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## **Theatrical Genius Robert Lepage's *The Blue Dragon / Le Dragon Bleu* Opens SFU Woodward's – February 2–27**

The headliner in the SFU Woodward's Inaugural Program is a theatrical tour-de-force that has already thrilled critics and audiences in Europe, the USA and Eastern Canada and now makes a much-anticipated stop in Vancouver. **The Blue Dragon/Le Dragon Bleu (February 2–27)** is the creation of Québec playwright, actor and director **Robert Lepage**, who has been praised as a “master sculptor of light, space and sound” (*Variety*, 2009) and one of the most imaginative, boundary-bending theatrical artists in the world. *The Blue Dragon* demonstrates Lepage at the peak of his powers, both as a consummate storyteller and a multimedia alchemist.

Lepage and co-writer **Marie Michaud** have crafted a story that resurrects Pierre Lamontagne, the central figure in Lepage's 1985 breakthrough masterpiece, *The Dragons' Trilogy*. *The Blue Dragon* picks up Pierre's story more than two decades later, with the ex-pat Québécois (played by Lepage) now running an art gallery in Shanghai. Claire Forêt (Marie Michaud) is a former art-school classmate turned advertising executive who is lured to China by its economic promise, and by the possibility of restoring meaning to her life by adopting a Chinese baby. Her reunion with Pierre in Shanghai is complicated by the presence of Xiao Ling (Tai Wei Foo), a Chinese dancer and artist whom Pierre represents and who is also his lover. The dramatic collision between these three characters becomes a catalyst for profound change in the lives of all three.

*The Dragons' Trilogy* offered a magical, buoyant interpretation of Chinese mythology in which the first three dragons (green, red and white) symbolize the first three seasons. *The Blue Dragon* invokes the fourth, winter dragon – living invisibly beneath the snow, symbolizing death and rebirth, and manifesting itself in bolts of lightning. And thus the cycle is complete.

*The Blue Dragon* is part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad and is co-presented by SFU Contemporary Arts and Théâtre la Seizième. All performances will be in the 450-seat Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre, the centrepiece of the new 125,000 square foot SFU Woodward's Contemporary Arts complex which will open to the public in January 2010, and house SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts as of September 2010.

### **What Reviewers Say About *The Blue Dragon/Le Dragon Bleu* and Robert Lepage**

“Robert Lepage...has established himself in the last two decades as one of the phenomena of world theatre. He's a brave innovator with a wildly prodigious talent and a way of turning drama and opera into awe-inspiring spectacle. Canada has never before produced anyone even remotely like him...” -*Robert Fulford, National Post*

“Lepage fans rejoice...exciting and soul-expanding...a seamless combination of precise acting, cinematic stagings and eloquent dance.” -*San Francisco Chronicle*

“...a play about growing older, mislaying one's ideals, and trying to cope with the unbearable loneliness of the human condition. Robert Lepage's *The Blue Dragon*...is the product of a master at the height of his powers.”  
-*The Telegraph*

**Reserved seating - buy tickets online at [www.sfuwoodwards.ca](http://www.sfuwoodwards.ca) or call the box office at 604.873.3311.**

There are two performances in French, **Feb. 2–3**, followed by an English-language run from **Feb. 4–27**.

More information on *The Blue Dragon/Le Dragon Bleu* is available at [www.sfuwoodwards.ca](http://www.sfuwoodwards.ca) including a seating chart of the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre.

Digital images available – contact Heather Kennedy at 604.723.2562 or [heatherkennedy.vcr@gmail.com](mailto:heatherkennedy.vcr@gmail.com)

## BACKGROUND – Robert Lepage

Versatile in every form of theatre craft, Robert Lepage is equally talented as a director, scenic artist, playwright, actor and film director. His creative and original approach to theatre has won him international acclaim and shaken the dogma of classical stage direction to its foundations, especially through his use of new technologies. His source of inspiration is contemporary history, and his modern and unusual work transcends all boundaries.

