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**BERKELEY REP'S TONY TACCONE MAKES HIS BROADWAY DEBUT,
ARRIVING VIA *BRIDGE & TUNNEL***

**His production of Kushner/Sendak's *Brundibar* also transfers from Berkeley to New York
as Taccone's shows play at theatres across America**

JANUARY 25, 2006 – Tomorrow Berkeley Repertory Theatre's artistic director, **Tony Taccone**, makes his Broadway debut. This milestone is only part of a landmark year in which two of his shows will be seen in New York, one will transfer to New Haven, and a world premiere he's directing takes the stage in two cities on the West Coast – even as he simultaneously picks the plays for Berkeley Rep's 39th season, beginning in September.

Taccone is a New York native, and he's taking an unusual route to get home: he's arriving from California via *Bridge & Tunnel*. As local audiences will remember, last year the award-winning solo show by **Sarah Jones** prepared for the Great White Way with special workshop performances at Berkeley Rep. Now it's opening at the Helen Hayes Theatre in Times Square for an exclusive two-month engagement.

Meanwhile, Taccone's production of **Tony Kushner** and **Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar***, which was a holiday hit in Berkeley, is also celebrating the New Year by changing coasts. A co-production of Berkeley Rep and Yale Repertory Theatre, *Brundibar* begins performances in New Haven this February before coming to New York's New Victory Theater in April – and discussions are underway to present the show in other cities this fall. Meanwhile, as if that weren't enough, Taccone is also directing the world premiere of **Culture Clash's *Zorro in Hell***, which opens at Berkeley Rep in March and La Jolla Playhouse in September.

"Life goes in cycles," **Taccone remarks**. "Sometimes the cycles are rich and fertile, and this is definitely an abundance of crops in the field. I feel very fortunate and grateful to be working on so many wonderful projects, and so lucky and blessed to have the opportunity to work with such great artists. When you line up Sarah Jones, Tony Kushner, Maurice Sendak, and Culture Clash, I just couldn't think of a better group of artists to work with."

"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," **says Jones**, who is also making her Broadway debut with *Bridge & Tunnel*. "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."

"*Brundibar* is my sixth time collaborating with Tony Taccone, a theatre artist I respect enormously, love working with, and, well, just plain love," **Kushner comments**. "It's my fourth show at Berkeley Rep, one of our great theatres, one of the best places for an American theatre artist to work... Maurice Sendak and I love *Brundibar* and *Comedy on the Bridge*, two little-known masterpieces of musical theatre. We have long felt they would have great appeal for modern

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audiences, children, and adults. Tony and the remarkable staff at Berkeley Rep have made our dream come true; we're immensely proud of the results, which Berkeley saw first, and which will travel around the country."

"There is nobody on earth you want to develop a new work with other than T.T.," insists **Richard Montoya** of Culture Clash. "We refer to him as Skipper. He's Tony Soprano mixed with Samuel Beckett and the brains of a rocket scientist. I am sure Tony was pushed around the school yard by the fifth-grade bully, but look who's getting the last laugh now – and all the important gigs! It's his year, and we're lucky to have him on *Zorro in Hell*."

And Culture Clash's **Herbert Sigüenza** sums it up in his usual succinct fashion: "Tony has got the smarts, the passion, and the *cojones* to make American theatre important again."

Here is a current schedule of Taccone's shows for 2006:

- January 26 – March 12, 2006:
Bridge & Tunnel on Broadway
Helen Hayes Theatre / 240 West 44th St @ 7th Ave / New York, NY 10036
800.432.7250 / www.telecharge.com
- February 10 – March 5, 2006:
Brundibar in New Haven
Yale Repertory Theatre / University Theatre / 222 York St / New Haven, CT 06510
203.432.1234 – www.yalerep.org
- March 17 – April 16, 2006:
Zorro in Hell in Berkeley
Berkeley Repertory Theatre / The Roda Theatre / 2015 Addison St / Berkeley, CA 94704
510.647.2949 / www.berkeleyrep.org
- April 26 – May 21, 2006:
Brundibar in New York
New Victory Theater / 209 West 42nd Street @ 7th Ave / New York, NY 10036
646.223.3020 – www.newvictory.org
- September 30 – October 29, 2006:
Zorro in Hell in La Jolla
La Jolla Playhouse / Sheila & Hughes Potiker Theatre
2910 La Jolla Village Drive / La Jolla, CA 92039
858.550.1010 / www.lajollaplayhouse.com

