

CONTACT:
Christina Kellogg 510.643.6714
ckellogg@calperfs.berkeley.edu
Joe Yang 510.642.9121
scyang@calperfs.berkeley.edu

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**CANADIAN THEATER LEGEND ROBERT LEPAGE UNVEILS *THE BLUE DRAGON*
AT CAL PERFORMANCES' ZELLERBACH PLAYHOUSE
TUESDAY-SATURDAY, JUNE 9-13**

Lepage Stars in this Three Person Play Set in Modern China

BERKELEY, May 1, 2009—The groundbreaking director, producer, playwright, filmmaker and actor **Robert Lepage** will return to Cal Performances with the Bay Area premiere of his play *The Blue Dragon Tuesday–Saturday, June 9–13* in **Zellerbach Playhouse**. *The Blue Dragon* is the winner of the 2007 Europe Theatre Prize and bears all the hallmarks of Lepage's original and highly visual style. Lepage is “a theatrical conjurer, whose dazzling shows have captivated audiences around the world with their mixture of storytelling and stunning imagery” (*The Guardian*, London). For *The Blue Dragon*, Lepage and designer **Michel Gauthier** created a double decker set that metamorphoses into airports, train stations and boats that melds with film clips and ancient calligraphy. Co-written by **Marie Michaud** and produced by Lepage's multidisciplinary production company **Ex Machina**, the play features trademark Lepage characters who are drawn to encounters with the exotic or the unknown. The play follows the story of Pierre Lamontagne through the paradox and turmoil of the contemporary Chinese art scene. Dancer **Tai Wei Foo** plays Lamontagne's new love interest when a former lover (Michaud) arrives in China to adopt a child.

The Blue Dragon is a stand-alone sequel to Lepage's critically acclaimed *The Dragons' Trilogy*, also co-written by Michaud. The work ended with Quebecoise Lamontagne's decision to travel to China to study art. *The Blue Dragon* introduces Lamontagne twenty-five years later at the heart of Shanghai's art scene, where he has opened an art gallery. Claire arrives in China to adopt a little girl, a plan that quickly falls apart. On a brief stop to Pierre's home, Claire finds that he has completely immersed himself in the oriental lifestyle. Both Claire and Pierre are disillusioned by life and more than a little awed by the fertility—artistic and biological—of Pierre's young lover Ling, whose artistic career is just kicking off. *The Blue Dragon*'s central premise might be interpreted as the rise of a strong, virile China and the decline of an idea-

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starved, infertile West. In many Asian cultures, the blue dragon symbolizes death and rebirth. “Themes of identity, alienation, cultural heritage, art versus commerce—these and others swirl around the three characters as they connect and collide in both surprising and poignant fashion” (*The Ottawa Citizen*).

This production is co-commissioned by Cal Performances as have been Lepage's *Far Side of the Moon* in 2001, his Bay Area debut; *The Busker's Opera* (2005) and *The Andersen Project* (2008).

ROBERT LEPAGE

Director **Robert Lepage** is credited with some of theater's most imaginative productions, including the internationally celebrated one-man show *The Far Side of the Moon*. Other solo performances include *Vinci* (about Leonardo da Vinci) and *Elsinore*, his examination of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Expanded plays include his ethereal ruminations on Hiroshima in *The Seven Streams of the River Ota*, the destructive addictions behind Jean Cocteau and Miles Davis in *Needles and Opium*, the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright in *Geometry of Miracles*, and a modern adaptation of *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Busker's Opera*.

Robert Lepage was born and raised in Quebec City. Between 1975 and 1978, he studied theater at Quebec City's Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique and later participated in workshops at Alain Knapp's theater school in Paris, France. Upon returning to Quebec City, Lepage wrote, directed and performed in independent productions; he joined Théâtre Repère in 1982. From 1989 to 1993, he was the artistic director of the National Arts Centre's Théâtre Français in Ottawa. In 1993, Robert Lepage founded the group Ex Machina, and continues to serve as its artistic director.

