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Innovative New Multimedia Drama *SPINE* Sparks SFU Woodward's Inaugural Program – March 10-20

SFU Woodward's Inaugural Program will present the world premiere of **SPINE**, a production that takes audiences on a riveting ride into the world of virtual reality. It's the creation of the University of Alberta's **Kevin Kerr**, Simon Fraser University alumnus **James Sanders** and award-winning Vancouver actor **Bob Frazer**, the creative trio that produced the wildly popular action-adventure-comedy *Skydive*. *SPINE* will be staged from **March 10–20** in the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre, in Simon Fraser University's new SFU Woodward's Contemporary Arts complex at 149 West Hastings St.

SPINE takes audiences into a virtual universe where avatars provide a seductive opportunity to reinvent one's body and soul, free from the boundaries of human physicality and conventional morality. It's a modern exploration of our changing relationship with our bodies and our notions of identity, truth, and love in an increasingly mediated world. The play also pushes the boundaries of technology, making imaginative use of video screens and three-dimensional projections that can be influenced by actors onstage.

"*SPINE* is a character-driven story about someone trying to use technology to reinvent his body and identity," says Kevin Kerr, a Governor General Award-winning playwright. "We examine that, along with the growing relationship to our identities through virtual reality. People are getting increasingly comfortable in creating identities online that may not correspond to their actual personal or physical selves. So we're asking, what does it mean to be real, to be human?"

James Sanders is the central character in *SPINE*. The real-life Sanders became a quadriplegic following a spinal cord injury in 1990. He's now the director of Realwheels, the Vancouver-based theatre company co-producing *SPINE* in partnership with the University of Alberta. Realwheels' mandate is create shows that deepen audiences' understanding of the disability experience. This production of *SPINE* coincides with the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games.

Bob Frazer, University of Alberta's Mary Mooney distinguished-visiting-artist, will direct the SFU Woodward's production. Frazer is well known in Vancouver as an actor and his performance along with Sanders in *Skydive (2007)* captivated audiences and critics during that year's PuSh Festival. *SPINE* will be Frazer's directing debut. The cast of *SPINE* is made up of the University of Alberta's Bachelor of Fine Arts 2010 graduating class, working with Sanders who takes the lead role. The play's development has been a collaborative process, with the actors, designers and a technological team coming together in workshops to create and refine elements of the production.

The artistic partnership between SFU Contemporary Arts and the University of Alberta will serve as a model for future educational partnerships at SFU Woodward's.

The production has been co-commissioned by the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad.

Reserved seats - buy tickets online at www.sfuwoodwards.ca or call the box office at 604.873.3311.

More information on *SPINE*, including a seating chart of the Fei and Milton Wong Experimental Theatre, is available at www.sfuwoodwards.ca.