

For Immediate Release

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**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY'S JACK H. SKIRBALL CENTER
BEGINS ITS SECOND SEASON AS A MAJOR PRESENTER
WITH THE WORLD PREMIERE OF
MABOU MINES' RED BEADS SEPTEMBER, 20-24**
**SEMINAL EXPERIMENTAL THEATER COMPANY CELEBRATES 35TH ANNIVERSARY
WITH NEW MULTIMEDIA WORK: A COLLABORATION
WITH ACCLAIMED PUPPETEER BASIL TWIST AND 24 NYU STUDENTS**
FOUR PERFORMANCES ONLY!

The 2005-2006 fall and winter season of NYU's **Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts** is a surprisingly broad and ambitious one for the institution's second season as a major presenter of live performance. The beautiful, 860-seat theater on Washington Square Park will host 34 performances of 12 public programs. The first is the world premiere of *Red Beads*, a visually spectacular collaboration between the seminal experimental theater troupe **Mabou Mines** and the avant-garde puppeteer **Basil Twist**. Produced by Mabou Mines in association with the Skirball Center, who are also co-commissioners of the work, the show will run for four performances: September 20, 22, 23, 24. Opening night begins at 7:30 P.M. on opening night, 8:00 P.M. on the 22nd and 23rd, and 7:00 P.M. on the 24th.

Red Beads features Clove Galilee, Rob Besserer and Ruth Maleczek in a Skirball show *par excellence*: a multimedia, interdisciplinary work by two of the most highly acclaimed innovators in the performing arts, Mabou Mines and Basil Twist. Skirball Center executive director Wiley Hausam emphasized the artists' decision to ask two dozen NYU students of acting, dance and music to be a part of the production: "*Red Beads* is an exemplary Skirball Center production: a world premiere in which world-renowned theater artists work side by side with NYU's most talented students, in performance, to create a bold new work."

The New York Times has called Mabou Mines co-artistic director and co-founder Lee Breuer "a wizard-director, an alchemist who blends ideas, genres, styles, texts and technologies to make new kinds of theater." *The Village Voice* says Basil Twist has "made viable the theater that visionary artists of a century ago—Scriabin, Kandinsky, Appia, Loie Fuller, Gordon Craig—only dreamed about." To create the score, Breuer tapped Ushio Torikai, whom he describes as "sort of a Japanese combination of Laurie Anderson and Philip Glass."

Like the immensely acclaimed and multiple award winning *Mabou Mines DollHouse*, *Red Beads* finds Breuer combining the seemingly disparate arts of performance, movement opera, and puppetry. In *Mabou Mines DollHouse*, he turned Ibsen's 19th century bourgeois tragedy into a feminist comedy by casting all male parts to actors 4'5" and under. This time, Breuer takes as his point of departure a Siberian folk tale by Polina Klimovitskaya, about an adolescent girl's coming of age, setting it in Edwardian New England. For her 13th birthday, the girl at the center of the story is promised her mother's necklace of 13 red beads. The daughter's deliberate ascension to womanhood, and her mother's corresponding demise, culminates in a battle to the death between them.

To realize this symbolic tale, the show's creators use vertical choreography—a synthesis of aerial acrobatics, contact improvisation and ancient Japanese ceremonial dance—and wind puppetry. Most of the action takes place in the air above the stage, where cast members fly and giant-size silk puppets dance, seemingly unencumbered by human intervention. The show unfolds as a rhymed ballad *a la* Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* or Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*. If the production's visual aesthetic is reminiscent of Symbolism and Surrealism, Torikai's score draws inspiration from the choral music of Japanese nuns and mixes it with electronic elements and traditional Western tonalities. Three soloists and a choir handle the sung passages, while the poem becomes a piece of the set via projections of the text.

