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**BERKELEY REP'S *PASSING STRANGE* NOMINATED FOR SEVEN TONY AWARDS**  
**Broadway's outrageous rock musical also nets seven Drama Desk nominations**

MAY 13, 2008 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre received yet another gift for its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday today when its outrageous production of *Passing Strange* earned nominations for seven Tony Awards **including Best Musical!** The show, which bounded from Berkeley Rep to Broadway, is now in the running for theatre's most prestigious and coveted prize.

*Passing Strange* has already won four Audelco Awards and netted nominations for three Drama League Awards, three Lucille Lortel Awards, and one Outer Critics Circle Award. It also added **seven nominations for Drama Desk Awards** to this list since Berkeley Rep last crowed about the show's success. Plus, the cast was invited to perform at the ceremony for this year's Obie Awards on Monday, May 19. (While there are no nominations for the Obies, winners will be announced on that date.)

"We are extremely proud," remarks **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "From the beginning, we knew that Stew had something important to say in a fresh and unusual way, so it was an honor to support the development of *Passing Strange* and to host the world premiere. These artists truly deserve recognition, and we're thrilled to have been a part of bringing this play to Broadway. As we celebrate Berkeley Rep's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, it's gratifying to know that a wider audience is now enjoying the adventurous work that's been seen on our stage for years."

"*Passing Strange* is all about pilgrimages to the Real, and my first real-life pilgrimage was to Berkeley when I was a teenager," says **Stew**, the renowned singer/songwriter who stars in the show and penned its book and lyrics. "This is why it was so moving and important to me that the play premiered at Berkeley Rep. Berkeley embodies many of the ideals that are celebrated in the play – a place where people live as if their thoughts have meaning and consequence. **Berkeley Rep was the perfect place for a crazy rock band with no idea what theatre was to make a play.** I can't think of a better environment to have given birth to *Passing Strange*. Probably because there is none."

Winners of this year's **Tony Awards** will be announced on CBS during a nationwide broadcast on Sunday, June 15. The *Passing Strange* cast is expected to perform two songs during the ceremony: "Amsterdam" and "Keys." (The show found itself in an unexpected controversy last week when CBS refused to air a humorous musical number called "**We Just Had Sex**" during its pre-Tony special.) Few plays developed at Bay Area nonprofits have ever been nominated for Tony Awards, which the American Theatre Wing began presenting in 1947. *Passing Strange* may be the first that reached Broadway with its original cast intact and reeled in nominations for theatre's top prize:

- Best Musical: *Passing Strange*
- Best Book of a Musical: Stew
- Best Original Score: Stew and Heidi Rodewald
- Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical: Stew
- Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical: Daniel Breaker
- Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical: de'Adre Aziza
- Best Orchestrations: Stew and Heidi Rodewald

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The **Drama Desk Awards**, which started in 1955, are the only honors for which Broadway, off-Broadway, and off-off-Broadway shows compete on equal footing. The ceremony on Sunday, May 18 will be webcast at TheaterMania.com and broadcast on satellite radio's XM28 On Broadway. *Passing Strange* will compete in the following categories:

- Outstanding Musical: *Passing Strange*
- Outstanding Actor in a Musical: Daniel Breaker
- Outstanding Lyrics: Stew
- Outstanding Book of a Musical: Stew
- Outstanding Music: Stew and Heidi Rodewald
- Outstanding Orchestrations: Stew and Heidi Rodewald
- Outstanding Choreography: Karole Armitage

*Passing Strange* is the **15<sup>th</sup> show in the last 20 years** – and the fourth in the last two years – that Berkeley Rep has helped develop and send to New York. Beginning with *Hard Times* in 1987, this string of successes includes Philip Kan Gotanda's *Yankee Dawg You Die* (1989); José Rivera's *Each Day Dies with Sleep* (1990); Craig Lucas' *Prelude to a Kiss* (1990); Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings* (1992); Heather MacDonald's *Dream of a Common Language* (1992); Gotanda's *Ballad of Yachiyo* (1997); Anne Galjour's *Alligator Tales* (1997); Danny Hoch's *Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop* (1998); Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* (1999); Naomi Iizuka's *36 Views* (2002); Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar* (2006); Sarah Jones' Tony Award-winning *Bridge & Tunnel* (2006); and Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* (2007). Associate Artistic Director Les Waters brought his popular production of *Eurydice* to Berkeley, New Haven, and New York, and it too is in the running for one of Manhattan's top theatrical honors: the Drama League Award for Distinguished Production of a Play.

