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SFU Woodward's Achieves Critical and Box-Office Success with *The Blue Dragon/Le Dragon Bleu*

The Blue Dragon/Le Dragon Bleu, the headline production in the new **SFU Woodward's Inaugural Program**, has come to a successful close after generating both enthusiastic praise from the critics and final audience numbers that surpassed all advance projections.

Robert Lepage's internationally acclaimed multimedia production was staged from February 2 – 27 at Simon Fraser University's newest downtown facility, with a mix of French and English-language performances. The play, part of the 2010 Cultural Olympiad, was co-presented by SFU Contemporary Arts and Théâtre La Seizième. Twenty-one of the 26 performances were sold out, which represents an average of 94% of house capacity over the entire run. Audiences included a mix of local theatregoers and Olympic visitors from across Canada as well as from Australia and the UK, the USA and Mexico, Japan, France, Finland and Brazil.

Local and national critics applauded *The Blue Dragon* for its superb production values and powerful story, calling it "a wholly satisfying experience" (*Vancouver Sun*) and "perhaps the crowning achievement of the Cultural Olympiad" (*Globe and Mail*).

"We were simply amazed at the audience response and the extensive word of mouth that spread the story of this production so broadly", says Michael Boucher, SFU Woodward's Director of Cultural Programs and Partnerships. "My hat is off to an incredible team of people leading our charge - great marketing, publicity, administrative and technical support - all coming together to accomplish what needed to be done. For me personally, the most rewarding outcome was the cross section of people of all ages from all across Vancouver who came to see this show in such numbers. We look forward to welcoming them back again to future SFU Woodward's events as well as our Contemporary Arts productions."

As it will continue to do, SFU Woodward's hired front of house staff from the local community, engaging 20 people to work as theatre ushers through a partnership with the BOB program (Building Opportunities with Business) which aims to develop business in the Downtown Eastside and find work opportunities for DTES residents. The BOB recruits joined SFU Contemporary Arts students to make up the ushers' team and Theatre Manager Heather Blakemore describes the project as a major success. Complimentary tickets were given to local social agencies including the Carnegie Centre and Vancouver Moving Theatre as a community engagement initiative, so that disadvantaged area residents were able to see the show.

Simon Fraser University's newest Vancouver campus facility opened its doors to the public in January 2010 with the launch of a dynamic six-month program of exhibitions and staged performances. The program has been designed to show the potential of the visionary new SFU performance facility to invigorate and inspire Vancouver's contemporary cultural scene. SFU School for the Contemporary Arts faculty and students will take up residence in the new building in September 2010. Still to come in the Inaugural Program this spring are the multimedia theatrical production **SPINE (March 10-20)** which has been co-commissioned by the Cultural Olympics, the powerful drama **Machinal (April 7-17)** and **IMPRINT (June 17-20)** which includes three premieres by leading Canadian composers, choreographers and directors. Note that *Machinal* will be relocated to SFU's Burnaby campus theatre to allow for ongoing construction work in the new complex. Meanwhile **First Nations/Second Nature**, a thought-provoking international visual arts exhibition, continues at SFU Woodward's Audain Gallery until March 20, 2010.

Visit www.sfuwoodwards.ca for more information on SFU Woodward's and Inaugural Program events and exhibitions.