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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BERKELEY REP INVITES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TO JOIN STORY BUILDERS**  
**Program sponsored by Target expands to serve grades 1- 5 – in both English and Spanish!**

NOVEMBER 7, 2007 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre is turning 40 this year – and its favorite program for local kids is turning four! In its fourth year, **Target® Story Builders** has expanded to serve children in first through fifth grade, and these vibrant classroom visits are now offered **in English, in Spanish, or in both languages**. When teaching artists from the Tony Award-winning theatre help students bring storybooks to life, **kids think they're just having fun** – but teachers know that the program increases literacy, encourages communication skills, and reinforces state education standards.

“This program is the perfect option for local schools struggling to keep the arts in the curriculum,” says **Susan Medak**, managing director of Berkeley Rep. “It costs very little, it only takes an hour, and it keeps kids engaged while covering several state-mandated subjects. I am truly grateful for Target’s ongoing support of Berkeley Rep and our outreach efforts to local children.”

With **Target® Story Builders**, children turn their classroom into a theatre by becoming the characters in a storybook. A trained teaching artist leads the class in exercises that explore the story’s themes through movement, improvisation, and other skills suggested by state standards. Then the students collaborate to create an original performance, becoming both the audience and the performers as they reenact their chosen tale.

Target® Story Builders has been specifically designed to meet the needs of California students and teachers. It reinforces the Department of Education’s content standards in English Language Arts, History / Social Science, Mathematics, Physical Education, and Visual and Performing Arts. In the past three years, Berkeley Rep’s teaching artists have visited more than 450 classrooms in seven counties, serving more than 10,000 students. This year, **visits are available between January 14 and March 21**. Each visit is one hour long, and the cost is only \$75. Discounts are available to teachers paying out of pocket and to classes in Title One schools.

Teachers start the process by choosing a book that has been approved by the California Department of Education and recommended by Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre. Each of these books investigates themes of relevance to children everywhere:

- *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* by Eric Kimmel is a West African story about a spider who steals food and the little deer that must outwit him. This colorful, humorous tale deals with bullying, cooperation, and standing up for your friends.
- *And to Think I Saw it on Mulberry Street* by Doctor Seuss is a classic text about the power of imagination and the importance of telling the truth – all told with the master’s trademark rhythm and rhyme.
- *Andy and the Lion* by James Daugherty revisits an ancient tale about a boy who removes a thorn from a lion’s paw – and how one good deed has unexpected results for the whole community. It’s a heartwarming story about making and taking care of your friends.

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- *Chang's Paper Pony* by Eleanor B. Coerr instills the importance of honesty, hard work, and tolerance by considering the challenges of a young Chinese immigrant during the California Gold Rush.
- *Harvesting Hope* by Kathleen Krull recounts the life of Cesar Chavez and his courageous efforts to improve the lives of migrant farm workers. It's a story about teamwork, leadership, and never giving up hope when fighting for your beliefs.
- *It Could Always be Worse* by Margot Zemach is a Yiddish folk tale about a poor man in a noisy house. He yearns for a peaceful life, but learns an important lesson about valuing your family and appreciating what you have.
- *John Henry* by Brad Kessler relates the legend of an extraordinary man born with a hammer in his hand. He pits his strength and his indomitable spirit against a machine, which threatens his traditional way of life.
- *One Grain of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale* by Demi combines gorgeous, gold-leaf illustrations, simple mathematics, and the cultural traditions of India as a clever girl outsmarts a selfish raja and saves her village from starvation.

The **Berkeley Rep School of Theatre** provides a wide array of programming for individuals of all ages. In addition to Target ® Story Builders, the School offers theatre classes for youth and adults; the Family Series, a free series of programs for families; the Student Matinee Series for middle- and high-school students; the Playmaking Project for high-school students and incarcerated youth; in-school residencies; teacher training; and a variety of outreach activities that encourage lifelong learning. The School also hosts the Teen Council, which allows youth to participate in all aspects of the dramatic process: on stage, backstage, and in front of the stage. Housed in the Nevo Education Center, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre is supported by the Mosse Foundation for Arts and Education.

**Target** has funded Berkeley Rep's education programs since 1986. "We are pleased to continue our partnership with Berkeley Rep to bring free and discounted programs to families in the Bay Area," remarks **Bernard Boudreaux**, senior manager of community relations. "Through our sponsorship of community programs, Target can make a real difference every day by making the arts more accessible to families, youth, and teens."

**For more information** about Target ® Story Builders, or to schedule a classroom visit, contact Shannon Howard at 510.647.2974 or [showard@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:showard@berkeleyrep.org) – or simply click [www.berkeleyrep.org/storybuilders](http://www.berkeleyrep.org/storybuilders).

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