirez Sansano (*Choreographer*) studied at the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona, Spain and has danced with Ballet Joven de Alicante, Ballet Contemporaneo de Barcelona, Ballet de la Comunidad de Madrid and Nederland's Dans Theater II. He was the recipient of the first prize for choreography at the 1997 Ricardo Moragas Barcelona Competition, and his first-prize winning work was performed by The Hamburg Ballet for the 2001 Dom Pérignon Competition. He was a member of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and has premiered works for Ballet Met of Ohio and the Luna Negra Dance Theater.

Artist biography

Luis De La Torre (*Visual Artist*) is a Chicago-based artist who uses a variety of techniques and mediums, including watercolor and oil painting, to project his vivid visions. It was during early childhood in Mexico when De La Torre experienced his first encounter with painting. Growing up he was inspired by the paintings of artists Salvador Dali and David Alfaro Siqueiros and illustrators Alan Lee and Bill Sienkiewicz. Studying at American Academy of Art to fine tune his artistic talents gave him the opportunity to study under Master Watercolorist Irving Shapiro. He went on to graduate and earn his degree in Fine Art. The essence of his art is a combination of creativity, persistence and a civic conscious resulting in art that speaks of universal issues affecting us all. In 2002 he was the recipient of an arts grant awarded by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. De La Torre is currently involved in local exhibits including an exhibit at River East Art Center.

###