



## Theatre Calgary and the Playhouse Theatre Company Announce World Premiere Co-Production of new musical *Beyond Eden*

**MARCH 10, 2009 – Vancouver, B.C. and Calgary, AB (For immediate release)** – Theatre Calgary and the Playhouse Theatre Company of Vancouver are once again making Canadian theatre history. Today, Artistic Directors **Dennis Garnhum** (Calgary) and **Max Reimer** (Vancouver) are proud to announce that they will present the world premiere production of *Beyond Eden*, written and composed by **Bruce Ruddell**, during their 2009-10 seasons, and that the show will be featured as part of the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad.

*Beyond Eden* is an account of the 1957 expedition that saw a group of anthropologists and archaeologists travel to a cluster of remote islands in the North Pacific Ocean known as Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands) to remove the last remaining ancient Totem Poles from the deserted Haida village known as Ninstints. It is a story of struggle, love, loss, redemption and transformation all triggered by the harsh clash of European cultures and the ancient arts and culture of the Haida Nation. The universal and timeless themes of the story will resonate with people around the planet.

*Beyond Eden's* theatrical form is a full-scale musical theatre work. The show will feature a cast of 14, which is headlined by renowned Canadian musician **John Mann** of the band Spirit of the West.

*“What an extraordinary opportunity for Theatre Calgary to be a part of this important west coast story. We are proud to be partnering once again with the Vancouver Playhouse on this world premiere,”* says Dennis Garnhum, who will direct the production. *“This spectacle finds a compelling and dazzling way to tell this piece of history using song, dance and multi-media visual spectacle. Bruce Ruddell’s landscape is enormous and imaginatively envisioned. I look forward to imagining with him this beautiful world of the musical inspired by the Haida culture.”*

Max Reimer echoes the excitement for this production. *“This season at the Playhouse I am taking a fresh new look at our historical roots in order to revitalize and engage our audiences. I am thrilled that the Playhouse and Theatre Calgary are working together again after successfully co-producing **Timothy Findley’s The Wars** two seasons ago. This time we are working to bring a true BC story to the stage. I am also excited that the Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad will present this project.”*

The story of *Beyond Eden* is based on true historical events of the expedition that was organized and led by the young anthropologist/archaeologist Wilson Duff and his Haida friend, Bill Reid. What they encountered on this expedition completely changed their lives. Bill Reid had quit his job with the CBC

and had begun to explore his Haida ancestry, teaching himself how to carve and the art of jewelry making. Over the next 50 years Reid's work embraced many art forms reaching international acclaim. But perhaps more importantly, he rekindled Northwest Coast art and culture and has inspired Aboriginal people worldwide to be proud of their heritage. Following the 1957 expedition, Wilson Duff began a spirit quest into the heart of the Haida Nation. His discoveries inspired anthropologists everywhere to see Indigenous peoples in a very different light than they had been viewed in the past. Unfortunately, Duff's quest became increasingly more difficult for him and his life ended tragically with his suicide in 1976.

*Beyond Eden* is a story that Bruce Ruddell has been working on since 1984, where it first began as a 15-minute oratorio called *The World is as Sharp as a Knife*. Since then, Ruddell has worked on the show with a number of artists. Some of the artists include **Bill Henderson** of rock-band Chilliwack fame, who collaborated on the songs. Haida artist, dancer and singer **Derek Edenshaw** who has consulted on the Haida songs and ceremonies. The Haida Artistic consultant for the show is **Gwaai Edenshaw**, an accomplished artist who has studied under Bill Reid and the son of Guujaaw: President of the Council of the Haida Nation.

Also integral to the play's development was Ruddell's close friend **Bill Reid** (who passed away in 1998), American Director **Harold Prince**, and Canadian directors **Robin Phillips**, **Roy Surette**, **Glynis Leyshon** and **Dennis Garnhum**. *Beyond Eden* was recently developed as part of Theatre Calgary's 2008 *FUSE* Play Development Program, and has received additional development through workshops at the Playhouse and Victoria's Belfry Theatre.

***Beyond Eden has received the full endorsement of the Council of the Haida Nation and from the Chiefs and Elders of Haida Gwaii.***

*Beyond Eden* starts in Vancouver on January 16 and run through February 7, 2010. The opening night gala performance will be January 21 in Vancouver. The production will then move to Theatre Calgary for a run from February 16 to March 7, 2010.

Theatre Calgary is Calgary's largest professional theatre company. Its mandate consists of ambitious programming, extraordinary plays and passionate community engagement through an eclectic mix of productions that stimulate, provoke and delight. For more information, visit: [theatrecalgary.com](http://theatrecalgary.com)

The Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company is British Columbia's premier regional theatre company, producing engaging plays of the highest calibre since 1962. For more information, visit: [vancouverplayhouse.com](http://vancouverplayhouse.com)

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