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**FROM BERKELEY REP TO BROADWAY, *BRIDGE & TUNNEL* WINS A TONY**

MAY 12, 2006 – Big news in Berkeley: **Sarah Jones** will receive a Tony Award next month for her acclaimed solo show, *Bridge & Tunnel*, which was workshopped at Berkeley Repertory Theatre prior to its Broadway run and directed by the Theatre's artistic director, **Tony Taccone**. *Bridge & Tunnel*, which opened in New York this January, was originally scheduled to play only two months – but it has been extended all the way into July. Berkeley Rep audiences were a key part of the show's success, helping prepare it for the Great White Way during special workshop performances last year on Berkeley Rep's intimate Thrust Stage.

"I feel wonderful that such an authentic and uplifting show has received this level of recognition," **Taccone remarked**. "It's really a testament to Sarah's extraordinary skill as both a performer and a writer that *Bridge & Tunnel* has captured the imagination of the public. I'm truly pleased that Berkeley Rep played an important role in the development of the piece. The workshops with our audiences were tremendously valuable, making the show much tighter and leaner. I've had a tremendous time collaborating with Sarah – the entire experience has been nothing but joyful."

Asked about the award, **Jones was quoted** in the *New York Times* as saying, "I can stop knocking on every piece of wood in my house now. It's gratifying in the extreme." Previously she'd said, "Working with Tony Taccone has been an intense, enlightening, fortifying experience each time for me as an actor and writer. Broadway, happily, has been no exception. My creative partner, Steve Colman, and I have learned more about our own process through our collaborations with Tony than with anyone else. His generosity, passion, and dedication to the craft of honest expression are but a few of his many gifts. In other words, we think he kicks ass."

The Tony Committee announced the award early because Jones faced no competition in the category for *Bridge & Tunnel*, which is playing at the Helen Hayes Theatre on 44<sup>th</sup> Street. Meanwhile – **only two blocks away** – Taccone's production of **Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar*** opened to positive notices on Friday and sold out its entire run. *Brundibar* debuted at Berkeley Rep in December before transferring to New Haven and New York. As if that weren't enough, Taccone also directed the successful world premiere of ***Culture Clash's Zorro in Hell*** at Berkeley Rep in March, and that show will travel to La Jolla Playhouse in September. It's certainly a milestone year for the Theatre and its leader.

In *Bridge & Tunnel*, the astonishing **Sarah Jones** creates more than a dozen unforgettable characters in a hilarious tour de force about the American Dream and the people who chase it. The Broadway run is presented by Eric Falkenstein, Michael Alden, and Boyett/Ostar Productions. Jones is a Tony and Obie Award-winning playwright, actor, and poet. She attended Bryn Mawr College where she was the recipient of the Mellon Minority Fellowship, then returned to her native New York and began writing and performing. Called "a master of the genre" by the *New York Times*, Jones and her solo shows *Surface Transit*, *Women Can't Wait*, and *Bridge & Tunnel* have garnered numerous honors, including a Helen Hayes Award, HBO's Comedy Arts Festival's Best One-Person Show Award, and two Drama Desk nominations. Her plays have enjoyed sold-out runs at many venues, including the Kennedy Center, Berkeley Rep, and the American Place Theatre, and have been presented for such audiences as the United Nations, the

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Supreme Court of Nepal, and members of the U.S. Congress. She has received grants and commissions from Lincoln Center, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and many others. Jones made history by suing the F.C.C. for its ban of her celebrated poem/song "Your Revolution," eventually forcing reversal of the censorship.

**Tony Taccone** is artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, where he has staged more than 35 shows, including the world premieres of *Continental Divide*, *The Convict's Return*, *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa*, *The First 100 Years*, *Geni(us)*, *Ravenshead*, and *Virgin Molly*. He commissioned Tony Kushner's renowned *Angels in America*, co-directed its world premiere at the Mark Taper Forum, and collaborated with Kushner on six projects, including their current hit, *Brundibar*, designed by beloved children's author, Maurice Sendak. Before making his Broadway debut with *Bridge & Tunnel*, Taccone staged the show's record-breaking off-Broadway run, workshopped it for Broadway at Berkeley Rep, and directed Jones' previous hit, *Surface Transit*. In 2004, his production of David Edgar's *Continental Divide* transferred to the Barbican in London after playing the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Rep, and England's Birmingham Rep. Taccone frequently works in Ashland, where he has also directed *Coriolanus*, *Othello*, *Pentecost*, and the American premiere of Seamus Heaney's *The Cure at Troy*. His other regional credits include noted theatres such as Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arizona Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, San Jose Rep, Seattle Rep, and San Francisco's Eureka Theatre, where he served six years as artistic director before coming to Berkeley Rep.

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Founded in 1968, the Tony Award-winning **Berkeley Repertory Theatre** has established a national reputation for its ambitious programming and dynamic productions. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Tony Taccone and Managing Director Susan Medak, Berkeley Rep seeks to engage its audience in an ongoing dialogue of ideas. Through its bold choice of material and vivid style of production, Berkeley Rep reflects a commitment to diversity, excitement, and quality. The company is especially well known for its presentations of important new dramatic voices and its fresh adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In 2001, Berkeley Rep opened The Roda Theatre, a 600-seat proscenium theatre that complements the 400-seat Thrust Stage, and the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, housed in the Nevo Education Center. The addition of these two buildings has transformed what was once a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex.

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