

Guggenheim Foundation Honors Puppeteer Basil Twist

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New York, N.Y. (April 8, 2006) -- Puppeteer Basil Twist has been awarded a 2006 Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. The fellowships are awarded to professionals who have demonstrated exceptional ability by contributing a significant body of work in the fields of natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the creative arts.

"The New York artistic community is enriched, and inspired, by Basil Twist's work and the national recognition he brings to puppetry," said Jim Henson Foundation President, Cheryl Henson. "We all join in wishing him continued success."

Since 1998, Twist has continually expanded the realm of puppetry by creating and touring new works, focusing especially on work integrated with live music. His work has been described a "kaleidoscopic, romantic, joyful, haunting and hallucinogenic- an awe-inspiring experience. He is perhaps best known as the creator of the award-winning *Symphonie Fantastique*. He staged the opera *La Bella Dormiente Nel Bosco* for last year's Spoleto and Lincoln Center Festivals, and he will direct the upcoming production of Paula Vogel's *The Long Christmas Ride Home* at San Francisco's Magic Theater in May. (Twist created the puppetry for the show's previous productions at such venues as Trinity Rep in Providence, Rhode Island and the Vineyard Theatre in New York City.) He has recently been commissioned by The Houston Grand Opera and Atlanta Opera to direct and design Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" for their 2006 and 2007 seasons respectively.

"I have been producing and supporting Basil's work with all my means since our partnership began in 1998. I have had my belief in Basil's significant creative talent confirmed by a string of visually breathtaking, awe-inspiring and life affirming original work" says Producer, Barbara Busackino. "He has received two Bessie Awards, an OBIE Award, three UNIMA citations of Excellence, two Drama Desk Awards, a New York Innovative Theatre Award, and a 2005 American Theatre Wing/Henry Hewes design Award. The Guggenheim Fellowship is a distinct, and well deserved honor for Basil."

Twist's fellowship work will be the development of his next original full - length theatrical production, an orchestral program, a further exploration of abstraction and music. He will create a non representational visual staging, a "ballet without dancers", candidates being Debussy's "Le mer" or "Le Martyre de St. Sébastien" and Ravel's "Bolero", with an orchestra and puppeteer/performers, Illuminating and charging the music with a vocabulary that is broader than a dancer's (human) traditional vocabulary, allowing the audience to experience the music in a completely new way.

Guggenheim Fellowships are distributed by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, founded in 1925 by former United States Senator and Mrs. Simon Guggenheim in memory of their son John Simon Guggenheim, who died in 1922.

The 2006 Fellowship winners include 187 artists, scholars, and scientists selected from almost 3,000. Decisions are based on recommendations from hundreds of expert advisors and are approved by the Foundation's Board of Trustees, which includes six members who are themselves past Fellows of the Foundation. The Guggenheim Fellowship program considers applications in 78 different fields, from the natural sciences to the creative arts. The new Fellows include writers, playwrights, painters, sculptors, photographers, film makers, choreographers, physical and biological scientists, social scientists, and scholars in the humanities.