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**CUTTING BALL THEATER OPENS 12TH SEASON WITH
MAURICE MAETERLINCK'S "PELLEAS & MELISANDE"
October 21 – November 27, 2011**

SAN FRANCISCO (September 09, 2011) – San Francisco's cutting-edge **Cutting Ball Theater** opens its 12th season with French symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck's **PELLEAS & MELISANDE**, in a new translation by Cutting Ball Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. Directed by Melrose, with a musical score by composer Cliff Caruthers, video installation by Wesley Cabral, and choreography by Laura Arrington, **PELLEAS & MELISANDE** features **Joshua Schell, Catilyn Louchard, Derek Fischer, Paul Gerrior, and Gwyneth Richards**, along with **Bennett Fisher, Jessica Rudholm, Carla Pauli, and Brittany Kilcoyne McGregor**. **PELLEAS & MELISANDE** plays **October 21-November 27** (*Press opening: October 27*) at the Cutting Ball Theater in residence at EXIT on Taylor (277 Taylor Street) in San Francisco. For tickets (\$10-50) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**.

PELLEAS & MELISANDE has all the ingredients for a classic fairy tale: a princess in distress, a handsome prince, and a beautiful castle. Yet this seminal avant-garde play reveals that it is often easy to hide secrets in the shadows of the familiar. After Melisande's royal wedding, her growing feelings for her husband's brother Pelleas threaten to jeopardize her happily ever after. Their tragic love affair has inspired music from Claude Debussy's opera to orchestral works by Gabriel Faure, and Jean Sibelius. In addition to Cutting Ball's production, San Francisco's EXIT Press will publish Melrose's translation of **PELLEAS & MELISANDE**, along with his translations of *Ubu Roi* and *Woyzeck*; the book will include a forward by Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director of the Public Theater, and an introduction by Paul Walsh, Yale School of Drama professor and former head of dramaturgy at American Conservatory Theater.

Maurice Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* premiered in 1893 in Paris at the Bouffes-Parisiens under the direction of Aurélien Lugné-Poe; the production was the antithesis to the realism popular in French theater at the time. The play has been the basis of several pieces of music, perhaps the best known is the opera (1902) of the same name by Claude Debussy (the only opera Debussy ever completed). In 1898,

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Gabriel Fauré composed incidental music for the play, from which he later extracted a suite. The story of Pelléas and Mélisande also inspired Arnold Schoenberg’s early symphonic poem *Pelleas und Melisande* (1902-03); Jean Sibelius wrote incidental music for a version of the story in 1905.

“**PELLEAS & MELISANDE** is a play that is close to my heart,” said Cutting Ball Artistic Director Rob Melrose. “I am very excited to open Cutting Ball’s 12th season with this new version of the play, and to share this new translation of a work that I have long wanted to bring to the Cutting Ball stage. Maurice Maeterlinck was one of the most respected writers of his time; there is something about his worldview that is truly unique. It is at once modern and medieval, a fairy tale world for adults. In our busy modern lives, there is something refreshing and eye opening about spending some time in this world. I have dreamt about how to direct **PELLEAS & MELISANDE** since I first read it 20 years ago, how to open this world up to a contemporary audience. I’m thrilled to be able to bring together a team of some of Cutting Ball’s best designers, as well as many favorite company members, to help bring this evocative grown-up fairy tale to life.”

