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AFTER DEVASTATING FIRE, BERKELEY REP FINDS TEMPORARY SCENE SHOP
Nonprofit theatre still needs to raise millions to build permanent space

JANUARY 26, 2006 – After months of searching, Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced today that it has identified a temporary space to replace its scene shop, which was destroyed by fire last June. The building, on Wood Street in West Oakland, is a 17,000-square-foot warehouse, affording suitable space to build, paint, and test the elaborate scenery that audiences expect from the Tony Award-winning theatre. Nonetheless, this is only a short-term solution, and the nonprofit still must raise millions of dollars to build a permanent home for its scene shop.

“I’m thrilled that we’ve found a space which can meet our immediate needs,” remarks **Susan Medak**, managing director of Berkeley Rep. “By leasing this warehouse for a few years, we can sustain our artistic excellence while continuing to pursue our dream to eventually build a space of our own. Unfortunately, no matter what path we go down, we face a significant financial challenge – but as setbacks like this have clearly demonstrated, we can count on our community to rally around us in difficult times. I am so grateful for all the support we’ve received.”

While identifying a temporary building is a relief, and insurance is expected to cover many expenses, the nonprofit still faces significant challenges in preparing the warehouse for occupancy. This renovation process is now underway, and crews are expected to begin work in the new scene shop on April 15.

Meanwhile – in an unintentional allusion to the Theatre’s origins in a Berkeley storefront 38 years ago – set construction continues in a former pet shop on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. This donated space was used to build the stunning set for *9 Parts of Desire*, a solo show about women in war-torn Iraq that played nine sold-out months off Broadway and opened at Berkeley Rep last night. It will also house set construction for Berkeley Rep’s upcoming world premiere of **Culture Clash’s** *Zorro in Hell* and **Les Waters’** production of *The Glass Menagerie*, starring the legendary **Rita Moreno**.

Berkeley Rep’s previous scene shop was completely destroyed by fire on June 29, 2005. The building, located at 1230 Fifth Street in Berkeley, had housed the shop for nearly 20 years and witnessed set construction for at least 200 shows. It was also known for its prior incarnation as a rehearsal hall for the rock band, **Creedence Clearwater Revival**. No one was in the building at the time of the blaze, and quick response and excellent work by local firefighters ensured that neighboring buildings were saved. Nonetheless, the fire – ruled an accident – incinerated the building and the specialized carpentry, metalwork, and painting equipment that the Theatre’s skilled technicians need to build scenery for as many as eight shows each year.

To make a tax-deductible donation to Berkeley Rep, contact Brian Katz at 510.647.2905 or bkatz@berkeleyrep.org – or simply write to Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 2025 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA 94704.

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