Co-commissioned by Berkeley Rep and The Public Theater, ***Passing Strange*** is the critically acclaimed rock musical that follows a young musician's journey – from '70s Los Angeles through free-loving Amsterdam to the anarchy of '80s Berlin – in his search to feel something Real. The show has some of the most soulful songs and witty, thought-provoking lyrics in recent memory. *Passing Strange* made its world premiere at Berkeley Rep in 2006 and enjoyed an extended off-Broadway engagement at The Public in 2007. It began a Broadway run in February at the Belasco Theatre, produced by The Shubert Organization and Elizabeth Ireland McCann in association with Berkeley Rep and The Public.

**See tomorrow's plays today at Berkeley Rep.** Subscribe now for the 2008/09 Season, which includes the world premiere of Itamar Moses' *Yellowjackets* and another collaboration from Ruhl and Waters: the world premiere of *The Vibrator Play*. If you can't wait until fall, see the West Coast premiere of *Figaro* or Nilaja Sun's award-winning *No Child...*, which are running side by side in Berkeley Rep's two-theatre complex. Inviting new prices ensure that everyone can join the fun. For details, call 510.647.2949 or toll-free at 888-4-BRT-Tix – or simply click [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org).

#### ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Born in a storefront on College Avenue, Berkeley Rep has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. Founded in 1968 by Michael Leibert, the Theatre quickly earned respect for presenting the finest plays with top-flight actors. In 1980, with the support of the local community, Berkeley Rep built the 400-seat Thrust Stage where its reputation steadily grew over the next two decades. It gained renown for an adventurous combination of work, presenting important new dramatic voices alongside refreshing adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the

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Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. The company celebrated by unveiling a new 600-seat proscenium stage in 2001, the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre. It also opened the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, a permanent home for its long tradition of outreach and education programs. The addition of these two buildings transformed a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex, the linchpin of a bustling Downtown Arts District which has helped revitalize Berkeley. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 50 world premieres. The Theatre now welcomes an annual audience of 180,000, serves 20,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 400 artists, artisans, and administrators.

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## ***PASSING STRANGE* ON BROADWAY**

- WHO:** Book and lyrics by Stew  
Music by Stew and Heidi Rodewald  
Directed by and created in collaboration with Annie Dorsen  
Designed by David Korins (sets), Elizabeth Hope Clancy (costumes),  
Kevin Adams (lights), Tom Morse (sound), and Karole Armitage (choreography)  
Starring de'Adre Aziza, Daniel Breaker, Eisa Davis, Colman Domingo,  
Chad Goodridge, Rebecca Naomi Jones, and Stew  
Featuring a band with Christian Cassan, Christian Gibbs, Heidi Rodewald,  
and Jon Spurney  
Produced by The Shubert Organization and Elizabeth Ireland McCann in association  
with Berkeley Repertory Theatre and The Public Theater
- WHAT:** *Passing Strange*  
The outrageous new rock musical that went from Berkeley Rep to Broadway
- WHERE:** The Belasco Theater / 111 West 44<sup>th</sup> St @ 6<sup>th</sup> Ave / New York, NY 10036
- WHEN:** Eight shows every week:
- Tuesday @ 7pm
  - Wednesday @ 2 PM & 8 PM
  - Thursday & Friday @ 8 PM
  - Saturday @ 2 PM & 8 PM
  - Sunday @ 3 PM
- TIX & INFO:** 1-800-432-7250 or [www.telecharge.com](http://www.telecharge.com)

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