FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE JOFFREY BALLET ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE WINNING WORKS CHOREOGRAPHIC COMPETITION, PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MCA STAGE

Three aspiring choreographers will present World Premieres in “Winning Works 2016” at the MCA Stage, March 5-6, 2016

CHICAGO – October 29, 2015 – The Joffrey Academy of Dance, Official School of The Joffrey Ballet, announces the recipients of the sixth annual Winning Works Choreographic Competition: Jeffrey Cirio, Christian Denice and Mariana Oliveira. This announcement follows a national call for ALAANA (African, Latino(a), Asian, Arab and Native American) artists to submit applications, which began in July. The Winning Works Choreographic Competition was created to recognize talented and emerging ALAANA choreographers and to provide them with a platform to showcase their original and innovative work. The winning choreographers are awarded a $5,000 stipend and provided the opportunity to work under the artistic supervision of Joffrey Academy Artistic Directors Anna Reznik and Alexei Kremnev. The choreographers’ world premiere works will be showcased on the international members of the Joffrey Academy Trainee Program and Joffrey Studio Company in “Winning Works 2016” presented in association with the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago located at 220 Chicago Avenue, in three performances, Saturday, March 5, 2016 at 3:00 PM and 7:30 PM and Sunday, March 6 at 3:00 PM.

“It is fitting that as we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we continue to move forward with the vision of our founder Robert Joffrey by showcasing new work from emerging choreographers,” said Ashley Wheater, Artistic Director. "Winning Works, now in its sixth year, is the perfect opportunity to move the art form forward giving diverse and emerging artists the opportunity to create new work on our Joffrey Studio Company and Trainees, while giving those young dancers the exciting, once-in-a-lifetime chance to perform in a world premiere."

“The Joffrey thrives on the diversity of our dancers, students and choreographers and it is an honor to provide these three immensely talented artists with a platform to showcase their work,” said Greg Cameron, Executive Director. “Through the Winning Works initiative, these artists are given creative freedom and a blank canvas to delve into an artistic process that is truly inspiring and energizing for our young up-and-coming dancers. This inspiration translates to a dynamic performance on the stage of the Edlis Neeson Theater at the MCA.”

“At the MCA we are committed to presenting the most thought-provoking work being produced by artists working today, and we are energized by the ways in which the Winning Works initiative expands the dance field and enriches the performing arts platform of MCA Stage. Working closely with the Joffrey, we are thrilled to co-present the new pieces that Jeffrey Cirio, Christian Denice, and Mariana Oliveira are making for the striking dancers of Joffrey Academy.”

(continued)
Jeffrey Cirio started his ballet training at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet and went on to train at Boston Ballet. Mr. Cirio has won numerous ballet competitions worldwide, including a gold medal at the Helsinki International Ballet Competition. He was also awarded the coveted Princess Grace Award. Mr. Cirio joined Boston Ballet in 2009, and was promoted quickly through the ranks, becoming a principal dancer in 2012. He has performed numerous classical, neo-classical and contemporary roles for Boston Ballet and worldwide in galas with Stars of American Ballet, at Vail International Dance Festival, and with United Ballet Company in Mongolia and Japan. Mr. Cirio also danced at the 2014 Kennedy Center Honors in Washington, D.C., honoring Patricia McBride. He joined American Ballet Theatre in 2015 as a soloist. Cirio’s latest efforts have been in the area of choreography. Mr. Cirio was commissioned to create two pieces for Boston Ballet, “of Trial” and “fremd.” He has also created pieces for Ballet Academy East and Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. In 2015, Mr. Cirio, along with his sister, Lia Cirio (principal at Boston Ballet) formed a new company, Cirio Collective, which is a summer project that brings together dancers and choreographers to work and perform in a residency environment, and to create without fear of failure. Cirio Collective performed “MiniM” at Vineyard Arts Project and Cape Dance Festival for their inaugural year.

Christian Denice began his professional dance career at Odyssey Dance Theater in Salt Lake City, Utah, and spent the next three years at River North Dance Chicago in Chicago, IL, under the direction of Frank Chaves. There, Mr. Denice worked with such choreographers as Robert Battle, Sidra Bell, Lauri Stallings, and Frank Chaves. He has guest performed with the Montgomery Ballet, Greensboro Ballet, and Company E. Recently, Mr. Denice lived in Montreal, Quebec where he danced for Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal and had the privilege of performing works by Andonis Foniadakis, Cayetano Soto, Wen Wei Wang, and Barak Marshall. In addition to dancing, Christian teaches and choreographs nationally and internationally. He has created works for Odyssey Dance Theatre, Odyssey II, Expansions Dance Company, River North Dance Chicago in collaboration with Frank Chaves, LEVELdance Chicago, and a collaborative work for DanceWorks Chicago and Interlochen Center for the Arts in Interlochen, Michigan. Mr. Denice’s choreography has been featured at Jazz Dance World Congress and has been performed both nationally and throughout Europe. He is the 2015-2016 winner of the University of South Florida's Echo Choreographic Competition, and had a two week residency at the university where he restaged his 2011 work, “raum”.

Mariana Oliveira is the Choreographer and Artistic Director of The Union Project Dance Company. Originally from Brazil, she started her career as a ballet dancer, and at the age of 17 she had the opportunity to travel to London to study at the Royal Academy of Dance. While living in the UK, Ms. Oliveira was a trainee dancer at the National Dance Company of Wales, under the direction of Roy Campbell-Moore. At the age of 19, she was invited to perform with the Cuban Classical Ballet of Miami. In 2007, Ms. Oliveira moved to New York, and 2 years later she founded The Union Project Dance Company. She has developed works in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and Brazil, with performances venues including Lincoln Center, Tribeca Performing Arts, McCallum Theatre, among others. Now residing in Los Angeles, Mariana has been recently invited to present her works at the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival Inside/Out Series. Ms. Oliveira has been nominated as one of the finalists of the McCallum Theatre 18th Choreography Festival, and she has also been nominated to the World Choreography Awards 2015 in the Concert Dance Category.

The “Winning Works 2016” program also includes a World Premiere by Joffrey Academy Artistic Director Alexei Kremnev titled Coco + Igor. Coco + Igor is a new creation about artistic geniuses, and the passion of two 20th-century icons, Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky. The relationship between Stravinsky and Chanel parallels the innovative spirit of Stravinsky’s “The Rite of Spring” and the creation of Chanel’s signature perfume, Chanel No. 5. Combining contrasting elements of avant-
garde and conservatism, this work explores the journey of two creative powerhouses that leads to artistic triumph.

**Ticket Information**
Tickets for “Winning Works 2016” at the MCA Stage are $24 and available for purchase at the MCA's official Box Office located at 220 East Chicago Ave., by telephone at 312-397-4010, or online at [www.mcachicago.org](http://www.mcachicago.org).

**About the Joffrey Academy Trainees and Joffrey Studio Company**
The Trainee Program is a rigorous program with an internationally recognized reputation for excellence which gives students the skills needed to launch their careers into the professional world. Academy Alumni have danced with companies around the world, including The Joffrey Ballet, American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, Dresden Semperoper and many more. The Joffrey Studio Company is a scholarship program of the Joffrey Academy, comprised of 10 outstanding students at the cusp of their professional careers. The individualized training and performance opportunities provided by the Joffrey Studio Company offers dancers exceptional insight into the life of a professional dancer and pushes dancers to realize their full artistic and technical potential.

For more information on the Academy Trainees of The Joffrey Ballet, the Joffrey Studio Company, or other programs at the Academy of Dance, Official School of The Joffrey Ballet, please visit [joffrey.org/academy](http://joffrey.org/academy)

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