

**CUTTING BALL THEATER CLOSES SEASON WITH  
“RISK IS THIS...THE CUTTING BALL NEW EXPERIMENTAL PLAYS FESTIVAL”  
May 13 – June 25, 2011**

SAN FRANCISCO (April 22, 2011) – San Francisco’s cutting-edge **Cutting Ball Theater** closes its 11<sup>th</sup> season with the adventurous **RISK IS THIS...THE CUTTING BALL NEW EXPERIMENTAL PLAYS FESTIVAL**, one of the only play festivals in America solely dedicated to experimental works for the stage. Pushing the boundaries of what theater can be, this year’s festival features five exhilarating staged readings, three of which were commissioned by Cutting Ball. The 2007 edition featured a reading of Marcus Gardley’s *...and Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi*, which became a hit for the Cutting Ball main stage in 2010, garnering three Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle awards (Entire Production, Ensemble, and Male Performance). This year’s festival offers a unique opportunity to see plays in development, alongside the artists creating them, as the works find their theatrical voice. **RISK IS THIS...THE CUTTING BALL NEW EXPERIMENTAL PLAYS FESTIVAL** runs **May 13 through June 25** at the Cutting Ball Theater in residence at EXIT on Taylor (277 Taylor Street) in San Francisco. **Free and open to the public** (General seating; \$20 donation for reserved seating; \$50 donation for 5-play reserved seating festival pass). For more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**.

“I am tremendously excited about this year’s *Risk is This...The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival*,” said Cutting Ball Artistic Director Rob Melrose. “With the help of a generous grant from the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, we’ve been able to make this year’s festival our most ambitious to date. *Risk is This...* is a chance for our artists to do groundbreaking work in a safe, supportive environment. For our audience, it is an opportunity to go behind the scenes and get a sneak peek at Cutting Ball’s most exciting upcoming projects, and a chance to be a part of the creative process and give feedback while artists are still at work. I appreciate the process of *Risk is This...* because rather than shoehorning a project into the working models of a given theater, it allows us to think outside the box, try out big ideas, and break preconceived notions of what theater can be.”

## CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS RISK IS THIS...

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The schedule for the 2011 **RISK IS THIS...THE CUTTING BALL NEW EXPERIMENTAL PLAYS FESTIVAL** is as follows:

### **TONTLAWALD** (*Cutting Ball Commission*)

By Eugenie Chan

Directed by Paige Rogers

May 13-14, 2011

**TONTLAWALD** is an original ensemble-based piece that weaves evocative a capella harmonies and visceral movement into a multilayered retelling of an ancient Estonian tale. Part concert, part dance, part fairy tale, and inspired by the work of Poland's famed Teatr ZAR, **TONTLAWALD** follows a mistreated girl who flees her tormentors and unexpectedly finds a safe home in the mysterious, forbidden *Tontlawald* – the ghost forest. Written by Cutting Ball's resident playwright Eugenie Chan and directed by Associate Artistic Director, Paige Rogers, **TONTLAWALD** is slated to receive its fully staged World Premiere as part of the company's 2011-2012 season.

### **KRISPY KRITTERS IN THE SCARLETT NIGHT**

By Andrew Saito

Directed by Rob Melrose

May 20-21, 2011

Drumhead looks for Jesus as he puts dead mice into boxes of Lucky Charms. Snowflake freezes on the corner waiting for customers in her coat lined with baby blue fur. With **KRISPY KRITTERS IN THE SCARLETT NIGHT**, playwright Andrew Saito dazzles with sublime, surreal language and images fit for a Dalí painting.

### **MADAME HO**

By Eugenie Chan

Directed by Rob Melrose

May 27-28, 2011

**MADAME HO** tells the story of a formidable woman in the Wild West, a real-life 19th century brothel hostess, single mother, Chinese immigrant, great-great grandmother, and ghost.

### **OZMA OF OZ: A TRIP-HOP MUSICAL** (*Cutting Ball Commission*)

Adapted from the novel by L. Frank Baum

Rob Melrose (book and lyrics)

Z.O.N.K. (music)

Directed by Rob Melrose

June 10-11, 2011

Cutting Ball Artistic director Rob Melrose collaborates with the San Francisco-based electro-rock group Z.O.N.K. to create Cutting Ball's first musical, a trip-hop fantasy that captures L. Frank Baum's American breed of surrealism with a hint of the post-modern. In **OZMA OF OZ**, Dorothy is transported to the land of Ev with a talking chicken named Billina. Together, they plot to overthrow the evil Nome King, but they cannot succeed without the help of a mysterious princess. This reading will feature live musical performances by Z.O.N.K. and the cast.

## CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS RISK IS THIS...

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### **TENDERLOIN** (*Cutting Ball Commission*)

By Annie Elias

Directed by Annie Elias

June 24-25, 2011

Annie Elias brings her years of experience in documentary theater to the Tenderloin, creating an unforgettable piece about the people and places in Cutting Ball's neighborhood.

### **About the Artists:**

**Eugenie Chan** is Cutting Ball Theater's resident playwright. Her plays have been produced and workshopped across the country at venues including the Public Theater, Magic Theatre, Thick Description, Brava Theater, Mixed Blood, PlayLabs, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, and others. In addition to *Bone to Pick* and the World Premiere of *Diadem*, which played earlier this season at Cutting Ball Theater, her work for the stage includes *Kitchen Table*; *B'umblebee*; *Pilgrim*; *Daphne Does Dim Sum*; *Rancho Grande*; *Emil, A Chinese Play*; *Novell-ah!*; *Tour Sino*; *Conset*; and *Willy Gee!*. Her opera libretto *Snakewoman* was part of the **RISK IS THIS...THE CUTTING BALL NEW**

**EXPERIMENTAL PLAYS FESTIVAL** in 2004. She has written political satire for the Tony Award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe, is a resident playwright at the Playwrights Foundation, and a member of New Dramatists.

**Andrew Saito** is a poet and playwright who has studied and lived in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru. A graduate of the University of Iowa Playwrights Workshop, where he was the recipient of an Iowa Arts Fellowship, Saito has worked with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the Asian-American Theater Company, Writers Corps, Performing Arts Workshop, and the legendary Peruvian theater collective Yuyachkani. He served as a Teaching Artist Fellow at Montalvo Arts Center, in San Jose, CA, has been both finalist and semifinalist for the Princess Grace Award in playwriting, and an alternate for a Fulbright Fellowship; additionally, his work has received workshops and staged readings at Magic Theatre and Brava Theater.

Breaking out of the Bay Area as tour support for bands including Concrete Blonde, the B-52's, De La Soul, Lyrics Born and The Pharcyde, **Z.O.N.K.**'s unique sound has endeared them to a fan base as eclectic as the band itself. Founded in 1999 by Nic McFiendish and Uncle Bergie, and later joined by DJ Red5 and Dave L., Z.O.N.K.'s music has been featured locally and worldwide and has been highlighted on San Francisco's Alice Radio, NPR, Better Propaganda, TheOwlMag, and Musician's Atlas, among others. Additionally, the group won the 2004 national download contest from MusicForAmerica.org.

## CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS RISK IS THIS...

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**Z.O.N.K.**'s discography includes *Half Human* (2005), *Our Five Worst Songs* (2004), *Tongue in Cheeks* (2002), and *To Play is to Win* (2001).

Writer and director **Annie Elias** specializes in ensemble playmaking, working with a group of actors to compose new plays from interviews, improvisations, adapted texts, and original writing. She has created and directed three documentary theater pieces; *Moon Over Marin*; *Write a Book, Have a Child, Plant a Tree*; and *Epiphany*, using transcripts of interviews as the basis for scripts focused on cultural issues. She has written and directed numerous plays for Phantom Theater including *Rip! The Twenty Year Night*, *Descent into Mayhem*, *Raising Rapunzel*, *Intellect*, and *Hedda Takes*. Elias is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including a development grant from the Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science and Technology Project for her dance/theater adaptation of *Einstein's Dreams* by Alan Lightman, and development support from the Magic Theatre for her play *Entranced*, based on the Sleeping Beauty myth. She was an actor in the acclaimed Chicago commedia company New Crime Productions, holds a B.A. from Mills College, was a Thomas J. Watson Fellow, and studied dramaturgy at the American Repertory Theater Institute at Harvard University. She is the Chair of the Performing Arts Department at Marin Academy.

**Rob Melrose** is the Artistic Director and co-founder of The Cutting Ball Theater, where his directing credits 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 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 Theater (*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. Last spring, he was the Public Theater's artist-in-residence at Stanford University, where he directed *Troilus and Cressida*; next season, Melrose will direct *Troilus and Cressida* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in association with the Public Theater, as well as the Acting Company's production of *Julius Caesar* at The Guthrie.

## CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS RISK IS THIS...

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**Paige Rogers** is Associate Artistic Director and co-founder of the Cutting Ball Theater. She appeared earlier this season in Eugenie Chan's plays *Bone to Pick* and *Diadem*, and last season in the company's hit production of *The Bald Soprano*; she has appeared in Cutting Ball's productions of *My Head Was a Sledgehammer*, *As You Like It*, *The Vomit Talk of Ghosts*, *Macbeth*, *Accents in Alsace*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Rogers has been seen locally with Berkeley Opera, Lamplighters, Sonoma County Repertory Theater, and on tour with California Shakespeare Theater. Nationally, she has performed at The Kennedy Center, McCarter Theater, Trinity Repertory Company, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. At Cutting Ball, her directing credits include The Hidden Classics Reading Series, Suzan-Lori Parks' *365 Plays/365 Days*, and *Risk is This...The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival* and *Mud*.

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, the Magic Theatre, and 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*.

### FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

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June 24-25, 2011

**WHEN:** All performances Friday-Saturday at 8pm

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

**TICKETS:** General seating. Free and open to the public; \$20 donation for reserved seating. \$50 donation for 5-play reserved seating festival pass. For more information, the public may visit [cuttingball.com](http://cuttingball.com) or call **800-838-3006**

The Cutting Ball Theater's 2010 - 11 season is made possible in part by The Compton Foundation, The W.A. Gerbode Foundation, Grants for the Arts / San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Magic Theatre / Z Space New Works Initiative, Mental Insight Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, The San Francisco Arts Commission, The San Francisco Foundation, Theatre Bay Area New Works Fund, United Business Media LLC, The Zellerbach Family Foundation, and by individual donors.

*Risk is This ...The Cutting Ball New Experimental Plays Festival* is part of The Cutting Ball Theater's New Experimental Plays Initiative, which is generously supported by the Kenneth Rainin Foundation.