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## **Jim LeFrancois Honoured with Inaugural Leonard McHardy and John Harvey Award**

Toronto, June 5, 2008 - **The Leonard McHardy and John Harvey Award** (LMJH Award) is a new annual award that recognizes the important work of theatre, dance and opera administrators. Recipients of the LMJH Award have at least 10 years of demonstrated commitment to the performing arts, in addition to having made an impact on the industry in Toronto.

The Award is named after Leonard McHardy and John Harvey, the celebrated owners of Toronto's Theatrebooks which they co-founded over 30 years ago in 1975. A bookstore specializing in theatre, it is one of the longest surviving independent bookstores in the country. The award winner receives a plaque and a cheque for \$1,000 through the generous sponsorship of **Elizabeth Comper**. In naming the award after Leonard McHardy and John Harvey, Ms Comper noted, "Leonard and John are role models in their support of the arts and in particular the theatre community. I wanted them to be recognized for everything they do and for everything they stand for."

The winner of this year's inaugural Leonard McHardy and John Harvey Award is **Jim LeFrancois**, one of the most talented, supportive and resourceful producers of professional theatre in Toronto. LeFrancois has worked tirelessly on behalf of both institutions and individuals and has made a significant and long-standing impact on the health of the arts in Toronto and Canada. His strong social consciousness and sense of community is present in all that he does.

Originally trained as a musician and musical theatre performer, Jim LeFrancois is currently Artistic Producer at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (Canada's premiere Queer theatre company and performance venue). During his nine-year tenure at Buddies - first as Director of Marketing and Development and since 2003, Artistic Producer - he has helped to shape it into a leader within both the theatre community and the gay community. Working alongside Buddies in Bad Times Theatre Artistic Director David Oiye, he has overseen a period of unprecedented growth, making it one of the fastest growing and most successful theatre companies in Toronto. Known for his dedication and tenacity, his vision for the company has led to a significant increase in programming, and stabilized the organization's financial position. He has a reputation for championing risky undertakings that would be hard pressed to find support in the mainstream. Termed an "Artistic Director's dream of a Producer," by Oiye, he has nurtured both the company and the art.

In addition to his time at Buddies in Bad Times, he has, since 2003, been the Producer for Topological Theatre, a company dedicated to developing new works for teen audiences. In his role there, he has devoted himself to the growth of the company and its artistic vision under Artistic Director Edward Roy. As a freelancer, LeFrancois has been a

producer and/or publicist to a host of colourful companies and events, including VideoCabaret, The Six Stages Festival, and da da kamera. Prior to entering the non-profits arts scene, he worked in commercial theatre with Follows Latimer Productions.

He is presently on the Allocations Committee for the Lesbian and Gay Community Appeal Foundation and is Board President for STAF (Small Theatre Administrative Facility).

The LMJH Award is administered by the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA). LMJH Award potential recipients are nominated by TAPA members and then reviewed by a committee. Chaired by Sandy Tulloch, the LMJH Selection Committee is Derrick Chua, Jacoba Knaapen, Leonard McHardy and Gayle Matthews.

TAPA is an arts service organization that represents nearly 200 professional theatre, dance and opera companies in the City of Toronto, and works to create an environment in which the performing arts may flourish. In addition to the Dora Mavor Moore Awards, programs and services offered by TAPA include: T.O. TIX - Toronto's One-Stop Ticket Shop at Yonge-Dundas Square, the Go Live Toronto marketing campaign and the Commercial Theatre Development Fund. For more information visit [www.tapa.ca](http://www.tapa.ca).

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