

Launch of The Magic of Lanterns **Admire a *Thousand and One Stars*, Ablaze with Light**

Montréal, September 4, 2008 – Francine Senécal, Vice-Chair of the City of Montreal Executive Committee and member responsible for sports, recreation and Montréal's Nature Museums, officially opened the 16th Magic of Lanterns event at the Chinese Garden of the Montréal Botanical Garden at a festive ceremony. "It is a pleasure to renew a tradition like the Magic of Lanterns, so firmly anchored in Montréal life," she noted. "Every year, this illuminated spectacle delights over 200,000 visitors from near and far. The magic continues this year, with some old favourites and new innovations!"

Charles-Mathieu Brunelle, Director of Montréal's Nature Museums since August 18, said that "The Magic of Lanterns is a triumph of knowledge, culture and know-how by everyone involved in bringing it together." Gilles Vincent, Director of the Montréal Botanical Garden, for his part saluted the contribution of the many artists, partners and employees to making this event "a wonderful success once again, with its many new features."

From September 5 to October 31, the Chinese Garden of the Montréal Botanical Garden will be transformed into a light-filled show during the ***Magic of Lanterns*** event. With this year's theme of ***A Thousand and One Stars***, there will be over 1,000 traditional lanterns and dozens of enormous figures representing popular Chinese performance arts (juggling, acrobatics, opera, music and more) to amaze and delight visitors of all ages.

China's Hundred Acts

Popular arts like juggling, contortion, magic and acrobatics have always existed. In China, they are known as *Zaji* (various talents) or called the *Hundred Acts*. Over the centuries, Chinese folklore and customs led to the creation of the *Lion Dance* and the emergence of a new popular art form: opera. Today, numerous troupes specialize in some of China's *Hundred Acts* and perform around the world, delighting millions of spectators everywhere.

The magical tradition at the Botanical Garden

The *Magic of Lanterns* event, on a different theme every year, introduces visitors to different facets of traditional Chinese culture. Created anew each year, the lanterns are designed in Montréal and meticulously handcrafted by artists from Shanghai. The hundreds of lanterns are then shipped by boat all the way to the Botanical Garden, where they add their special glow to the fall sky in Montréal.

The use of decorative lanterns to brighten and illuminate Chinese festivities dates back to the Han dynasty (207 B.C.-220 A.D.). The tradition grew and spread as the centuries passed, with glittering lanterns produced in all sorts of shapes.

September 5 to October 31, 2008

THE MAGIC OF LANTERNS FEATURES A THOUSAND AND ONE STARS

The Chinese Garden, the Botanical Garden's exhibition greenhouses and the Insectarium will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily during the event.

General information: www.museumsnature.ca / 514 872-1400

Interesting facts

- The Montréal Botanical Garden works hard year-round planning the *Magic of Lanterns* event. It takes about a month to set up the exhibition. It is faster to take it down – about a week.
- The lighting has been modernized for the *Magic of Lanterns* this year, with the new *TFT LED Contactless System*. The new system will mean a substantial reduction in energy use (nearly 10 times less) during the event, and will be more reliable, even in poor weather.
- The *Magic of Lanterns* features some 1,000 traditional and thematic lanterns.
- The showpiece of the 2008 *Magic of Lanterns* event, an opera mask and banners, is 20 feet tall by 22 feet wide.

A fun quiz!

1. What is the lucky colour for the *Magic of Lanterns*?
2. What symbol of purity is found on many of the lanterns?
3. What symbol of uprightness and flexibility is drawn on many of the lanterns?
4. How many bells are there in the set of lantern chimes?

Answers: 1. Red 2. A lotus. 3. Bamboo 4. 60

A NEW EXHIBITION TO SEE AND HEAR ...

The Sounds of Music* – until October 31 **NEW!*

In the Tower of Condensing Clouds in the Chinese Garden, you can admire and listen to the sounds of some splendid Chinese instruments, including a *zheng*, *pipa*, *yangqin*, *erhu* and *suona*. Come enjoy a traditional Chinese tune in this entrancingly sumptuous setting.

We wish to thank our partners for making this event possible: Sun Life Financial, Transfotec International, a division of EMD Technologies, the Montréal Nature Museums Foundation, La Presse and the Montréal Chinese Garden Society.

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Visual available on request