

**For photos, interviews, etc. contact:**  
Terence Keane, Director of Public Relations  
510.647.2917, [tkeane@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:tkeane@berkeleyrep.org)

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## **OTT RETURNS TO BERKELEY REP TO DISH OUT *CRIME AND PUNISHMENT***

**Respected director delivers gripping adaptation of classic with only three actors**

JANUARY 12, 2009 – In her 13 years as artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, **Sharon Ott** led the company to new artistic heights, national prestige, and a well-deserved Tony Award. Now, after a 12-year absence, she returns with a gripping production of **Fyodor Dostoevsky's** classic ***Crime and Punishment***. The scene of this *Crime* is Berkeley Rep's intimate Thrust Stage, where Ott earned her reputation as a dazzling director. The show begins previews on **February 27**, opens **March 4**, and closes **March 29**. Its executive producers are John and Helen Meyer and Richard H. Rubin and H. Marcia Smolens, with production sponsorship from the Bernard Osher Foundation. BART and Wells Fargo are the season sponsors for Berkeley Rep's 41<sup>st</sup> year of fearless theatre.

"I am thrilled to return to Berkeley Rep after 12 years," **Ott remarks**, "and particularly pleased to direct on the Thrust Stage, which is without a doubt one of my favorite theatres in the country. I never do anything halfway – so this season I'll be staging two shows at Berkeley Rep. In addition to *Crime and Punishment*, I'll be back in May with the premiere production of Amy Freed's farce, *You, Nero*. I love it that these plays have such different tones and styles, and look forward to sharing that contrast with Bay Area audiences. I'm also enjoying this opportunity to reconnect with some of my favorite local collaborators, including Delia McDougall and Lydia Tanji for this play and Charles Dean and Danny Scheie for *Nero*."

"It's truly an honor and a pleasure for me to welcome Sharon back to our stage," says the Theatre's current artist director, **Tony Taccone**. "Many of our subscribers have been with us since her days at the Theatre, and I know they're eager to see her work again. This script is an elegant and compelling distillation of a complex book, and the perfect challenge for her skills."

Before *Law & Order*, there was ***Crime and Punishment***. As a police inspector interrogates a man about murder, we journey through the mind of a criminal. What did he do? Why did he do it? And what would you be capable of in certain circumstances? Performed with only three actors, this chamber piece compresses all the tension and pathos of the novel into a powerful evening of theatre.

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The ***New York Times*** calls it “remarkably absorbing... *Crime and Punishment*, in a feat that rivals the construction of the Hoover Dam, has been distilled into a taut 90-minute play by **Marilyn Campbell** and **Curt Columbus** [that] will banish any bad memories you might have of trying to struggle through Dostoevsky’s book.” The play’s premiere earned Chicago’s prestigious Joseph Jefferson Award for Best New Adaptation and was acclaimed by the ***Chicago Sun-Times*** as “stunningly lean, taut, and emotionally searing.” Dive into the greatest crime story ever written, a tale of murder and redemption that plumbs the depths of the human soul – when Sharon Ott returns to the Thrust Stage.

One of the world’s most influential authors, **Fyodor Dostoevsky** is best known for *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Idiot*, and *Notes from the Underground*. He was so popular in his native Russia that he was hailed as a prophet and a mystic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Virginia Woolf, “The novels of Dostoevsky are seething whirlpools, gyrating sandstorms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul. Against our wills **we are drawn in, whirled round, blinded, suffocated, and at the same time filled with a giddy rapture**. Out of Shakespeare there is no more exciting reading.”

**Sharon Ott** has been a leading figure in the American theatre for 25 years. During her 13-year tenure at Berkeley Rep, she directed many memorable productions including *The Ballad of Yachiyo*; *Heartbreak House*; *Lady from the Sea*; *The Tooth of Crime*; *Twelfth Night*; *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*; *The Woman Warrior*; and *Yankee Dawg You Die*. She then served as artistic director of Seattle Repertory Theatre for nine years. Ott has also staged plays and operas for Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, and The Public Theater in New York; South Coast Repertory and the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles; Arena Stage in Washington, DC; the Huntington Theatre Company in Boston; Opera Colorado, San Diego Opera, and Seattle Opera; and many others. She has collaborated with important American artists including actors Tom Berenger, Ricardo Chavira, Willem Dafoe, and Anna Deavere Smith; directors Joe Mantello, Stephen Wadsworth, George C. Wolfe, and Mary Zimmerman; and authors Nilo Cruz, Amy Freed, Beth Henley, Philip Kan Gotanda, and the late August Wilson. Ott has earned numerous honors including an Obie Award, two Drama-Logue Awards, an Elliot Norton Award, two awards from the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle, and the Paine Knickerbocker Award for Lifetime Achievement. Presently, she is a professor at the Savannah College of Art and Design and serves on the national executive board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