When it was just a poem, *Red Beads* was originally published in Breuer's book *Sister Suzie Cinema: The Collected Poems and Performance*. The production was first developed for the stage in workshop at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis in May-June, 1999. *The Minneapolis Star Tribune* reviewed the work in progress and raved, "after only a week of rehearsals, [*Red Beads*] has the makings of a singular, visually stunning theater piece." In 2001 and 2002, further development took place at MASS MoCA.

Lee Breuer and the Mabou Mines theater company first revealed their subversive approach to drama in their OBIE-winning 1974 adaptation of *The Lost Ones*, which employed the tools and playfulness of deconstruction to reinterpret Beckett's classic. Before *Mabou Mines DollHouse* (2003), Breuer mined the canon for a number of celebrated adaptations, including the Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Gospel At Colonus* (1982), the multiple OBIE-winning, gender-reversed *Lear* (1989) and the OBIE- and Outer Critics Circle-nodded *Peter and Wendy* (1996), which won two OBIE Awards, a Drama League Award, and an American Theater Wing Award. He is the author and director of the Mabou Mines trilogy *Animations*, including *The B. Beaver*, *The Red Horse*, and *The Shaggy Dog Animation*, which was awarded the OBIE for Best Play in 1978.

Basil Twist is a third generation puppeteer and the only American to graduate from the École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mezieres, France. He is the creator of the critically acclaimed *La bella dormente nel bosco* and *Symphonie Fantastique*, which premiered in New York City and has toured to San Francisco, Montreal, Washington DC, France, London and Munich. For *Symphonie Fantastique*, Twist received a 1999 Drama Desk Nomination, a UNIMA Citation of Excellence and an OBIE Award. The production returned to New York for Lincoln Center's New Vision Series in April/May of 2003. Twist worked with Mabou Mines previously on *An Epidog* and *Peter and Wendy*.

Ushio Torikai has received commissions from the Kronos Quartet, among many others. Her acclaimed albums include *Go Where?* and *A Un*, a seventy-five-minute work for 40 Japanese Buddhist Monks. Her evening-length *Son Buo No Toki*—a piece for two tenors, two baritones, a 30-voice Buddhist Monks choir and traditional Japanese dancers premiered in Tokyo and toured Japan in the fall of 2002. Torikai has lived in New York City since 1986, when she was awarded a fellowship from the Asian Cultural Council. *The New York Times* says, "Ms. Torikai has a wide-ranging musical imagination" and has called her music "exuberant, radical and dense."

Red Beads is just the first in the Skirball Center's bold, broad, and surprising fall-winter lineup of performances. Other highlights include a major, **multi-arts festival examining and celebrating hip-hop culture**; a **Thursday night live indie music series**; new works from master contemporary choreographers **Lar Lubovitch**, **Bill T. Jones**, and **Rennie Harris**; and the U.S. premiere of the French acrobatic extravaganza, ***More or Less, Infinity***. The Skirball Center will announce its spring and summer season (March—August, 2006) in January, 2006.

At face value, tickets for *Red Beads* will cost \$45 and \$55. As always, they will be available to NYU students for \$12. With the Skirball Center's new Insider Program—a flexible, significantly discounted, advance ticket purchase plan—"Insiders," who purchase tickets to at least two shows in advance will receive a discount of 20% off regular prices. A commitment to three or more shows in advance will receive a 30% discount. Other benefits include early ordering privileges, prime seat locations, and invitations to special private events. Insider memberships are available now by telephone through the box office, 212.992.8484.

Tickets to all events through February are also available now and can be purchased at the Skirball Center box office or online at www.skirballcenter.nyu.edu.

About NYU's Skirball Center

NYU's Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, located off of Washington Square South at 566 LaGuardia Place, provides a large-scale, professional performance space for university productions and events and live professional performances from around the world. The 860-seat theater (which



opened in October 2003) hosts the only major university-based professional performing arts presenting program in Manhattan. The Center presents a broad range of live performance, including theater, dance, music, music theater and opera, solo performance, comedy, video, film, and public affairs events. The Center's mission is to serve the NYU community and create young audiences for live performance by reaching out to them with innovative, forward-thinking work at low ticket prices.

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