



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 4, 2009

Contact: Heather Kennedy, Media Relations - SFU Woodward's, 604.723.2562, heatherkennedy.vcr@gmail.com
For Simon Fraser University information: Susan Jamieson-McLarnon, SFU PAMR, 778.782.5151, jamieson@sfu.ca

Visionary Building, Visionary Artists: SFU Woodward's Inaugural Program Inspires with *The Blue Dragon* and *SPINE*

The new SFU Woodward's Contemporary Arts complex at 149 West Hastings St. opens its doors to the public in January 2010, drawing back the curtain on a remarkable six-month Inaugural Program of exhibitions, theatre, dance and multimedia performances. The program will be a high-profile introduction to the visionary new Simon Fraser University facility where arts, culture and communities come together in partnership – to engage, entertain and inspire.

"I am extremely excited that we will open SFU Woodward's with the internationally-celebrated artist Robert Lepage, and gifted Canadian artists James Sanders and Steven Hill," says SFU Woodward's Director of Cultural Programs and Partnerships, Michael Boucher. "This new cultural venue will allow us to provide multiple and simultaneous offerings from all arts disciplines. Combined with an interdisciplinary teaching facility, SFU Woodward's will create a unique opportunity for new cultural partnerships. It will contribute to arts, culture and communities in an already vibrant and diverse neighbourhood, the Downtown Eastside."

Headlining the Inaugural Program is **The Blue Dragon/Le Dragon Bleu**, created by Québec theatrical genius Robert Lepage (**February 2–27**). This must-see production is a sequel to Lepage's career-launching *Dragon's Trilogy*. Twenty-five years later, *The Blue Dragon* takes us to modern-day Shanghai where Pierre Lamontagne, the haunting central figure in the Trilogy, has now established himself as part of the contemporary Chinese art scene. Performed by Lepage along with co-writer **Marie Michaud** and **Tai Wei Foo**, the production unites thrilling high-tech wizardry with Lepage's trademark storytelling gifts. *The Blue Dragon* is part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad and is co-presented by SFU Contemporary Arts and Théâtre la Seizième. There are two performances in French, **February 2–3**, followed by an English-language run from **February 4–27**.

Other productions and exhibitions in the Inaugural Program include:

The Show Must Go On – French choreographer **Jérôme Bel** is a pivotal figure in international dance and *The Show Must Go On* is regarded as his signature stage work. It's both charmed and outraged audiences around Europe and North America since 2001, winning a New York theatre Bessie Award along the way. Bel is preoccupied with the formation and transmission of identity – both of his performers and those who watch them – and this innovative production engages audiences in unexpected and marvelous ways. "...sly, witty, joyous fun." (*New York Times*). Presented as part of the PuSh Festival (**January 20–23**).

First Nations/Second Nature (Audain Gallery) – A cornerstone of SFU Woodward's, the street-front **Audain Gallery** is free and open to the public. Its inaugural exhibition, *First Nations/Second Nature* explores North American Natives' concepts of place and territory, in the context of this continent's colonial history. Local, national and international perspectives come together through works by **Matthew Buckingham, Greg Curnoe, Stan Douglas, Sam Durant, Jimmie Durham, Andrea Geyer, Brian Jungen** and **Patricia Reed** and new site-specific commissions by **Rebecca Belmore** and **Cheryl L'Hirondelle**.

Exhibit curator – Candice Hopkins; Audain Gallery curator – SFU Contemporary Arts faculty member Sabine Bitter. *First Nations/Second Nature* is part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad (**February 6–March 20**).

SPINE – At our very core, who are we? Boldly physical and with spectacular imagery, this character-driven story propels us into a world of avatars where a man explores the possibilities of reinventing his body and identity through the use of new technologies and ethically questionable experiments. Written by **Kevin Kerr** (*Skydive*), directed by **Bob Frazer** and starring **James Sanders**, *SPINE* is a co-production of SFU Contemporary Arts, Realwheels and the University of Alberta and is co-commissioned by the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad (**March 10–20**).

Machinal – by Sophie Treadwell, directed by Steven Hill. What brings a 1928 Broadway hit back to the stage in 2010? Its exploration of universal themes of alienation, personal choice and mechanization – themes that continue to be relevant and compelling in our modern-day world. *Machinal* is loosely based on the true story of Ruth Snyder, trapped in a drab, loveless existence until her glimpse of a passionate life puts her on a murderous path which ultimately leads to the electric chair. The powerful drama is an expressionistic masterpiece. The production features SFU's Bachelor of Fine Arts acting class directed by **Steven Hill**, co-artistic director of the acclaimed Leaky Heaven Circus (**April 7–17**).

IMPRINT – Three extraordinary premieres are on the program for this spectacular event. Audiences have the opportunity to explore music, dance, theatre and technology by leading Canadian composers, choreographers and directors. Works include *Minx* by **Rudolf Komorous**, *Cut Flowers* by **Linda Catlin Smith**, and *Imprint* by composer **Owen Underhill** and choreographer **Henry Daniel**. The production is presented by **Turning Point Ensemble** in partnership with the SFU Contemporary Arts (**June 17–20**).

All of the Inaugural Program's stage productions will be in the 450-seat **Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre**, a versatile production space ideally suited for contemporary multi-disciplinary presentations. The theatre's name honours the prominent Vancouver businessman, respected community leader and former SFU chancellor Milton Wong and his wife Fei. Their major financial contribution to the SFU School for the Contemporary Arts has made the state-of-the-art theatre a reality. The venue will be the centrepiece of the 125,000 square foot SFU Woodward's facility, which will house SFU's School for the Contemporary Arts as of September 2010.

Tickets available online through www.sfuwoodwards.ca or by calling 604.873.3311.

Tickets for *The Show Must Go On* available through Tickets Tonight at www.ticketstonight.ca.

Full Inaugural Program details, including a seating chart of the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre, are at www.sfuwoodwards.ca.

-30-

Digital images available – contact Heather Kennedy, tel. 604.723.2562 or heatherkennedy.vcr@gmail.com