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Ott's accomplices are two talented artists who have adapted *Crime and Punishment* for the stage. In addition to being an actor and playwright, **Marilyn Campbell** is the co-founder and artistic associate of the Writers' Theatre in Glencoe, Illinois. Her other full-length plays include *The Beats*, *The Gospel According to Mark Twain*, and *My Own Stranger*. **Curt Columbus** currently serves as artistic director of Trinity Repertory Company. Before that, he was the associate artistic director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company, artistic director of the Chicago Park District's Theater on the Lake, and an artistic associate at Victory Gardens Theater. He recently published a volume of translations entitled *Chekhov: The Four Major Plays*.

Ott's *Crime* is also aided and abetted by three **accomplished actors**. **J.R. Horne** (Porfiry and others) performed in the world premiere of *Hydriotaphia* at Berkeley Rep. His Broadway credits include *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, *The Crucible*, *Inherit the Wind*, and *The Show-Off*, and his off-Broadway credits include *Almost an Evening*, *Anadarko*, *Hughie*, *The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite*, *The Night Hank Williams Died*, *Our Leading Lady*, and *Rhinoceros*. On screen, he has been seen in two films by the Coen Brothers: *Burn After Reading* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Berkeley Rep audiences will recall **Delia MacDougall** (Sonia and others) from *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *Hydriotaphia*, *Mad Forest*, *Pentecost*, *The Rivals*, and *Serious Money*. She is an artistic associate at California Shakespeare Theater, an actor and director for Campo Santo, and an actor, director, and charter member of Word for Word. In addition to numerous local appearances, she has worked with the Alley Theatre, the Huntington, Intiman Theatre, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and San Diego Repertory Theatre. In New York, **Tyler Pierce** (Raskolnikov and others) has performed at Atlantic Theatre Company, Atlantic Theatre Studio, Circle Rep East, HERE Arts Center, New Dramatists, New Georges, Lark Theatre, New York Classical Theatre, and Theatre for a New Audience. He also toured with *Barriers*, *Legends*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His regional experience includes Actors Theatre of Louisville, McCarter Theatre Center, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, and two stages in Washington, DC: the Shakespeare Theatre Company and The Studio Theatre.

Ott has gathered four **clever designers** to help her plan the perfect *Crime*. **Christopher Barreca** (scenic design) has created sets for ten previous productions at Berkeley Rep, including collaborations with Ott on *The Illusion* and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. Whether it's theatre, opera, dance, or film, he has designed more than 200 productions around the world, including shows on and off Broadway. **Lydia Tanji** (costume design) has more than 20 credits at Berkeley

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Rep, including Ott's productions of *Ballad of Yachiyo*, *Heartbreak House*, *McTeague*, and *Yankee Dawg You Die*. Her extensive experience includes films such as *The Joy Luck Club* and *A Thousand Pieces of Gold*, and her many regional credits include three shows with Ott at Seattle Rep. **Stephen Strawbridge** (lighting design) has designed for Broadway, off Broadway, and most leading theatres and opera companies in the US, as well as major premieres in Bergen, Copenhagen, The Hague, Hong Kong, Munich, Sao Paulo, Stockholm, and Vienna. He is co-chair of the Design Department at Yale School of Drama and resident lighting designer at Yale Repertory Theatre. **Cliff Caruthers** (sound design) is an artistic associate at the Cutting Ball Theater, a company member of Crowded Fire Theatre Company, and resident sound designer for TheatreWorks. He has created sound and music for more than 100 shows in the Bay Area, including *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and *TRAGEDY: a tragedy* at Berkeley Rep. The stage manager for this production is **Heath Belden**.

Audiences can enjoy extended visiting hours during this *Punishment* with **26 special events**:

- *Low-cost previews* take place on Friday, February 27; Saturday, February 28; Sunday, March 1; and Tuesday, March 3.
- *Target @ Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, February 27, and includes dinner donated by Bowzer's Pizza, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *Crime and Punishment*. Tickets are only \$10 for teens. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- *Opening night* festivities are held on Wednesday, March 4, including a pre-show dinner for donors at Downtown Restaurant and a post-show party for the audience catered by Tomatina and Raymond Vineyards.
- *Student matinees* occur at noon on Wednesday, March 11 and Wednesday, March 18. Tickets are \$10 each, and a chaperone is admitted free for every 10 students. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place at 7:00 PM on the following Tuesday and Thursday evenings: March 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, and 26.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, March 5; Friday, March 13; and Tuesday, March 17.

