

COBA, Collective of Black Artists, celebrates during **Black History Month** with
DIASPORIC DIMENSIONS
featuring **THREE** world premieres and
a remount of *Maa Keeba*, a tribute to the late legendary South African singer **Miriam Makeba**

Toronto, January 21, 2010... Now in its 17th season, **COBA** (Collective of Black Artists) proudly presents *Diasporic Dimensions*, a dynamic program of dance and live music that explores the richness of Africa and the Diaspora from Mali to Haiti featuring **three exciting world premieres** along with a **remount** of last season's acclaimed *Maa Keeba*, a tribute to the late legendary South African singer **Miriam Makeba**. Running **February 26-28** at **Fleck Dance Theatre**, *Diasporic Dimensions* fittingly closes out **Black History Month** and features choreographies that examine innovation, spirituality, and legacy from guest Haitian choreographer **Jeanguy Saintus**, and COBA company members **BaKari E. Lindsay** (co-Artistic Director) and **Julia Morris**.

WORLD PREMIERE: Mandé Variations from COBA Co-Artistic Director BaKari E. Lindsay

BaKari E. Lindsay, Co-Artistic Director of COBA, creates a new work that juxtaposes the notion of classical/traditional with innovation to create a new contemporary physicality that seamlessly weaves African and European aesthetics. **Mandé Variations** will be danced by the whole company to the recorded music of **Toumani Diabate**, a virtuoso Kora player from Mali steeped and rooted in tradition, but constantly seeking to innovate and make contemporary statements.

WORLD PREMIERE: Moments from Jeanguy Saintus, 2008 Prince Claus Award recipient

Haitian visionary choreographer, dancer and educator **Jeanguy Saintus** expresses the rich fusion of Caribbean culture and the contemporary life of his country through his choreographic work that combines modern and contemporary dance with Haitian folklore, rhythms and voodoo religious culture. His works, rooted in the region's historical experience, create a universal language. He previously choreographed two works for COBA: *Hommage à Erzulie* (1997) and *Transe* (2002).

In an eerie and sad confluence of events, this Port-au-Prince native describes *Moments* – which was conceived prior to the recent devastating earthquake in Haiti - as “*Moments of Hope / Moments of despair / Moments of confusion... / Everything in our lives is related to a certain time, a certain space (place) / And when everything seems to go wrong the only way to get through it, is through our beliefs (or within)... / Belief linked to our roots / a calling, a cry ... Then come the moments! / Moments of faith / Moments Marasa...* (Marasa means twin souls and is a deity in Voodoo culture)

WORLD PREMIERE: Hightal from COBA company member Julia Morris

Jamaican-born COBA company member **Julia Morris** creates her third piece for the troupe. *Hightal* is a contemporary group music and dance work with strong traditional Nyabingi rhythms (the music played by the Rastafarian religious movement of Jamaica that accepts Haile Selassie I, the former Emperor of Ethiopia, as God incarnate). *Hightal* conjures the soul of the “chosen people” today, as the evolution of the ideology has moved into the 21st Century.

Maa Keeba from BaKari E. Lindsay

Maa Keeba is a tribute to the late, legendary South African singer **Miriam Makeba** who passed away after her last performance at a concert in Italy in November 2008. Known as Mama Africa, Makeba was an outspoken opponent of South Africa's apartheid regime and became a symbol of the fight against apartheid in her home country from the 1960s till its dismantling in the early 1990s. *Maa Keeba* is a variegated portrait of her life through her music and juxtaposes the music with movement to tell a story that is humorous, spirited and emotionally charged “The dancers worked in beautiful unison.... Impressive transitions shifted the story seamlessly.... still deeply engraved in my mind.” -Margarita Osipian, *MONDOMagazine.net*

Founded in 1993, **COBA** is dedicated to creating and presenting the finest traditions in dance and music that celebrate and reflect an Africanist aesthetic. Hailed as a company that entertains with “dynamic dance and exhilarating music performed by talented dancers and drummers” (Susan Walker, *Toronto Star*), COBA continues to push the boundaries of “traditional” dance in its 17th season. With a repertoire of over 25 pieces, the company has toured Ontario, the United States, the U.K., Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago with its critically acclaimed traditional African, Caribbean and contemporary works. As well, COBA has commissioned works by renowned choreographers from Senegal, Haiti and South Africa and has carved a niche in the Toronto dance scene through its annual Black History Month school-touring programs and student matinees.

COBA, in association with Harbourfront Centre's *Next Steps*, presents *Diasporic Dimensions*
at **Fleck Dance Theatre**, 207 Queens Quay West
February 26-28: Friday and Saturday at 8pm, and Sunday at 3pm
Tickets range from \$25 - \$32 (Discounts for seniors, students, Next Steps subscribers, CADA)
Box Office: 416-973-4000 or www.cobainc.com