



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, interviews or visuals please contact:

Elizabeth O'Grady
Marketing & Public Relations Manager
Bata Shoe Museum
416.979.7799 x225
elizabeth.ogrady@batashoemuseum.ca

Bata Shoe Museum Welcomes Peking Opera Star Performing for First Time Outside China *- A unique chance to see Lotus Shoes in action -*

TORONTO, ON, May 28, 2007 – The Bata Shoe Museum, in partnership with the Harbourfront Centre for the Dim Sum Chinese Festival from July 20 to 22, is pleased to be hosting a lecture and *Nan Dan* demonstration by Master Bi Gu Yun—renowned Peking Opera sensation—whose upcoming Canadian appearances mark his first time ever performing outside China. Following the Dim Sum Chinese Festival at the Harbourfront Centre, the Bata Shoe Museum invites audiences on July 24 from 3 to 5 pm to discover the unique art of the *Nan Dan*, a celebrated Chinese opera tradition wherein males assume female roles.

Despite being steeped in Chinese operatic history, the *Nan Dan* tradition is an increasingly rare art form. Banned from 1965 to 1975 due to the Cultural Revolution, it is no longer a mainstay in Chinese opera curriculums. As a result, Master Bi is a member of a great generation of artists who have received traditional training in this beautiful and awe-inspiring art form.

Shoe connoisseurs are bound to be impressed by Master Bi's forte: his remarkable *Qiao* technique, which uses specially designed theatrical shoes to imitate the bound feet of aristocratic women. Footbinding originated in China around the 10th century among upper class women. The practice required young girls to have their feet bound with meters of tightly wound fabric, thus altering their feet painfully and permanently—a 3 inch foot being the desired outcome. The resulting silhouette, popularly referred to as the 'lotus foot,' mimicked the shape of a lotus flower and transformed the way women carried themselves. Master Bi's use of faux-Lotus shoes, paired with his classical repertoire, offers a truly one-of-a-kind experience to see such 'small feet' in action.

| more |

Born in 1930, Master Bi has graced stages all over China, captivating audiences in Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, and has appeared in major opera films and television documentaries.

Master Bi's Canadian debut has been conceived by William Lau, a Chinese-Canadian operatic dance artist. Mr. Lau explains, "Master Bi is drawn to Toronto's pluralistic makeup and fascinated by the Bata Shoe Museum. This visit is a rare treat for us all: a chance to showcase the little known *Nan Dan* operatic tradition and an opportunity for Master Bi to connect with Canadian audiences and artists alike."

The afternoon's rich cultural experience will include a select exhibit of Peking Opera theatrical shoes from the collection of William Lau, complemented with artifacts from the Bata Shoe Museum's own collection of Chinese footwear. The exhibit will run from July 23 to August 5. The lecture, exhibit and performance are included in regular Museum admission prices.

Partnering with the Bata Shoe Museum as part of the Dim Sum Chinese Festival from July 20 to 22, the Harbourfront Centre will feature a performance by Master Bi followed by a panel discussion on Chinese beauty standards throughout the ages on July 21 at 3 pm in the Brigantine Room. In addition, an exhibition of Peking Opera theatrical shoes will be on view throughout the festival from July 20 to 22 in the Loft. For more information about this event, please contact Cary Mignault, Publicist at Harbourfront Centre at 416.973.4655 or please visit the Harbourfront Centre website at www.harbourfrontcentre.com.

About the Bata Shoe Museum

The Bata Shoe Museum is a centre of knowledge about the role of footwear in the social and cultural life of humanity. The Museum's growing international collection of over 12,000 objects touches on 4,500 years of history. A varied programme of events and exhibitions lets visitors discover the stories behind footwear from many lands and cultures. Current exhibitions include: *Chronicles of Riches: Treasures from the Bata Shoe Museum*; *The Charm of Rococo: Femininity and Footwear in the 18th Century*; *Watched by Heaven, Tied to Earth: Summoning Animal Protection for Chinese Children*; and *All About Shoes: Footwear Through the Ages*. Online exhibitions include *All About Shoes* and *On Canadian Ground: Stories of Footwear in Early Canada*. The Bata Shoe Museum is located in downtown Toronto at the southwest corner of Bloor and St. George Streets. Further information is available at www.batashoemuseum.ca.

| more |



Master Bi is a member of a great generation of artists who have received traditional training in the beautiful and awe-inspiring art form of the *Nan Dan*.

Celebrated for his *Qiao* technique, seen above, Master Bi uses specially designed shoes to mimic the appearance of performing in lotus shoes.