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STUDIO THREE TO CLOSE OUT 30th ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Final Studio Series Installment to Include a World Premiere from Ma Cong, Jessica Lang's Lines Squared

Richmond, VA – Richmond Ballet is pleased to welcome back choreographers Jessica Lang and Ma Cong, as Ms. Lang's *Lines Squared* and Mr. Cong's world premiere work, *Lift The Fallen*, will close out the Ballet's 30th Anniversary season, at the company's downtown Studio Theatre, May 13-18, 2014. *Lines Squared*, returning to the Richmond Ballet stage for the first time since its premiere in November of 2009, is one of six original pieces Ms. Lang has set for Richmond Ballet. *Lift The Fallen* will mark Mr. Cong's third, fully-produced commission for the Ballet, following *Ershter Vals* (2010) and *Luminitza* (2012).

"We have had a long relationship with Jessica Lang, and it is always a pleasure to stage her work on our company," said Stoner Winslett, Richmond Ballet Artistic Director. "*Lines Squared* was an exciting commission when it premiered over five years ago, and I know its dynamic choreography and innovative design will once again be engaging for our audiences. Ma Cong's work has become a wonderful addition to our repertory here in Richmond. We are honored to offer him a platform to once again create and explore and, this time especially, to help him tell a very personal story of loss and recovery that should be moving for our Studio Theatre patrons."

Ms. Lang's work takes its inspiration from the bold red, yellow and blue geometric paintings of the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). Speaking ahead of the ballet's premiere in 2009, Ms. Lang noted that the painter's distinct lines lent themselves to the development of an intricate and angular vocabulary of movement that also informed her music selection. "I wanted it to go back to the ideas that I had about art," she explained. "Somehow [Mondrian's] graphic line and color reminded me of a technological structure so I went into the world of synthesizers and electronic composition." She later elaborated while speaking to arts students at Virginia Commonwealth University. "Everything was about lines for me, and squares, so the challenge was how many different ways I [could] come up with making that happen with the body." With a bold design scheme envisioned by Ms. Lang herself and brought to life by Richmond Ballet production director MK Stewart and colorful contemporary costumes by Tamara Cobus, *Lines Squared* transforms a two-dimensional concept into an active three-dimensional work of art, showing Richmond Ballet at its full strength, and at its technical best.

Lines Squared also formed the basis for a newer piece with a smaller cast, *Lines Cubed*, which premiered in 2012 at the 80th Anniversary of Jacob's Pillow. *Lines Cubed* is now one of the most performed pieces from Ms. Lang's own company repertory, Jessica Lang Dance.

Mr. Cong's *Lift The Fallen* is a deeply personal ballet for the Chinese-American. Drawing his inspiration largely from the experience of his mother's death, his vision calls for a ballet in two parts that explores his own healing process through both classical and neo-classical movements. "It's a process for human beings [to deal with loss]," said Mr. Cong. "And the process of how they heal their scars, and continue on with their lives, to even make their lives more extraordinary, is a process about becoming stronger. And even though our loved ones may be gone, they want you to live better. So, I wanted to create a work that can encourage and lift the fallen." Mr. Cong also pulled much of his inspiration from the music of Max Richter, whose *Memorybook* compositions seemed to mirror the enormity and overwhelming sensation of the equally devastating and hopeful waves of emotion so much a part of the grieving and healing process. "This music is very emotional, and the image that it gave to me was like the ocean waves. And human emotion is almost like the waves, waves that hit you." Selections from Richter's *Memorybook* now form the score for Mr. Cong's new work.

Though the ballet chronicles Mr. Cong's own reckoning with a very great personal loss, the struggle in overcoming death is both universally familiar and challenging. "This work is one that I have put a lot of my personal touch into, yet, it's not only a piece for me," Mr. Cong was quick to add. "I am creating this piece rather to make those in the audience feel like they have experienced this kind of emotional hit, and [to show] that they too can recover and move forward."

With the recent announcement of the Ballet's *Road to China* initiative, it is fitting to conclude the season with an original commission from a Chinese-American in the work of Mr. Cong. Mr. Cong's *Ersbter Vals* will also be part of the touring program, *Made in The USA: Traditions & Innovations*, which the company will take to China.

"In many ways, we are closing our 30th Anniversary season with a wonderful sense of symmetry with the season's start, in performing two commissioned works," said Ms. Winslett. "Of course, all of our work at Richmond Ballet is informed by the powerful connective currents of our mission, part of which charges us with fostering new works. We both opened our season and now are concluding it with works created very much in the spirit of that mission. Certainly, our Studio Three ballets are, and will be, a wonderful testament to the power of that mission."

Studio Three

Lines Squared | Choreography by Jessica Lang | Music by John Metcalfe and Thomas Metcalf

Lift The Fallen | Choreography by Ma Cong | Music by Max Richter

Richmond Ballet Studio Theatre

Tuesday, May 13, 6:30 pm

Wednesday, May 14, 6:30 pm

Thursday, May 15, 2:00 pm and 6:30 pm

Friday, May 16, 6:30 pm

Saturday, May 17, 6:30 pm and 8:30 pm

Sunday, May 18, 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm

The 2013-14 Studio Series title sponsor is Altria Group.

Major support for Ma Cong's world premiere is provided by the Lewis Butler Foundation and National Endowment of the Arts. Additional support is provided by Richmond Ballet Choreographers' Fund.

Studio III is also sponsored by KPMG LLP and Morgan Stanley.

PLEASE NOTE:

Media wishing to attend any Studio Three performances **must** arrange to do so through Richmond Ballet's press office by contacting Kate Crowder at kcrowder@richmondballet.com or 804.344.0906, ext. 246.

For more information on Richmond Ballet and its classes and programs, please visit www.richmondballet.com or call 804.344.0906.

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Richmond Ballet, The State Ballet of Virginia, is dedicated to the education, promotion, preservation, and continuing evolution of the art form of ballet. Richmond Ballet strives to keep meaningful works of dance alive and to produce and foster new works that remain true to these values. Now in its 30th professional season, Richmond Ballet's mission is to "awaken and uplift the human spirit, both for audiences and artists."