

SONY CENTRE ANNOUNCES ITS 2011-2012 SEASON



This year promises to bring an exciting and richly diverse lineup of world-class performances to Toronto audiences. "The power of live performance is its ability to transcend boundaries. The Sony Centre's 51st season is a veritable round-the-world-trip with stops in Argentina, China, Cuba, India, Japan, Russia, Sarajevo, South Africa and Ukraine," says Dan Brambilla, CEO of the Sony Centre.

Here's a rundown of the Centre's highlights:

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, heralded as America's Cultural Ambassador to the World, comes to the Sony Centre to showcase the vision of new Artistic Director Robert Battle.

Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet's production of Svengali. Yearning for public recognition, Svengali escapes the repression of his mother's ballet studio to a decadent world reminiscent of mid-century Weimar.



The Backyardigans: Quest for the Extra Ordinary Aliens is an out-of-this-world theatrical production with the whole Backyardigans gang.

The unique **Goran Bregovic and his Wedding and Funeral**

Orchestra combines a Serbian gypsy band, a classical string ensemble, an orthodox male choir and two Bulgarian female vocalists.

Kings of Salsa is an explosion of high-voltage salsa and sexy choreography.

Bharati, a live music and dance spectacle that journeys through the colours, scents and flavours of India. (See accompanying story.)

Shumka at 50! is a unique hybrid of the rich Ukrainian dance heritage and a contemporary Canadian dance dynamic.

The Classical Mystery Tour: A tribute band backed by the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.

Tango Pasión features the world's greatest tango dancers and a live orchestra.

The Soweto Gospel Choir was formed to share the joy of faith through the inspirational power of African Gospel music.

Tao: a company of martial arts drummers trained in traditional Japanese percussion who use their entire body to express the music.

BON APPETIT

The Sony Centre will now be offering an international culinary experience that reflects the flavour of the onstage performances. For example, the menu features smoked duck, baked brie, coquilles St. Jacques and crème brûlée, all prepared by executive chef Stephen Lee to set the stage for turn-of-the-century Paris for Moulin Rouge – The Ballet.

THE WONDER THAT IS INDIA

Toronto's first performing arts centre has played a defining role in the cultural life of Toronto for more than 50 years, and now Toronto audiences will soon have the opportunity to taste the musical masala that is Bharati, a spectacular live presentation of the dance, music, fashion, and folk traditions of India.

The troupe has been touring the world for six years, and the critically acclaimed performance boasts a company of 70 dancers, actors, singers, acrobats, and musicians in a powerful story of love and homecoming.

The story revolves around Siddharth, an Indian-born engineer raised in the U.S., who returns to his homeland to work on the Ganga Cleaning Project. Cynical and contemptuous of all things Indian, Siddharth finds himself attracted to a mysterious Indian woman named Bharati. As she re-introduces him to the wonders of India, Siddharth ends up discovering his true self, and the meaning of love.

The performance is narrated by Rahul Vohra, an actor who has appeared in several films internationally, but widely recognized for his roles in popular films

like Swades and Monsoon Wedding.

"I narrate the story, I'm a storyteller, I'm a spectator or sometimes I'm an actor," says Vohra. "It's slightly more than just narration. In India we call it a Sucrachar, or the guy who holds the strings like a master puppeteer."

The title character, Bharati, is played by Bhavna Pani, a dancer, model and actor known for her roles in Dil Vil Pyar Vyar, Yuvaraja, and Tere Liye.

She explains the dichotomy behind the performance. "It is a metaphor for India. She is what India is at the moment; a lot of struggling between trying to strike a balance between modernism and traditionalism," says Pani. "The love for her man represents modernism and the love for her father represents a tradition and how she strikes a balance and brings the both of them together."

On Oct. 26, to honour the "Festival of Lights," The Sony Centre For The Performing Arts will transform itself into a Diwali Festival Marketplace with vendors of exclusive apparel, jewelry, accessories and home décor, plus henna artists, photo booths and an array of South Asian snacks served up.

SONY CENTRE: NEWLY REFURBISHED

After being closed for two years of renovations, the Sony Centre reopened its doors for its 50th anniversary in October 2010. In the eight months since, the Sony Centre has seen more than 200,000 ticket holders go through the refinished bronze doors for such shows as: Robert Lepage's Eonagatta, The Merchants of Bollywood and Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical.