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**CUTTING BALL THEATER OPENS SEASON
WITH RARELY-PERFORMED ABSURDIST GEM
“VICTIMS OF DUTY”**

Translated by Donald Watson

Ionesco play begins Company's residency at EXIT on Taylor

October 24 – November 23, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO (September 17, 2008) – San Francisco's cutting-edge **Cutting Ball Theater** opens its 2008-09 season with **VICTIMS OF DUTY** from the master of absurdism, Eugène Ionesco. Cutting Ball Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** helms Ionesco's most surreal and autobiographical play, starring **David Sinaiko** and **Felicia Benefield**, and featuring **Avery Monsen** and **Ryan Oden**, **October 24 through November 23** (*Press opening: Thursday, October 30*). The production begins Cutting Ball Theater's residency at Exit on Taylor, 277 Taylor Street in San Francisco. For tickets (\$15-30) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**.

A humorously eccentric experiment in theatrical possibilities, **VICTIMS OF DUTY** finds Choubert and Madeleine enjoying a quiet evening at home in their Parisian apartment where “nothing ever happens.” There is an unexpected knock at the door. A detective enters, claiming that he is trying to track down the previous tenant. What starts as a simple interrogation quickly becomes one of the most mind-bending journeys ever imagined for the stage.

“I've wanted to direct **VICTIMS OF DUTY** for 15 years,” said Cutting Ball Artistic Director Rob Melrose. “Not only is it one of my favorite plays, but it is also a fitting choice for our first production as EXIT on Taylor's resident company - they have presented 33 productions of Ionesco and have never produced this particular play. With this production, which will be a provocative, ultra-modern embrace of the absurdist spirit, we hope to usher in a new era of experimental work in our new theatrical home.”

CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS “VICTIMS OF DUTY”

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Cutting Ball Theater has assembled a talented ensemble for **VICTIMS OF DUTY**. **David Sinaiko** returns to the Company as Choubert. He has appeared in Cutting Ball’s productions of *Endgame*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *The Sandalwood Box*, *Ajax, for Instance*, *Macbeth*, and *Woyzeck*, among others. Additional credits include productions at the Goodman Theatre and The Actor’s Gang; he is a founding member of Chicago’s New Crime Productions. **Felicia Benefield** returns to the Company as Madeleine. Benefield most recently appeared in Cutting Ball’s *Avant GardARAMA! 2008*, as well as *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, and *Woyzeck*, among others.

Also returning to the Company are **Avery Monsen** as Mallot/Nicolas D’eu, and **Ryan Oden** as The Detective. Monson has performed in Cutting Ball’s productions of *Endgame* and *The Taming of the Shrew*; a recent graduate of Oberlin College, he also trained at the Moscow Art Theater and with the Upright Citizens Brigade in Los Angeles. **Ryan Oden** previously appeared in Cutting Ball productions of *Woyzeck*, *Fighter Airplane*, *Ajax, for Instance*, *Helen of Troy*, and *The Sandalwood Box*; additional credits include productions at TheatreWorks, Impact Theatre, and Theatre Rhinoceros, among others.

Artistic Director and co-founder of Cutting Ball Theater **Rob Melrose** has directed several productions for the company, including *Avant GardARAMA!*, *Endgame*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Macbeth*, *Hamletmachine*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, *Mayakovsky: A Tragedy*, *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). Additionally, he has translated *No Exit*, *Woyzeck*, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, and *Ubu Roi*. Melrose’s directing credits include productions at the Guthrie Theater (*Pen*), California Shakespeare Theater (*Villains, Fools, and Lovers*), and Crowded Fire (*The Train Play*), among others. He has assistant directed on productions at The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival (*Hamlet*, Oskar Eustis, director), Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*The Pillowman*, Les Waters, director), American Conservatory Theater (*Indian Ink*, Carey Perloff, director), Guthrie Theater (*Othello*, Joe Dowling, director), and Yale Repertory Theatre (*Twelfth*

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CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS “VICTIMS OF DUTY”

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Night, Mark Rucker, director). He is currently a 2007 – 2009 recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors.

Romanian-born playwright **Eugene Ionesco** is considered the father of the Theatre of the Absurd. Rejecting the logical plot, character development, and thought of traditional drama, Ionesco created his own anarchic form of comedy to convey modern man’s existence in a universe ruled by chance. He is the author of more than 20 plays, including *The Bald Soprano* (1950), *The Lesson* (1951), *The Chairs* (1952), *Victims of Duty* (1953), *Jack, or the Submission* (1954), *Rhinoceros* (1959), *Exit the King* (1962), *A Stroll in the Air* (1963), *Macbett* (1972), and *Journeys Among the Dead* (1980). Ionesco’s peers included Samuel Beckett and Arthur Adamov; his work in absurdism laid the foundation for contemporary playwrights including Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard.

Co-founded in 1999 by husband and wife team 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, Magic Theatre, and Z Space New Plays Initiative to commission new experimental works, including *Bone to Pick* by Eugenie Chan. The company has produced a number of World Premieres and West Coast Premieres, and re-imagined various classics. Cutting Ball Theater earned the Best of SF Award in 2006 for Theater from *SF Weekly*, and was selected by *San Francisco Magazine* as Best Classic Theater in 2007.

Cutting Ball Theater’s production of *Victims of Duty* is made possible in part by grants from Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund and Mental Insight Foundation.

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CUTTING BALL THEATER PRESENTS "VICTIMS OF DUTY"

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FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

San Francisco's cutting-edge **Cutting Ball Theater** opens its 2008-09 season with the master of absurdism, Eugène Ionesco's **VICTIMS OF DUTY**. Choubert and Madeleine enjoy a quiet evening at home in their Parisian apartment where "nothing ever happens." There is an unexpected knock at the door and a detective enters. What starts as a simple interrogation quickly becomes one of the most mind-bending journeys ever imagined for the stage. Cutting Ball Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** helms Ionesco's most surreal and autobiographical play, featuring **Felicia Benefield, Avery Monsen, Ryan Oden, and David Sinaiko**.

Co-founded in 1999 by husband and wife team 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. The company has produced a number of World Premieres and West Coast Premieres, and re-imagined various classics. Cutting Ball Theater earned the Best of SF Award in 2006 for Theater from SF Weekly, and was selected by San Francisco Magazine as Best Classic Theater in 2007.

WHEN:

Previews: October 24, 25 at 8pm; October 26 at 5pm;

Opens: October 30 at 8pm

Press opening: Thursday, October 30, 8pm

Closes: November 23 at 5pm

All performances Thursday-Saturday at 8pm and Sunday at 5pm

WHERE:

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

TICKETS:

For tickets (\$15-30) and more information, the public may visit **cuttingball.com** or call **800-838-3006**; discounts available for students and seniors

PHOTOS:

Art for **VICTIMS OF DUTY** can be found at <http://www.cuttingball.com/press.php> or by emailing [brightbutterfly\[at\]hotmail.com](mailto:brightbutterfly[at]hotmail.com)

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