Recently, Lepage oversaw *La Casa Azul*'s world tour and revived the cult-classic *Dragons' Trilogy* for the Festival de Théâtre des Amériques' 10th Edition. Lepage has also produced his fifth feature film, adapted from his award-winning play, *The Far Side of the Moon*. In 2004, Lepage collaborated with Cirque du Soleil on their Las Vegas show, titled *KÁ*. Working with maestro Lorin Maazel, Lepage directed an opera based on George Orwell's novel,

1984; The Royal Opera, London production premiered in 2005. In 2007, Lepage staged Igor Stravinsky's opera, *The Rake's Progress*, which was presented in Brussels and San Francisco. Additionally, in 2007, Lepage unveiled a new work titled *Lipsynch*, a multimedia production focusing on human expression through voice. It premiered in a five-hour version at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne's Northern Stage in February 2007; a work in progress, the final length is expected to reach nine hours.

Lepage's work has been recognized and honored numerous times. In 2007, Lepage received the Europe Theatre Prize, the most prestigious European recognition granted for theatrical work. Lepage received the Hans Christian Andersen Prize in 2004 for his work honoring Hans Christian Andersen. Other notable awards include the 1999 medal of l'Ordre National du Québec and the 2000 SORIQ Award for his enduring international career.

Co-writer and performer **Marie Michaud** graduated in 1982 from the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique de Québec. She spent six years as a member of Théâtre Repère in Quebec. Michaud has worked several times under the direction of Robert Lepage, performing and collaborating with him in the writing of *The Dragons' Trilogy*. Praised as a remarkable improvisational actor, Michaud has shared the stage with top international actors.

Dancer/actress **Tai Wei Foo** is a native of Singapore, China, where she trained in traditional and modern dance. She joined the Quan Zhou Company in 2004, and has performed with them in China and Sri Lanka. Since 2005, Tai Wei Foo has been studying contemporary dance at the École de Danse de Québec, where she performs in a number of traditional Chinese dance shows. *The Blue Dragon* is her first experience as an actress; she choreographed all the dances in the production.

EX MACHINA

In an ongoing attempt to extend his artistic reach, Lepage founded Québec's Ex Machina group in 1993, a not-for-profit multi-disciplinary production company that brings together actors, writers, set designers, technicians, opera singers, puppeteers, graphic designers, video artists, film producers, contortionists and musicians. At first devoted to the production of essentially

theatrical works—*Seven Streams of the River Ota*, *The Far Side of the Moon* and *La Casa Azul*—the artistically diverse company has branched out into new fields, including publishing, multimedia (the *Anamorphosis* and *Metamorphosis* web sites), music (*The Damnation of Faust* and *The Busker's Opera*), cabaret (*Zulu Time*) and museum installation. Nonetheless, a theatrical dimension permeates all of Ex Machina's work. Along with the directors of Ex Machina, Lepage has also founded another production company specifically for film and television endeavors known as In Extremis Images, Inc. Its principal mandate is the screenplay adaptations of productions initially intended for the theater, in particular, the events produced by Ex Machina. Ex Machina believes that the performing arts of dance and music should be mixed with the recorded arts of filmmaking and multimedia in the hopes that new artistic forms for the twenty-first century will emerge from these meldings.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the **Robert Lepage's *The Blue Dragon*** from **Tuesday, June 9 – Saturday, June 13** in **Zellerbach Playhouse** are priced at **\$75.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5.00 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988 or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.org.

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced two hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush ticket prices are \$10 for UCB students; \$15 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20 for all other community members. Information is available at (510) 642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Tuesday–Friday, June 9–12 at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 13 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.

Theater

Ex Machina

The Blue Dragon

Robert Lepage, writer, director and actor

Marie Michaud, writer and actress

Tai Wei Foo, dancer and actress

Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Dana St., Berkeley

Program: Canada's renowned director/writer Robert Lepage returns to Cal Performances with *The Blue Dragon*.

Tickets: \$75.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door.

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