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- And, on the following evenings, patrons can whet their palates for the play with *free tastings* from these culinary artisans one hour before curtain: Sushi Ko on Friday, March 6; Triple Rock Brewery on Saturday, March 14; Teance on Friday, March 20; Tres Sabores on Saturday, March 21; Charles Chocolates on Sunday, March 22; Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi on Friday, March 27; and Raymond Vineyards on Saturday, March 28.

Individual **tickets for *Crime and Punishment* start at only \$27**, thanks to exciting new prices that let more people experience the best theatre in the Bay Area. Additional savings are available for groups, seniors, students, and anyone under 30 years of age – meaning discounted seats can be obtained for as little as \$13.50. This change makes Berkeley Rep more affordable to people in the community who are just starting school, starting careers, and starting families – because lower prices are now available for every performance. Save even more by purchasing a ticket package that also includes two or more comedies in Berkeley Rep's season.

You can't escape *Crime and Punishment*. Berkeley Rep's Thrust Stage is located at 2025 Addison Street, near bus lines, bike routes, and parking lots – and only half a block from BART. For tickets or information, 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, 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 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. In the last seven years, Berkeley Rep has helped send seven shows to New York: *36 Views*, *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, *Metamorphoses*, *Passing Strange*, and *Taking Over*.

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## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT FACT SHEET

**WHO:** Written by Fyodor Dostoevsky  
 Adapted by Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus  
 Directed by Sharon Ott  
 Designed by Christopher Barreca (sets), Lydia Tanji (costumes), Stephen Strawbridge (lights), and Cliff Caruthers (sound)  
 Starring J.R. Horne, Delia MacDougall, and Tyler Pierce

**WHAT:** *Crime and Punishment*  
 A gripping adaptation of the novel staged by Obie Award-winning director Sharon Ott

**WHERE:** Berkeley Repertory Theatre  
 Thrust Stage, 2025 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Downtown Berkeley

**WHEN:** **February 27 – March 29, 2009**

- Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays @ 8:00 PM
- Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
- Saturdays @ 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM
- Sundays @ 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
- No matinees during previews

**Special Events:**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					27 FEB 8:00 PM	28 8:00 PM
1 MAR 7:00 PM	2	3 8:00 PM	4 8:00 PM	5 8:00 PM	6 8:00 PM	7 2:00 PM
8 2:00 PM	9	10 8:00 PM	11 7:00 PM	12 8:00 PM	13 8:00 PM	14 2:00 PM
15 2:00 PM	16	17 8:00 PM	18 7:00 PM	19 8:00 PM	20 8:00 PM	21 2:00 PM
22 2:00 PM	23	24 8:00 PM	25 7:00 PM	26 8:00 PM	27 8:00 PM	28 2:00 PM
29 2:00 PM						

- ▣ PREVIEW
- ▤ TARGET® TEEN NIGHT
- ▥ OPENING NIGHT
- ▦ POST-SHOW DISCUSSION
- ▧ TASTING
- ▨ DOCENT PRESENTATIONS EVERY TUE & THU 7PM

Low-cost previews: Friday 2/27, Saturday 2/28, & Tuesday 3/3 @ 8:00 PM & Sunday 3/1 @ 7:00 PM

Target @ Teen Night: Friday 2/27 @ 6:30 PM

Opening night: Wednesday 3/4 @ 8:00 PM

Docent talks: Tuesdays 3/3, 3/10, 3/17 & 3/24 and Thursdays 3/5, 3/12, 3/19 & 3/26 @ 7:00 PM

Student matinees: Wednesdays 3/11 & 3/18 @ noon

Post-play discussions: Thursday 3/5, Friday 3/13 & Tuesday 3/17 @ 8:00 PM

Free tastings: Fridays 3/6 (Sushi Ko), 3/20 (Teance) & 3/27 (Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi) @ 7:00 PM; Saturdays 3/14 (Triple Rock Brewery), 3/21 (Tres Sabores) & 3/28 (Raymond Vineyards) @ 7:00 PM; and Sundays 3/22 (Charles Chocolates) @ 6:00 PM

**HOW MUCH: \$13.50 - \$71**

	Section B	Section A	Premium
Previews .....	\$27	\$34	\$39
Tue 8 PM / Wed 7 PM / Sat 2 PM .....	\$33	\$45	\$52
Thu 8 PM / Sun 2 PM / Sun 7 PM.....	\$37	\$51	\$57
Friday @ 8 PM.....	\$45	\$57	\$63
Saturday @ 8 PM .....	\$51	\$63	\$71

- Discounts:
- Half-price tickets available for anyone under 30 years of age
  - \$10 discount for students and seniors one hour before curtain
  - Groups of 10 or more, contact 510.647.2918 or groups@berkeleyrep.org

**PHOTOS:** <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/press/photos-09cp.asp>

**TIX & INFO:** 510.647.2949 – [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org) – 888-4-BRT-Tix (toll-free)