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BERKELEY REP HELPS DEBUT *THE LARAMIE PROJECT: 10 YEARS LATER*

New script performed simultaneously in more than 100 cities on October 12

SEPTEMBER 8, 2009 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre, which set box office records when it presented the West Coast premiere of *The Laramie Project* in 2001, announced today that it will present a staged reading of *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later* as part of the international debut of this new script. At 8 PM on Monday, October 12, a cast of professional actors will read the play in the Roda Theatre, the same stage that introduced local audiences to this powerful and important work. Tickets for this event cost \$8 for students, \$10 for general admission, and \$15 for reserved seating; proceeds will be donated to the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

The writers of this epilogue are respected members of Tectonic Theater Project: **Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Greg Pierotti, Andy Paris, and Stephen Belber**. The reading will be directed by **Mina Morita**, the Bret C. Harte Directing Fellow at Berkeley Rep. The ensemble includes respected local actors who worked with Berkeley Rep on *The Laramie Project* or other shows: **James Asher, Kate Austin-Groen, James Carpenter, Matthew Chavez, Blake Ellis, Jeri Lynn Cohen, Alex Moggridge, Amy Resnick, Stacy Ross, and Lynne Soffer**.

The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later will be performed simultaneously in more than 100 cities around the world by high schools, universities, and professional theatres. In addition to a reading with the original cast at Lincoln Center in Manhattan, audiences can experience this new script on the same day in all 50 states, Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Hong Kong, and Spain. The epilogue focuses on the long-term effects of the murder of Matthew Shepard on the Wyoming town where he lived – and on the nation as a whole. The play includes follow-up interviews with many of the show's original subjects, as well as comments from Matthew's mother, Judy Shepard, and his murderer, Aaron McKinney.

"*The Laramie Project* was one of the first shows we presented in the Roda Theatre," said **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "It was a bracing, provocative, and profoundly moving play that provided insight and healing in the wake of a terrible murder. I have every expectation that Tectonic's epilogue will provide meaningful commentary on our world a decade later. We are proud to be a part of debuting the new script."

"Tectonic Theater Project set out to find out how Laramie had changed in the 10 years since the murder of Matthew Shepard," remarked **Moisés Kaufman**, artistic director of TTP. "When we arrived, we were forced to confront the question, 'How do you measure change in a community?'" One of the things we found when we got there, which greatly surprised us, was people in Laramie saying this was not a hate crime."

"We found the people of Laramie still fighting to own their own history, their own identity, their own story, and part of that is shaped by how they understand what happened that night to Matthew," added **Leigh Fondakowski**, who was a key player in Berkeley Rep's world premiere of *The People's Temple* in 2005 as well.

"Creating the epilogue also gave us the opportunity to talk to Aaron McKinney about his crime, what his thinking is about it now, and what his experience has been in prison over the past decade," said **Greg Pierotti**, the company member who interviewed McKinney.

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“We were also able to speak with Matthew's mother, Judy Shepard, whose striking transformation from privately grieving mother to civil-rights activist has captured the nation's attention,” concluded **Andy Paris**.

On October 6, 1998, Matthew Shepard was beaten and left to die tied to a fence on the outskirts of Laramie, Wyoming. His torture and murder became a watershed moment in American history that highlighted many of the fault-lines in our culture. A month after the crime, members of Tectonic Theater Project traveled to Laramie and conducted interviews with local residents. From these interviews they wrote ***The Laramie Project***, which went on to become one of the most performed plays in America. Berkeley Rep's production featured the original cast, some of whom missed a few performances during that run to film the movie in Wyoming. *The Laramie Project* has now been seen by more than 50 million people around the world. Ten years later, these artists returned to Laramie to find out what had happened in the decade since Matthew's death. Did the murder have a lasting impact on that community? How has the town changed as a result of this event? What does life in Laramie tell us about America 10 years later? These are the questions this event will address.

In tandem with the premiere, an online interactive community will be launched where participants can blog, upload video and photos, and share their stories about the play. The members of Tectonic Theater Project will be active participants in the online community, offering participants feedback and encouragement.

For more information on *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later*, call (510) 647-2949 or toll-free at (888) 4-BRT-Tix – or just click berkeleyrep.org.

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Born in a storefront, **Berkeley Rep** has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 51 world premieres. In the last four years alone, Berkeley Rep has helped send four shows to Broadway: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Passing Strange*, and *Wishful Drinking*. Founded in 1968, 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 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. 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.

Tectonic Theater Project (Moisés Kaufman, artistic director; Greg Reiner, executive director; Jeffrey LaHoste, managing director; Dominick Ballesta, general manager) is an award-winning company whose plays have been performed around the world. Since 1992, TTP has produced innovative works that explore theatrical language and form, fostering an artistic dialogue with

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audiences on the social, political, and human issues of the day. The company has developed and produced works for theater and film, including *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, *The Laramie Project*, and *I Am My Own Wife*, winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for best play. Tectonic has garnered numerous awards including the Humanitas Prize, the Obie, the Lucille Lortel Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, the GLAAD Media Award, the Artistic Integrity Award from the Human Rights Campaign, and the Making a Difference Award from the Matthew Shepard Foundation. The film of *The Laramie Project* was also honored with four Emmy nominations, the National Board of Review Award for Outstanding Made for Television Movie, and a Golden Bear Award from the Berlin Film Festival. In addition to creating theatrical works, Tectonic Theater Project works in residence at universities around the country and hosts a New York-based training lab for theatre artists. For more information on the company, visit tectonictheaterproject.org.

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ATTENTION, CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHO: Written by Moisés Kaufman, Leigh Fondakowski, Greg Pierotti, Andy Paris, and Stephen Belber

Directed by Mina Morita

Featuring James Asher, Kate Austin-Groen, James Carpenter, Matthew Chavez, Blake Ellis, Jeri Lynn Cohen, Alex Moggridge, Amy Resnick, Stacy Ross, and Lynne Soffer

WHAT: *The Laramie Project: 10 Years Later*, a staged reading of the new epilogue to the documentary play that moved and shocked the nation

WHERE: Berkeley Repertory Theatre
Roda Theatre, 2015 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Berkeley, CA 94704

WHEN: Monday, October 12, 2009 @ 8:00 PM

HOW MUCH: \$8 for students / \$10 for general admission / \$15 for reserved seating

TIX & INFO: (510) 647-2949 – berkeleyrep.org – (888) 4-BRT-Tix (toll-free)

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