Playwright, poet, and essayist **Maurice Maeterlinck** was born in Ghent, Belgium in 1862. He was predominantly a writer of lyrical dramas, but his first work was a collection of poems entitled *Serres chaudes* (Ardent Talons), which appeared in 1889. Maeterlinck instantly became a public figure when his first play, *La Princesse Maleine* (Princess Maleine), received enthusiastic praise from Octave Mirbeau, the literary critic of *Le Figaro*, in August 1890. Lack of action, fatalism, mysticism, and the constant presence of death characterize the works of Maeterlinck’s early period, most importantly in his plays *L’Intruse* (Intruder, 1890), *Les Aveugles* (The Blind, 1890) and the love dramas *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892), *Alladine et Palomides* (1894), and *Aglavaine et Sélysette* (1896). His later works for the stage include *Joyzelle* (1903), *Marie Magdeleine* (1909), a version of a Paul Heyse play, *L’Oiseau Bleu* (The Blue Bird, 1909), and *Le Bourgmestre de Stilemonde* (The Mayor of Stilemonde, 1919), written under the impact of World War I. Maeterlinck developed his strongly mystical ideas in a number of prose works, among them *Le Trésor des Humbles* (The Treasure of the Humble, 1896), *La Sagesse et la Destinée* (Wisdom and Destiny, 1898), and *Le Temple Enseveli* (The Buried Temple, 1902). His most popular work was perhaps *La Vie des Abeilles* (The Life of the Bee, 1900). In later life, Maeterlinck became known for his philosophical essays. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911, and was given the title of Count of Belgium in 1932; he died in 1949 after suffering a heart attack.

Rob Melrose is the Artistic Director and co-founder of the Cutting Ball Theater. In addition to **PELLEAS & MELISANDE**, his directing credits for the company include the Bay Area Premiere of Will Eno’s *Lady Grey (in ever lower light)*; *The Tempest*; *The Bald Soprano*; *Victims of Duty*; *Bone to*

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Pick and Diadem (World Premiere); *Endgame*; *Krapp's Last Tape*; *The Taming of the Shrew*; *Macbeth*; *Hamletmachine*; *As You Like It*; *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*; *Mayakovsky: A Tragedy*; *My Head Was a Sledgehammer*; *Roberto Zucco*; *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts* (World Premiere); *The Sandalwood Box*; *Pickling*; *Ajax for Instance*; *Helen of Troy* (World Premiere); and *Drowning Room* (World Premiere). Translations include *No Exit*, *Woyzeck*, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, *The Bald Soprano*, and *Ubu Roi*. He has directed at The Guthrie Theater (*Happy Days*, *Pen*); Magic Theatre (*An Accident*, World Premiere); PlayMakers Rep (*Happy Days*); California Shakespeare Theater (*Villains, Fools, and Lovers*); Black Box Theatre (*The Creature*, World Premiere, BATCC Award for direction), as well as Actors' Collective; Alias Stage; and Crowded Fire, among others. He is a recipient of the NEA / TCG Career Development Program award for directors. In spring 2010, he was the Public Theater's artist-in-residence at Stanford University, where he directed *Troilus and Cressida*; Melrose will direct *Troilus and Cressida* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in association with the Public Theater as part of OSF's 2012 season, as well as the Acting Company's production of *Julius Caesar* at The Guthrie.

Cutting Ball Theater has assembled a talented ensemble for **PELLEAS & MELISANDE**. **Joshua Schell** returns to Cutting Ball as Pelleas in **PELLEAS & MELISANDE**; he appeared last season in Andrew Saito's *Krispy Kritters in the Scarlett Night* as part of *RISK IS THIS... The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival*. Additional credits include Tarell Alvin McCraney's *The Brother/Sister Plays, Part One: In The Red and Brown Water* at Marin Theatre Company, Young Jean Lee's *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* at Crowded Fire/Asian American Theater Company, and *Treefall* at New Conservatory Theatre Center. Also returning is Cutting Ball Associate Artist **Catilyn Louchard** as Melisande. Louchard previously appeared in Cutting Ball's productions of *The Tempest* and *The Bald Soprano*; additional Bay Area acting credits include *Cymbeline* with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, *A View From the Bridge* with Actor's Theatre of San Francisco, *Measure for Measure* with Shady Shakespeare, and *Tell It Slant* with the Pear Avenue Theatre/Bootstrap Foundation. As a teaching artist, she has worked with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, TheatreWorks, and Peninsula Youth Theatre. **Derek Fischer** returns to Cutting Ball as Golaud; he appeared in the company's production of *The Bald Soprano* and was most recently seen in *The Insect Play* as part of the Hidden Classics Reading Series. Additional credits include productions at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, and the Bay One Acts Festival.

