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BERKELEY REP'S *BRUNDIBAR* RECEIVES TWO DRAMA DESK NOMINATIONS

Local theatre is building a reputation for sending hit shows to New York City

APRIL 27, 2007 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre is thrilled to share the news that its New York production of *Brundibar* and *But the Giraffe* has received two nominations for the prestigious Drama Desk Award. **Kris Stone** was nominated for **Outstanding Set Design for a Musical** for the show's spectacular scenery, created with beloved children's author **Maurice Sendak**. And the entire production – staged by Berkeley Rep's acclaimed artistic director, **Tony Taccone** – was nominated for **Unique Theatrical Experience**. These honors are only part of a landmark period in Berkeley Rep's history: on the eve of its 40th birthday, four shows seen at the Tony Award-winning theatre have gone on to New York City.

"*Brundibar* was a labor of love by an incredible group of collaborators," **Taccone comments**. "Working with Kris, Maurice, and Tony – with Michael, Don, Robin, and Kimi – with our incredible cast – it was simply fantastic. And the children who performed in each community made enormous contributions: they inspired all of us with their dedication, talent, and energy. Having the opportunity to share this show with audiences across the country was a great experience."

An allegory of innocence triumphing over evil, *Brundibar* is the tale of a brother and sister who must earn enough money to buy milk for their sick mother. To do so, they join forces with three talking animals and a host of brave kids to outwit the town's sinister organ grinder. First composed in the ominous years leading up to World War II, the opera features **Hans Krása's** original score and **Adolf Hoffmeister's** libretto, which was adapted for this production by renowned playwright **Tony Kushner**. *Brundibar* became a powerful protest against the Nazis, after being performed 55 times by the children of the Terezin concentration camp, and continues to inspire with its message of good overcoming evil. The show featured a stellar cast of Broadway actors led by **Euan Morton** in the title role and supported by a chorus of children cast from each community in which *Brundibar* appeared.

This celebrated production first hit the stage at Berkeley Rep, where it was a holiday hit in 2005. A co-production with Yale Repertory Theatre, *Brundibar* transferred to New Haven in March 2006. Finally, in April and May of that year, it played a sold-out run in Manhattan at the New Victory Theater at Broadway and 42nd Street. This final run included the addition of Kushner's *But the Giraffe, a Curtain Raiser to Hans Krása's Brundibar*. An imaginative new work about a little girl who has to make a difficult decision, *Giraffe* was loosely based on an actual event: the smuggling of the score for *Brundibar* into Terezin by its conductor, Rudolph Freudenfeld.

Brundibar is one of four recent shows to make the leap from Berkeley Rep to Manhattan. While working on the project, Taccone also made his Broadway debut with another production that had been embraced by local audiences: after a workshop at Berkeley Rep, *Bridge & Tunnel* became a smash hit in New York. It played only two blocks away from *Brundibar*, earning a five-month extension and winning a Tony Award for its star, **Sarah Jones**. Meanwhile, two other shows seen at Berkeley Rep are about to land in New York: *Stew's Passing Strange* opens at The Public Theater next month after making its world premiere here in November, and **Les Waters'** lauded production of **Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*** opens at Second Stage Theatre in June.

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Tony Taccone is completing his tenth year as artistic director of Berkeley Rep, 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 has collaborated with Kushner on six projects. In addition to helping the Broadway production of *Bridge & Tunnel*, he also 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 Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and San Francisco's Eureka Theatre, where he served six years as artistic director before coming to Berkeley Rep. In January 2008, he is slated to direct the world premiere of Danny Hoch's new solo show at Berkeley Rep, which commissioned the piece.

Kris Stone's designs have been seen throughout New York, the United States, Scotland, England, and Ireland in more than 100 productions, earning her an NEA/TCG Award for Stage Design, Best Scenic Design from *Philadelphia Weekly*, and a nomination for the Irish Theatre Award for Best Set Designer. In the U.S., her work has been seen at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Alliance Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Long Wharf Theatre, Magic Theatre, The Old Globe, Philadelphia Theatre Company, San Jose Rep, and many venues off Broadway. Her credits abroad include The Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the Edinburgh Theatre Festival, and The Florentine Opera. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, Stone has taught stage design at Vassar, Swarthmore, and NYU's Tisch School.

The **Drama Desk** began giving out awards in 1955. It is the only critics' organization to honor achievement in theatre with competition between Broadway, off-Broadway, and off-off-Broadway shows.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP

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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BRUNDIBAR

FACT SHEET

WHO:

- Libretto by Tony Kushner, adapted from Adolf Hoffmeister
- Music by Hans Krása
- Production design by Maurice Sendak with Kris Stone
- Directed by Tony Taccone
- Designed by Kris Stone (sets), Robin I. Shane (costumes), Don Holder (lights), Rob Milburn and Michael Bodeen (sound), and Kimi Okada (movement)
- Starring Anjali Bhimani, Henry DiGiovanni, Matt Farnsworth, Danielle Freid, Aaron Simon Gross, Geoff Hoyle, Euan Morton, Devynn Pedell, Angelina Reáux, Martin Vidnovic, William Youmans, and a chorus of children from each community in which it played

WHERE & WHEN:

- November 11 – December 28, 2005:
***Brundibar* in Berkeley**
Berkeley Repertory Theatre / 2025 Addison St / Berkeley, CA 94704
www.berkeleyrep.org
- February 10 – March 5, 2006:
***Brundibar* in New Haven**
Yale Repertory Theatre / University Theatre / 222 York St / New Haven, CT 06510
www.yalerep.org
- April 26 – May 21, 2006:
***Brundibar* in New York**
New Victory Theater / 209 West 42nd Street @ 7th Ave / New York, NY 10036
www.newvictory.org

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