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Luna Negra Dance Theater Presents Muévete (Move!)

**Featuring the World Premiere of *Mi Corazón Negro (My Black Heart)*
by Luna Negra Dance Theater Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro
with live music by legendary Afro-Peruvian singer Susana Baca**

at the Harris Theater, November 10 & 11, 2006

September 25, 2006 –**Luna Negra Dance Theater**, Chicago's premier Latino contemporary dance theater, returns to the Harris Theater following last year's sold-out debut with an exceptional program featuring works by acclaimed Latino choreographers. The concert features the World Premiere of *Mi Corazón Negro (My Black Heart)* choreographed by Artistic Director **Eduardo Vilaro** to live music by legendary Afro-Peruvian singer and Luaka Bop recording artist **Susana Baca**. Also on the bill are audience favorites, *The Last 12 Minutes* by Ron DeJesus; *Eterno Despertar (Eternal Awakening)* by Maray Gutierrez; and *Enamorados (The Lovers)* by Bessie Award-winner Pedro Ruiz.

Luna Negra Dance Theater performs at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 Randolph Drive in Millennium Park, in two performances, **Friday, November 10 and Saturday, November 11, 2006 at 8PM.**

The World Premiere of *Mi Corazón Negro (My Black Heart)* is a mesmerizing journey into the multi-racial cultural heart of Latin America. Choreographed by Eduardo Vilaro, this piece for the whole company, is set to Afro-Peruvian songs performed live by Susana Baca, one of the most well known and respected singers and performers from South America today.

Highlights of the evening include: Ron DeJesus' *The Last 12 Minutes* (2004), a fast paced and intense piece that imagines the choices made and emotions experienced to get to acceptance and release in both life and death; Maray Gutierrez's *Eterno Despertar (Eternal Awakening)* (2006), a breathtaking quartet set to hauntingly beautiful Portuguese fado music, that explores with intensity and passion the emotions of longing, loss and hope; and Pedro Ruiz's *Enamorados (The Lovers)* (2006), a ravishing and sensual duet, masterfully infused with tango and ballet movements, that exposes the struggles that arise in relationships.

Founded by Vilaro in 1999, Luna Negra Dance Theater creates, performs and teaches contemporary dance by Latino choreographers. Luna Negra's distinctive style artfully blends ballet and contemporary dance movements strongly flavored by Latin and Afro-Caribbean dance forms. Luna Negra also collaborates with Latino artists of other disciplines, including visual, media artists, musicians and composers which fosters cross disciplinary explorations and results in richly textured and highly original, contemporary dance theater. In addition to performing, Luna Negra conducts extensive outreach and education programs, serving annually over 9,000 students in the Chicago area.

Tickets for Luna Negra Dance Theater's fall performances at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Friday, November 10 and Saturday November 11, range from \$25-\$50. 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.

The Sara Lee Foundation is the Lead Corporate Sponsor in commissioning Mi Corazón Negro. Exelon Corporation, Proud Parent of ComEd, is the 2006 Season Lighting Sponsor. In addition, this concert is made possible thanks to the generous support of LaSalle Bank and Capri Capital Advisors. Additional support is provided by Illinois Arts Council, an agency of the state of Illinois; City of Chicago, City Arts Program; and Strategy and Beyond.

Choreographer Biographies:

Eduardo Vilaro (*Luna Negra Founder and 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 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. Vilaro 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.

Ron DeJesus was a member of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago for 17 years. His choreographic works have been presented by numerous dance organizations, including Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, Joel Hall Dancers and Momenta. In 2004-05, he was dancing on Broadway with the Twyla Tharp/ Billy Joel production *Movin' Out*. DeJesus' creation, ***The Last 12 Minutes***, was co-commissioned by and premiered at Dance Chicago in 2004. Deep and intense, it imagines the choices we make and the emotions we experience to find acceptance and release in both life and death.

Maray Gutierrez is a native of Havana, Cuba. Gutierrez began her training at the Paulita Concepción Vocational School of the Arts in Havana and continued her studies at the National School of Dance. She has toured and danced throughout Europe, the United States and the Caribbean and has performed for British television and the Venice Opera. Gutierrez has participated in the American Dance Festival; The International Dance Festival in Berlin, Germany; The Holland Dance Festival; and the International Ballet Festival in Geona, Italy. She was a principle dancer for the National Contemporary Dance Company of Cuba for ten years and worked with esteemed choreographers such as Giovanni de Cicco, Donald McKayle, Isidro Rolando, Joaquin Sabate, Jan Linkens and Marianela Boan. Since relocating to Chicago, she has danced with Luna Negra Dance Theater, Concert Dance, Inc, and has danced and choreographed works for Hedwig Dances.

Cuban-born, **Pedro Ruiz** 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. Luna Negra premiered Ruiz's ***Sonetos de Amor*** (Love Sonnets) in 2005. It is a beautifully lyrical and romantic piece inspired by the words of the 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."* In October 2006 Luna Negra Dance Theater, in conjunction with the Joffrey Ballet, will premiere the new Pedro Ruiz ballet ***San Juan: allegro con sabor!*** for the Career Transition for Dancers Gala in New York's City Center.

Guest Artist Biography:

Susana Baca is one of the most well known and respected singers and performers from South America today. Born in the Northern coastal barrio of Chorrillos, outside Lima (Peru) where the descendants of slaves have lived since the days of the Spanish empire, Baca avidly pursued folk singing and dancing since childhood. While in school, she took an interest in the poets of Peru and began to see herself as a link in the cultural work of preservation and instruction. Baca formed an experimental music group combining poetry and song. Through grants from Peru's Institute of Modern Art and the National Institute of Peruvian Culture, she began performing. Singer, dancer, teacher, student, Baca has dedicated herself to the preservation of the history and culture of her people, the African-descended blacks of Peru. She and her husband, Ricardo Pereira, also founded the Instituto Negrocontinuo ["Black Continuum"] in Lima, a facility for the exploration, expression and creation of black Peruvian culture. She holds a repertoire of both old and new; traditional songs about the life of the countryside, others about rhythm and dancing. Baca is a recording artist with Luaka Bop.