

For Immediate Release: August 21, 2024

[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Photos of *SLAM!* are available for download from Cal Performances' [Press Room](#).

A video trailer for *SLAM!* can be found on [YouTube](#).

CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS

THE BAY AREA PREMIERE OF

SLAM!

“WHEN THEATER & CIRQUE MEET THE MAT”

A COLLABORATION OF EX MACHINA AND CIRQUE FLIP FABRIQUE

DIRECTED BY ROBERT LEPAGE

OCTOBER 4–6 AT ZELLERBACH HALL

Berkeley, CA, August 21, 2024—Cal Performances at UC Berkeley proudly presents the Bay Area premiere of a new work directed by longtime Cal Performances artistic partner **Robert Lepage**, and his company **Ex Machina** in collaboration with inventive Québécois circus arts troupe **Cirque FLIP Fabrique**. *SLAM!*, aptly subtitled “When theater and cirque meet the mat,” is a production that marries the raw physicality of pro wrestling with the storytelling of modern theater. *SLAM!* runs for three performances at Zellerbach Hall: Friday–Saturday, October 4–5 at 8pm; and Sunday, October 6 at 3pm.

Through the circus arts—and employing Lepage’s signature lighting and set design, live video, exuberant choreography, and compelling plot twists and turns—*SLAM!* is more than just a wrestling match. In a work that is likely the first of its kind, a kilted Scotsman and a muscular

superhero, an Amazon warrior woman and a contortionist Barbie, and a *luchador* (wrestler) with a *diabolo* master, all face off in the ring. In addition to telling stories inside the wrestling ring, the colorful commentators, fans, bodyguards, cameramen, and janitors in the arena are all depicted through surprising and poetic vignettes that showcase ground and hand-to-hand acrobatics, displays of strength, and juggling.

Says Lepage about *SLAM!*'s ability to unify these two artforms, "Everything is very caricatured and magnified, yet at the same time, it is happening before our eyes. It is a tacit pact between the public and the performers. The same goes for the circus. We believe in it, even if their performances seem improbable to us.... There are similarities."

FLIP Fabrique's eight circus artists, led by the company's founder **Bruno Gagnon**, have trained rigorously to convincingly portray wrestlers in the production—including through the enlistment of true wrestlers to teach key techniques of the artform, and the fast-paced drama involves razor-sharp coordination and breakneck costume changes between scenes. The original music and sound design by composers **Bob and Bill**, who are well-known for their work with Cirque du Soleil, is fueled by the iconic sounds of '80s pop music.

Robert Lepage is a Québécois writer, director, designer, and actor known for his highly original stage and film productions, which often bring together disparate cultural references and unconventional media. His works have been produced and performed the world over, including at the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Sadler's Wells, and for Cirque du Soleil. He founded his production company Ex Machina in 1994. This presentation of *SLAM!* continues a long and fruitful relationship between Lepage and Cal Performances, which presented him in his Bay Area debut (*the far side of the moon* in 2001), has co-commissioned four of his previous productions, and has presented many of his works in their US, West Coast, or Bay Area premieres over the past 25 years. Lepage's most recent appearance at Zellerbach Hall was in the solo work *887* in 2018.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, October 4, 8pm

Saturday, October 5, 8pm

Sunday, October 6, 3pm

Zellerbach Hall

Bancroft Way at Dana Street,

UC Berkeley campus

Theater

Ex Machina/Robert Lepage & Cirque FLIP Fabrique

SLAM! (Bay Area Premiere)

“When theater and cirque meet the mat”

Robert Lepage, *director*

Program:

In this new adrenaline-infused collaboration, Québécois troupe Cirque FLIP Fabrique partners with opera and theater director Robert Lepage to bring the spectacle and physicality of pro wrestling to the stage. *SLAM!* explores wrestling cultures from around the world through the circus arts, lighting and sets, choreography, and plot twists and turns.

Tickets: \$36–\$82 (prices subject to change). This program is suitable for children ages 8 and up.

Tickets for all performances are available at calperformances.org, by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm. More information about UC Berkeley student tickets and discounts is available at calperformances.org/ucb-students. For information about other discounts, visit calperformances.org/discounts.

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