Tony Taccone serves as artistic director of the Tony Award-winning 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*, and co-directed its world premiere at the Mark Taper Forum. Before bringing *Bridge & Tunnel* to Broadway, Taccone staged its record-breaking off-Broadway run, and also directed Sarah Jones' previous hit, *Surface Transit*, for audiences in New York and Berkeley. Recently, his production of David Edgar's *Continental Divide* transferred to the Barbican in London after playing Berkeley Rep, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and England's Birmingham Rep. He frequently works with OSF, where he has also directed *Coriolanus*, *Othello*, *Pentecost*, and *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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The astonishing Sarah Jones creates more than a dozen unforgettable characters in her hilarious *tour de force* about the American Dream and the people who chase it. Her biggest fan, **Meryl Streep**, says, "If there is one show you should see on Broadway, it's Sarah Jones' gift to New York: ***Bridge & Tunnel***. It's one of the best performances I've ever seen!" *Bridge & Tunnel* received rave reviews and Jones earned an Obie Award for the original, sold-out, off-Broadway run at the Culture Project, which was directed by Tony Taccone. During that run, *Bridge & Tunnel* broke the off-Broadway box-office record for single-day sales – and, last January, Jones prepared the show for Broadway by workshopping it with Taccone in front of packed houses at Berkeley Rep. On January 26, *Bridge & Tunnel* opens an exclusive two-month engagement at the Helen Hayes Theatre presented by Eric Falkenstein, Michael Alden, and Boyett/Ostar Productions.

Brundibar is a once-in-a-lifetime collaboration between two artistic giants: Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak. Not only is Kushner the acclaimed author of *Angels in America* and *Homebody/Kabul*, he wrote the brilliant libretto for *Caroline, or Change* – now he's penned a new libretto for this remarkable musical fable. Sendak's singular style is famous from books such as *Where the Wild Things Are* and *In the Night Kitchen* – don't miss his spectacular designs for this production. An allegory of innocence triumphing over evil, *Brundibar* was originally composed in the ominous years leading up to World War II and was performed by children imprisoned at Terezin, the Nazi's notorious "model ghetto." In 2003, Kushner and Sendak published a picture-book version of this tale; now audiences can enjoy it live! *Brundibar* is presented alongside the pair's adaptation of *Comedy on the Bridge*, an absurdist commentary on war also written in Czechoslovakia in the thirties. According to Kushner, "Both shows are a testament to the creative power of human beings, even in dark times, to turn ugliness into music." A co-production of Berkeley Rep and Yale Rep, *Brundibar* is directed by Kushner's longtime collaborator, Tony Taccone, and plays New Haven in February before coming to New York in April.

California was born from a clash of cultures, and now Culture Clash explodes the romantic myths surrounding its creation. Following the 2002 hit *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa*, also directed by Tony Taccone, these missionaries of mayhem return with the world premiere of ***Zorro in Hell***. Employing their usual irreverence, the trio takes on the legend of Zorro to explore questions of homeland security in the Wild West – when Anglo-Americans struggled with issues such as Mexican immigration, Indian gambling, and a governor born on foreign soil. At long last, it's a Latin look behind the mask of a mainstream icon invented by an Irish American. Zorro rides out of the pages of pulp fiction, through the Hollywood image machine, and beyond the barriers of class, race, and ethnicity to become a hero for the oppressed in every land. Both history and histrionics play a role when *Zorro* is unsheathed! Commissioned by Berkeley Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, and Zorro Productions International, this show makes its world premiere at Berkeley Rep in March and will be seen by audiences in La Jolla starting in September.

So consider that eternal question: "**Who was that masked man** going from town to town doing good works?" In 2006, the answer will be Tony Taccone.

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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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