Also returning to Cutting Ball is veteran stage and screen actor, and Cutting Ball Associate Artist, **Paul Gerrior** as Arkel, and **Gwyneth Richards** as Genevieve in **PELLEAS & MELISANDE**. Gerrior previously appeared in Cutting Ball's productions of Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Endgame*, *Robert Zucco*, and *As You Like It*, as well as the workshop production of Trevor Allen's *Chain Reactions* for

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RISK IS THIS... The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival. He has also participated in the company's Hidden Classics Reading Series (*Medea, Magnetism of the Heart, PELLEAS & MELISANDE*). Other credits include *Othello* with Guerrilla Shakespeare and *Chain Reactions* with C.A.F.E. His film credits include *The Seagull Project* and *Saloon Song*. Richards was most recently seen at Cutting Ball in *Lady Grey (in ever lower light) and other plays* and appeared in Cutting Ball's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* and readings of *Trojan Barbie, Snakewoman, and PELLEAS & MELISANDE*. She is the recipient of a Bay Area Critics Circle Award and has numerous Bay Area stage credits, including her one-woman show, *Born Again Through Shakespeare*, and the title roles in *Ruth and the Sea* and *The Widow West* for Wily West Productions, with whom she is a company member. Additionally, Richards has taught classes on Shakespeare for over 25 years at venues including California Shakespeare Theater, American Conservatory Theater, and the College of Marin.

Rounding out the cast are **Bennett Fisher** (Marin Shakespeare Company, AtmosTheatre, San Francisco Theater Pub), **Jessica Rudholm** (AtmosTheatre/Theatre in the Woods), **Carla Pauli** (Pacifica Spindrift Players), and **Brittany Kilcoyne McGregor** (Custom Made Theatre).

Co-founded in 1999 by theater artists Rob Melrose and Paige Rogers, Cutting Ball Theater presents avant-garde works of the past, present, and future by re-envisioning classics, exploring seminal avant-garde texts, and developing new experimental plays. Cutting Ball Theater has partnered with Playwrights Foundation, and the Magic Theatre/Z Space New Plays Initiative to commission new experimental works. The company has produced a number of World Premieres, West Coast Premieres, and re-imagined various classics. Voted “Best Theater Company” in the 2010 *San Francisco Bay Guardian* Best of the Bay issue, Cutting Ball Theater also earned the Best of SF award in 2006 from *SF Weekly*, was selected by *San Francisco Magazine* as Best Classic Theater in 2007, and received the 2008 *San Francisco Bay Guardian* Goldie award for outstanding talent in the performing arts. Cutting Ball Theater was featured in the February 2010 issue of *American Theatre Magazine*.

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

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DATES:

Previews: October 21, 22, 8pm; October 23, 5pm

Opens: October 27, 8pm (*Also press opening*)

Closes: November 27

All performances Thursday at 7:30pm; Friday-Saturday at 8pm; Saturday at 2pm; Sunday at 5pm

PELLEAS & MELISANDE special events

Gala Opening Night – October 28, 8pm, \$50 tickets

Thursdays – pre-show Dramaturgy 101 and Happy Hour

Fridays – Post-show meet and greet with the cast

Saturday, November 5 and 19, 1pm – “Music inspired by Pelleas & Melisande,” a pre-matinee lecture and discussion with composer Cliff Caruthers and New Century Chamber Orchestra’s Executive Director, Parker Monroe; free and open to the public

Sundays – post-show talkbacks with the artists

WHERE:

The Cutting Ball Theater in residence at EXIT on Taylor, 277 Taylor St., San Francisco

TICKETS:

For tickets (\$10-50) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**; student discounts available (purchase at the door only)

PHOTOS:

High-resolution photos for **PELLEAS & MELISANDE** are available at

<http://cuttingball.com/press> or upon request by emailing **brightbutterfly[at]hotmail.com**

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RISK IS THIS...The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival is funded by The Kenneth Rainin Foundation and The San Francisco Foundation