



The Blue Dragon © Yanick MacDonald

# The Blue Dragon

by Marie Michaud & Robert Lepage  
production Ex Machina

# The Blue Dragon – Director's note

When we created *The Dragons' Trilogy*, none of us had ever been to China. Back then, the Middle Kingdom was the “great unknown,” an ever-shifting mirror that allowed us to see and understand ourselves better.

As we toured our productions, this fascinating land—which until then we had explored only in our imaginations—opened itself to us, revealing its wonders, its ancient cultures, and also, of course, its contradictions and paradoxes. For years, Western countries wanted China to open its borders, to allow the free passage of people and goods, to get in step with the global market economy. Now that it has embraced profound change, we realize that China, the country we so longed to align with capitalism, now has the power to set its own agenda.

Our contradictory feelings about China today were perfectly illustrated by the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics. The event showcased China's rich cultural heritage, but it also demonstrated the country's tremendous and terrifying power. And now we are beginning to wonder: Is this gigantic whale about to swallow us whole? Will it transform itself, as in Hebrew folklore, into a golem that will crush us all?

One thing is sure: China is on the cusp of change, poised at a crossroads of vast ideas and limitless possibilities—making it a fascinating setting for *The Blue Dragon*.

Robert Lepage

# The Blue Dragon

Québécois director Robert Lepage's characters are often travellers drawn to the revealing encounter with the other, the exotic, the unknown. Yet in all the stories Lepage has told through opera, film, or theatre, only one of his characters has ever gone away for good—Pierre Lamontagne, the central figure in *The Dragons' Trilogy*, who departs as the play closes to study art in China.

Twenty years later, Lamontagne resurfaces in Shanghai's Moganshan 50, a former industrial complex converted into an arts centre, now the heart of the contemporary Chinese art scene. Here he meets Claire Forêt, a Montreal ad executive, arrives for a visit to rekindle their friendship and adopt a Chinese baby. Claire, who had known Pierre in another life at art school, casts a decidedly western eye on his current existence. Through the shock of their rediscovery and confrontation, their common past opens an unexpected door to the future for both. Enter Xiao Ling, a Chinese artist exhibiting at Pierre's gallery. As she faces wrenching choices, the young woman awakens hopes long buried in Claire.

In the effervescent paradox that is modern China, the collision of these three characters brings about fundamental changes for each.

Co-written by Robert Lepage, winner of the 2007 Europe Theatre Prize, and his collaborator Marie Michaud (who also co-authored *The Dragons' Trilogy*), and performed by Marie Michaud, Henri Chassé and dancer Tai Wei Foo, *The Blue Dragon* bears all the hallmarks of Lepage's original, brilliant, and highly visual style. As always, Lepage relies on the one inexhaustible resource the theatre possesses—the audience's intelligence.

# The Blue Dragon – Biographies

## Marie Michaud



When she left the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec en 1982, Marie Michaud has been a member of Théâtre Repère for six years. She has worked several times under the direction of Robert Lepage. She collaborated with him in the writing of *The Dragons' Trilogy*, for example, and played the role of Jeanne, for which she received the FTA Best Actress Award. In addition to her television roles, she has also appeared in Alexis Martin's stage adaptation of *The Iliad*, in Carlo Goldoni's *La Locandiera*, *Désordre Public* by Évelyne de la Chenelière, Shelagh Stephenson's *The Memory of Water*, Bernard Marie Koltès' *Roberto Zucco*, Thomas Bernhard's *Old Masters* and many other plays. A remarkable improvisational actor, as a star player with the LNI she has frequently shared the stage with top international actors.

## Henri Chassé



Henri Chassé's career is rich in theatrical, television and film activities, and he's at ease both in the classical repertoire and in contemporary works. On stage, he was part of many a TNM play: *La fausse suivante*, *L'avare*, *Macbeth*, *L'Odyssée...* He was also behind the success of *Dévoilement devant notaire* (Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui), *Blasted* (Théâtre de Quat'Sous), *Les jumeaux vénitiens* (Théâtre St-Denis), *Le vrai monde?* (Théâtre du Rideau Vert) and *Maîtres anciens* (FTA and tours). As for motion pictures, his work includes *Post Mortem* (L. Bélanger) and *La position de l'escargot* (M. Saäl). On television, his many performances include parts in *Les machos*, *Gypsies* and *Chartrand et Simone*. In 2002, he received the Géméaux for best performance by an actor for his rendering of Louis in *Le monde de Charlotte*, a part that he's taking on again in the sequel to this series: *Un monde à part*.

## Tai Wei Foo



A native of Singapore, Tai Wei Foo trained in traditional and modern dance. In 1997 she joined Tampines Arts Troupe with whom she performed in Quan Zhou, China in 2004, and then she went to perform in Sri Lanka with Buddha Vihara Society. Since 2005 she has studied contemporary dance at the Ecole de Danse de Québec, and has performed in many traditional Chinese dance shows. *The Blue Dragon* is her first experience as an actress, and she choreographed all the dances in the show.

# The Blue Dragon – Robert Lepage



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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. Contemporary history is his source of inspiration, and his modern and unusual work transcends all boundaries.

