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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **BERKELEY REP BRINGS LITERACY PROGRAM TO LOCAL SCHOOLS**

### **Registration opens for Target ® Story Builders, which lets kids bring books to life**

OCTOBER 10, 2008 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre brings bilingual storytelling to local schools – and gets children excited about reading – with the return of Target ® Story Builders. Last spring, this interactive program nearly doubled in size, and in only four years the Tony Award-winning theatre has served 18,000 students by visiting more than 800 classrooms in nine counties. Now it's time to sign up for the next session of Target ® Story Builders, with **visits available between January 14 and April 21**. In its fifth year, the program will expand to serve children in kindergarten, as well as first through fifth grades – and activities are available in English, in Spanish, or in both languages.

“Story Builders is a great option for local schools struggling to keep arts in the curriculum,” says **Rachel Fink**, director of the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre. “The investment of time and money is minimal, but the payoff is immeasurable: kids have a great time while being taught several state-mandated subjects. We’re truly grateful that Target continues to support this program and helps us ensure that it reaches a wider group of students each year.”

With **Target ® Story Builders**, children turn their classroom into a theatre. When teaching artists from Berkeley Rep 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. The teaching artist leads the classes 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. Each visit is one hour long, and the cost is just \$75. Discounts are available to teachers paying out of pocket and to classes in Title One schools.

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. 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:

- *The Ballad of Mulan* by Song Nan Zhang retells one of the great legends from northern China: a girl courageously takes her father’s place in battle, saving her family – and ultimately the whole country.
- *The First Day in Grapes* by L. King Perez tells the story of a migrant farm boy who struggles to fit in at a new school. Students will recognize Chico’s struggles to make friends, and cheer as he discovers a new skill that sets him apart.
- *The Hungry Coat: A Tale from Turkey* by Demi humorously demonstrates the importance of judging people based on their actions rather than their outward appearances.

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- *Meanwhile* by Jules Feiffer brings the stunning power of imagination to life when a young boy discovers that a single word can give him access to exotic worlds containing all manner of adventures.
- *Raisel's Riddle* by Erika Silverman is a version of the Cinderella story set amidst the Jewish holidays, which emphasizes the importance of wisdom and independent thought rather than outward appearances.
- *Ride Like the Wind: A Tale of the Pony Express* by Bernie Fuchs explores the history and heroism of the Pony Express by focusing on a young rider, Johnny Free, and his beloved steed, JennySoo.
- *A Story A Story: An African Tale* is an Anansi fable retold by Gail E. Haley. In it, a spider struggles to overcome a series of impossible tasks to win a bet with the Sky God – and in the process discovers the power of sharing and helping others.

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 classes for youth and adults, student matinees for local middle schools and high schools, a free monthly Family Series, 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 that our partnership with Berkeley Rep continues to bring free and discounted programs to families in the Bay Area," remarks **Bernard Boudreaux**, group manager for community relations. "Sponsoring community programs like Story Builders allows Target to 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 Devon LaBelle at 510.647.2974 or [dlabelle@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:dlabelle@berkeleyrep.org) – or simply click [berkeleyrep.org/storybuilders](http://berkeleyrep.org/storybuilders).

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