

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BERKELEY REP'S *PASSING STRANGE* ENDS BROADWAY RUN WITH A SPIKE**  
**Spike Lee films final performances of Stew's outrageous rock musical**

JULY 16, 2008 – The long, strange trip is coming to an end: *Passing Strange*, the rock musical that was born at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, enjoyed an extended off-Broadway run at The Public Theater, and then burst onto Broadway with its original cast intact is scheduled to close this Sunday – but not until it's saved on film. On Saturday, celebrated director **Spike Lee** will shoot two of the show's final performances to preserve it for future generations!

"I can't wait to see what Spike Lee does with Stew's *Passing Strange*," remarked **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "It seems like a perfect pairing: both artists are uniquely imaginative, deeply political, and love to defy convention. Whatever happens, they will undoubtedly defy our expectations."

"This fresh musical is an unstoppable force of energy, music, and mayhem," **Lee commented**. "The pure rock energy, Soul, profound humanity, and brilliant cast are the elements that make *Passing Strange* unforgettable. As a filmmaker, the greatest artists on this earth to me are musicians because I feel their talents have come directly from God. So when I saw the play I was knocked out. The story, its musicianship, and the acting are a revelation. So often, when you see a great piece of theatre, it's gone unless you look at an archive of it at Lincoln Center. But this is a great piece of work, and it's going to be documented for many generations to see."

"I wanted to be a filmmaker for a couple of years of my life, but I didn't do it because being in a band was easier," **joked Stew**, the singer/songwriter at the center of *Passing Strange*. "For Spike Lee to want to deal with our play is such an honor, more than all the awards we've gotten. Getting the 'Spike Award' is huge. How often do you get to work with a genius, someone who changed the game?"

**Lee will film *Passing Strange* with a live audience** during the matinee and evening performances on Saturday, July 19. He will also shoot it twice without an audience so that cameras can access the stage. Distribution details remain to be determined; the film may see a theatrical release or broadcast on a premium cable channel such as HBO or Showtime.

*Passing Strange* closes after nearly **six months on Broadway**, putting in 20 previews and 165 performances. This is only the latest honor for the popular musical, which won a series of prominent prizes in recent months:

- **Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical**
- **New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Musical**
- **Drama Desk Award for Best Musical** – as well as the prize for Best Lyrics (Stew) and Best Music (Stew and Heidi Rodewald)
- **Audelco Award for Best Musical** – as well as Best Director (Annie Dorsen), Best Musical Director (Rodewald), and Best Performance (Daniel Breaker)
- **Obie Award for Best New Theatre Piece** – as well as Outstanding Ensemble

(MORE)

- **Theatre World Awards** for Best Debut Performances (Breaker and de'Adre Aziza)
- **Top 10 Shows of the Year** in the *New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, and other respected publications

This 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); Naomi Iizuka's *36 Views* (2002); Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* (2002); Sarah Jones' *Bridge & Tunnel* (2006); Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar* (2006); and Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* (2007). Taccone's production of Hoch's latest solo show, *Taking Over*, is also slated for a New York run this fall.

Co-commissioned by Berkeley Rep and The Public, ***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 transferred to an extended off-Broadway engagement at The Public in 2007. It began its Broadway run on February 8 at the Belasco Theatre, produced by The Shubert Organization and Elizabeth Ireland McCann in association with Berkeley Rep and The Public. The live cast album is currently available from Ghostlight Records.

The winner of an Emmy Award and two Academy Award nominations, **Spike Lee** is a director, producer, writer, and actor renowned for tackling controversial social and political issues. His extensive credits as a director include the films *4 Little Girls*, *25<sup>th</sup> Hour*, *Bamboozled*, *Clockers*, *Crooklyn*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Get on the Bus*, *He Got Game*, *Inside Man*, *Jungle Fever*, *Malcolm X*, *Mo' Better Blues*, *The Original Kings of Comedy*, *School Daze*, *She's Gotta Have It*, *Sucker Free City*, *Summer of Sam*, and *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*.

**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*. 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 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

(MORE)

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 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. Now America gets a taste of Berkeley with Stew's *Passing Strange*, Danny Hoch's *Taking Over*, and Carrie Fisher's *Wishful Drinking*.

###

## **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 Tony Award-winning 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:** **Final five performances – must close Sunday, July 20!**
- Wednesday @ 8 PM
  - Thursday & Friday @ 8 PM
  - Saturday @ 2 PM & 8 PM – filmed by Spike Lee!
  - Sunday @ 3 PM
- TIX & INFO:** 1-800-432-7250 or [telecharge.com](http://telecharge.com)

###