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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BERKELEY REP'S *PASSING STRANGE* NAMED BEST MUSICAL IN MANHATTAN**  
**Show born in Berkeley earns top title from Drama Critics, Drama Desk, Obies, and more**

MAY 19, 2008 – The good news keeps getting better for Berkeley Repertory Theatre: since netting seven nominations for the prestigious Tony Award last Tuesday, its New York production of *Passing Strange* has pulled in **eight more of the nation's top theatrical honors**. In the last week, the outrageous rock musical took home three Drama Desk Awards including Best Musical, two Obie Awards including Best New American Theatre Piece, two Theatre World Awards, and the top prize from the New York Drama Critics' Circle!

"There is good reason that this remarkable show continues to attract awards and acclaim," asserts **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "We're proud to have helped develop *Passing Strange* and gratified to give audiences beyond Berkeley an opportunity to enjoy the work of this talented team. I am pleased to see these extraordinary artists recognized for their achievements."

Here are the latest honors for the celebrated show that was born at Berkeley Rep:

- Yesterday, the show won **three Drama Desk Awards including Best Musical!** Stew and Heidi Rodewald were also honored for Outstanding Music, and Stew collected the trophy for Outstanding Lyrics. 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.
- Today, at Manhattan's historic Algonquin Hotel, *Passing Strange* was presented with the **New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Musical!** Chosen by 22 respected reviewers, these awards – initiated in 1936 – are the nation's second oldest theatrical prize.
- This evening, at Webster Hall in Greenwich Village, *Passing Strange* received **two Obie Awards including Best New American Theatre Piece!** After performing several songs from the show – including "We Just Had Sex," the cheeky number that CBS refused to broadcast in its pre-Tony special – the entire company was also presented with an award for Outstanding Ensemble. The *Village Voice* created the Obie Awards in 1956 to honor the best in off-Broadway theatre, and tonight's honor includes a \$1,000 prize.
- **Two Theatre World Awards** came to members of the *Passing Strange* cast on Thursday as well. Selected by a panel of prominent journalists, these prizes are bestowed upon exceptional performers making their debuts on the New York stage – and this year's winners include de'Adre Aziza and Daniel Breaker.
- *Strange* already claimed **four Audelco Awards including Musical Production of the Year!** In addition, Annie Dorsen was honored as Outstanding Director of a Musical, Rodewald was named Outstanding Musical Director, and Breaker received the award for Outstanding Performance in a Musical by a Male Actor. Devoted to building new audiences, the Vivian Robinson/Audelco Recognition Awards have honored excellence in black theatre for 35 years.

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In recent months, *Passing Strange* also netted **nominations for 14 other prizes**: three Drama League Awards, three Lucille Lortel Awards, one Outer Critics Circle Award, and seven Tonys – including the coveted title of Best Musical. The Tony Awards will be announced on national television on June 15, and the *Strange* cast will perform two songs at the event: the beautiful ballad “Keys” and the hilarious bohemian anthem “Amsterdam.” The **cast album**, recorded live in New York last month, won't be in stores until July – but, in a first for Broadway, fans can download it in advance starting **May 27 on iTunes**.

*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).

“It is a striking body of work, a reminder of the importance of regional theaters,” the **New York Times proclaimed** in a recent feature. “Berkeley Rep has a tradition of playing host to formidable talents before their big breaks, like Anna Deavere Smith, Mary Zimmerman, and Mary-Louise Parker. And it has long been a leader in producing writers of color. In recent years Mr. Taccone has put his weight behind producing another underserved group: emerging writers, including Stew, Ms. Ruhl (a recent recipient of a MacArthur ‘genius’ grant), and Jordan Harrison. Mr. Taccone's approach – to offer emerging writers the same resources as established ones and to hold them to the same standards – has helped yield a string of hits [and] the company continues to pride itself on producing provocative, often overtly political theatre, the kind that generates loud and clamorous debate.”

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 Sarah Ruhl and Les 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

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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 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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