Robert Lepage was born in Quebec in 1957. He took an early interest in geography, and when he later discovered all art forms, theatre caught his particular attention. He entered the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec in 1975 at the age of 17. After a study period in Paris in 1978 he returned to Quebec and became involved in 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. The next year *The Dragon's 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).

# The Blue Dragon – Robert Lepage

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 Cirque du Soleil shows: *KÀ* in 2005, a permanent show in Las Vegas, and *TOTEM* in 2010, a show under Grand Chapiteau that will tour worldwide. For Quebec City's 400th anniversary in 2008, Robert Lepage and Ex Machina created the largest architectural projection ever achieved: *The Image Mill*<sup>™</sup>. In 2009, *Aurora Borealis*, a permanent lighting installation inspired by the colors of the northern lights was created on the same location.

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 in Toronto at the Canadian Opera Company (2009), and has been presented at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and Opéra de Lyon in 2010. *Das Rheingold*, Wagner's Ring prelude, premiered September 2010 at The Metropolitan Opera with the cycle being presented during the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons.

Robert Lepage's work has been recognized by many awards. Among the most important was the medal of the Officers of the Ordre national du Quebec in 1999. In September 2000, he was given the SORIQ Award (La Société des relations internationales de Québec) for the impact of his work outside Quebec. 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. The following year he won the Denise Pelletier Prize, the highest distinction awarded by the Quebec government in the performing arts field, as well as the National Theatre School's Gascon Thomas Award. In 2004 he was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Prize for his outstanding artistic contribution to honouring Hans Christian Andersen worldwide. In 2005 he received the Institut France-Canada's Samuel de Champlain Prize for his contribution to French culture and the Stanislavski Award for his contribution to international theatre and the dissemination of his productions *The Dragons' Trilogy*, *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* and *The Busker's Opera*. 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. The production of *The Far Side of the Moon* was recognized by The Golden Mask Festival of Russian Performing Arts 2007 in the category of Best Foreign Production. In 2009, he received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for his outstanding contribution to the cultural life of the country.

# The Blue Dragon – credits

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| By                              | Marie Michaud<br>Robert Lepage               |
| English translation             | Michael Mackenzie                            |
| Director                        | Robert Lepage                                |
| Assistant to the director       | Félix Dagenais                               |
| Performed by                    | Marie Michaud<br>Henri Chassé<br>Tai Wei Foo |
| Set designer                    | Michel Gauthier                              |
| Properties designer             | Jeanne Lapierre                              |
| Sound designer                  | Jean-Sébastien Côté                          |
| Lighting designer               | Louis-Xavier Gagnon-Lebrun                   |
| Costume designer<br>Assisted by | François St-Aubin<br>Jessica Poirier-Chang   |
| Projection designer             | David Leclerc                                |
| Choreographer                   | Tai Wei Foo                                  |
| Director's agent                | Lynda Beaulieu                               |
| Production manager              | Julie Marie Bourgeois                        |
| Technical director              | Pierre Gagné                                 |
| Tour manager                    | Caroline Ferland                             |
| Stage manager                   | Christian Garon                              |
| Sound manager                   | Donato Wharton                               |
| Video manager                   | Alexis Rivest                                |
| Lighting manager                | David Desrochers                             |
| Wardrobe and prop manager       | Jeanne Lapierre                              |

# The Blue Dragon – credits

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Chief stagehand   | Chloé Blanchet  |
| Stagehand   | Simon Laplante  |
| Technical consultant  | Tobie Horswill<br>Catherine Guay  |
| Wigs  | Richard Hansen  |
| Set building  | Astuce Décors inc.<br>Les Conceptions visuelles Jean-Marc Cyr inc.<br>Conception Alain Gagné inc.   |
| Chinese calligraphy   | Truong Chanh Trung  |
| Produced by   | Ex Machina  |
| In coproduction with  | La Comète (scène Nationale de Châlons-en-Champagne)<br>La Filature, Scène Nationale de Mulhouse<br>MC2 : Maison de la Culture de Grenoble<br>Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Montréal<br>Festival Internacional de las Artes de Castilla y León, Salamanca 2008<br>Le Théâtre du Trident, Québec<br>Simon Fraser University, Vancouver<br>UCLA Live<br>Canada's National Arts Centre, Ottawa<br>Cal Performances, University of California, Berkeley<br>barbican bite 10, London<br>BITEF Belgrade International Theater Festival<br>Le Volcan, Scène nationale du Havre<br>TNT - Théâtre national de Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées<br>Ulster Bank Dublin Festival<br>Festival de Otoño de la Comunidad de Madrid<br>Théâtre National de Chaillot, Paris<br>Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre<br>Melbourne International Arts Festival |
| Associate producer, Europe, Japan                                       | Richard Castelli  |
| Associate producer's management team, Europe, Japan                     | Chara Skiadelli, Florence Berthaud, Claire Dugot  |
| Associate producer, United Kingdom                                      | Michael Morris  |
| Associate producer, The Americas, Asia (except Japan),<br>Australia, NZ | Menno Plukker   |
| Producer for Ex Machina   | Michel Bernatchez   |

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