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**CityDance Ensemble to embark on a three-week concert tour
of the Middle East and Persian Gulf**

Washington, DC—**CityDance Ensemble** announces a three-week tour of the Middle East and Persian Gulf in late April/early May 2009. With funding from the **United States Department of State, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation**, the tour will be the first of its kind by any Washington, DC area arts organization.

“This is precisely what we’ve been working toward since the founding of CityDance in the summer of 1996,” comments **Paul Gordon Emerson**, the company’s Co-Founder and Artistic Director. “As a former defense and foreign policy analyst, I can say from first-hand knowledge that artist exchange fosters dialogue and understanding that cannot be accomplished in any other way. It brings a level of humanity that transforms perception. When you consider where we are going, and for how long we will be there, there is nothing more important I can think of for CityDance to be doing as a dance company.”

In the three weeks that CityDance will be in the region, the company will teach and perform in **Jordan, The West Bank of the Palestinian Territories, Israel, The United Arab Emirates**, and possibly additional states. The concert schedule includes Amman, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Abu Dhabi, and may expand to include other cities and nations.

“We are going at the invitation of two ground-breaking festivals in Amman, Jordan, and Ramallah in the West Bank,” notes Emerson. “These are the first festivals of their kind in these countries and Territories, focused on modern dance and celebrating artists from around the world. We are the first Americans to be invited to the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival, and we take that opportunity, and that responsibility, very seriously. It is an honor.”

“Four years after its establishment, the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival 2009 is delighted to host an American dance troupe,” comments **Khaled Elayyan, Festival Director, Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival**. “In our communications with CityDance, we know that both parties are keen to promote future cultural communication, exchange, dialogue, understanding, and ultimately appreciation between the American and the Palestinian people. The Festival’s enjoyment

(more)

is not limited to watching the performances; it's also for us Palestinians and the atmosphere we generate. It is the realization of cultures meeting and a building of a mutually sustainable partnership that not only understands each other, but also appreciates each other."

"American artists are doing exceptional work, and it's a pleasure to be able to bring that work to Jordan," adds **Philip Frayne, Counselor for Press and Cultural Affairs for the U.S. Embassy in Amman**. "These two countries have deep and important ties, and the more we are able to share with one another the gifts of our artists, the more we can build those ties. The Arabesque: Arts of the Arab World Festival, which just completed a run at The Kennedy Center, opened doors, and eyes, in the American capital. Bringing CityDance, whose home is in Washington, DC, to Amman is a wonderful complement to that exchange and dialogue."

CityDance's Middle East and Persian Gulf tour will highlight the company's commitment to climate change issues and to international engagement. The company will perform Rehearsal Director & Choreographer-in-Residence **Christopher K. Morgan's** *Thirst*, a dance that is central to CityDance's concert series on climate change. In addition, CityDance will bring *Entangled*, a duet by Emerson with a score that has been adapted to use a poem by **Mahmoud Darwish**, one of the great Palestinian poets of our time. The poem will be performed live in Arabic during the tour by an actor from the region. Also on the program are Emerson's *Han*, a work made after and inspired by the company's concert tour of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2006; *Scorched* by **Kate Weare**; *Roger & Lucie* by **Ludovic Jolivet**; *Falling* by Emerson; and *Jungle Books*, the company's family concert based on Rudyard Kipling's classic stories.

While on tour, CityDance also plans to spend several days at the Dead Sea and in the protected Wadi Rum reserve in Jordan making a film of Morgan's *Thirst* at water's edge and in the desert.

"We deeply believe in the power of film and dance-on-camera," notes Emerson, "and I can think of no better place to explore the issues of water and thirst than in these places."

Key dates on the tour include:

April 29 & 30: Workshops and concerts in Amman, Jordan

May 2 & 3: Concerts in Ramallah

May 4: Concert in Jerusalem

May 5: Workshops in Ramallah

May 6: Concert in Nazareth

May 9 – 11: Filming of *Thirst*

May 12 – 15: Workshops and concerts in Abu Dhabi

This engagement is supported by the U.S. Department of State; the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts; and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation through U.S. Artists International with support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Additional support is provided by Hotel Novotel, Emirates National Group, and Abu Dhabi American Community School.

About CityDance Ensemble, Inc.

CityDance Ensemble, Inc. is the parent organization to **CityDance Ensemble**, an award-winning contemporary repertory dance company; **Early Arts**, an arts outreach program for youth reaching thousands of students each year; **CityDance Education Centers**, facilities committed to excellence in dance training for youth and adults; and **FilmWORKS**, a creator and presenter of dance-on-camera. The mission of CityDance is to advance the appreciation for and participation in the art of dance through excellence in performance, education, film, and artistic innovation.

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