Robert Lepage was born in Quebec in 1957. He entered the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec in 1975 at the age of 17. After studying in Paris in 1978 he returned to Quebec and worked on many creative projects, gaining experience as actor, author and director. Two years later he joined the Théâtre Repère.

In 1984, his play *Circulations* toured Canada and received Best Canadian Production award at the Quinzaine Internationale de Théâtre de Québec. In 1985 *The Dragons' Trilogy* gained him an international reputation, quickly followed by *Vinci* (1986), *Polygraph* (1987) and *Tectonic Plates* (1988). In 1988 he formed his own professional management company, Robert Lepage Inc. (RLI). From 1989 to 1993 he was Artistic Director of the Théâtre français at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Meanwhile pursuing his own creative projects, he directed *Needles and Opium* (1991), *Coriolanus*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest* (1992). With *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1992 he became the first North American to direct a Shakespeare play at the Royal National Theatre in London.

A turning point in his career came with the founding of his multidisciplinary production company, Ex Machina, in 1994. Under his artistic direction, this new team produced a steady output of plays, beginning with *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* (1994), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1995) and a solo production, *Elsinore* (1995).

In 1994, he made his début in the world of cinema. He wrote and directed his first feature film, *Le Confessionnal*, which appeared the following year at the Cannes Festival Directors' Fortnight. He went on to direct *Polygraph* in 1996, *Nô* in 1997, *Possible Worlds* in 2000 (his first feature film written in English), and finally, in 2003, a film adaptation of his play *The Far Side of the Moon*.

La Caserne, a multidisciplinary production centre in Quebec City, opened in 1997 under Robert Lepage's leadership. In their new quarters he and his team created and produced *Geometry of Miracles* (1998), *Zulu Time* (1999), *The Far Side of The Moon* (2000), *La Casa Azul* (2001), a new version of *The Dragons' Trilogy* with a new cast (2003) and *The Busker's Opera* (2004). This was followed by *The Andersen Project* (2005), *Lipsynch* (2007), *The Blue Dragon* (2008) and *Eonnagata* (2009).

Robert Lepage made a grand entrance in the opera world when he staged the successful double bill: *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Erwartung* (1993). His presence on the operatic stage continued with *La Damnation de Faust* presented for the first time in the Saito Kinen Festival Matsumoto, Japan (1999), then at the Opera National de Paris and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Among his achievements in opera: *1984* based on the novel by George Orwell, with Maestro Lorin Maazel providing the musical direction (2005), *The Rake's Progress* (2007) and *The Nightingale and Other short Fables* which premiered at the Canadian Opera Company this past October.

Robert Lepage is often asked to turn his creative hand to new fields. In 1993, he directed Peter Gabriel's *Secret World Tour*. In 2000, he was involved in producing *Métissages*, an exhibition at the Musée de la civilisation in Quebec City. In 2002, he joined forces with Peter Gabriel again to direct *Growing Up Tour*. He later designed and directed *KÅ*, a permanent Cirque du Soleil show in Las Vegas, which premiered in February 2005. For Quebec City's 400th anniversary in 2008, Robert Lepage and Ex Machina created the largest architectural projection ever achieved: *The Image Mill™*.

Robert Lepage's work has won him many awards. Among the most important was the medal of the Officers of the Ordre national du Québec in 1999. In October, 2001, he was recognized with the World Leaders Association of Harbourfront Centre, once again in honour of the international scope of his career. In 2002, France received him into the Légion d'honneur, the Quebec Chamber of Commerce named him "Grand Québécois", and he won the Herbert Whittaker Drama Bench Award for his outstanding contribution to Canadian theatre. In 2007, the Festival de l'Union des Théâtres de l'Europe honoured him with the distinguished Prix Europe, previously awarded to Ariane Mnouchkine and Bob Wilson among others. In 2009, Robert Lepage received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for his outstanding contribution to the cultural life of Canada.