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## **SPIKE LEE'S FILM OF BERKELEY REP'S *PASSING STRANGE* AIRS ON PBS**

**Broadcast starts January 13 – DVD goes on sale January 12**

DECEMBER 30, 2009 – Recently, shows developed at Berkeley Repertory Theatre have popped up on Broadway, the bestseller list, the silver screen, and even commercial radio. Now the work of this Tony Award-winning theatre is about to be seen on television as well. *Passing Strange*, the provocative rock musical that burst onto Broadway after being born at Berkeley Rep, will be broadcast nationwide on PBS this January.

**Locally, the film – created by celebrated director Spike Lee – will air on KQED-TV on Wednesday, January 13 at 9:00 PM and Thursday, January 14 at 3:00 AM.** It will also air on KQED-Life on Thursday, January 14 at 9:00 PM; Friday, January 15 at 3:00 AM; Sunday, January 17 at 9:00 PM; and Monday, January 18 at 3:00 AM. For those who want to own a copy, the DVD goes on sale Tuesday, January 12; retailers such as Amazon.com are already taking orders from impatient fans.

"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."

**Lee filmed *Passing Strange* with a live audience** during two of the final performances. He also shot it twice without an audience so that cameras could access the stage. The resulting work unites revelatory theatre with superb filmmaking, raising the whole to a dizzying plateau of emotional engagement. It is a tour-de-force of creative collaboration that captures the show's originality and resonance, not to mention some of the most soulful songs and witty lyrics in recent memory. Climb on board and follow 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 film has a **100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes**, the respected film-review website. Roger Ebert gives it four stars, calling it "one of Spike Lee's best films." A.O. Scott of the *New York Times* declares it "moving, thrilling, and new... I was blown away." Both film critics from the Associated Press ranked it among the Top 10 films of the year. "In every way a knockout," raves *Rolling Stone* – and the Onion A.V. Club proclaims it "god-damned transcendent, a near-religious experience." NPR's Bob Mondell sums it up when he says, "As someone who didn't go to see *Passing Strange* on Broadway and who now, having seen Lee's cinematic rendering, feels like an idiot for passing it up, I can tell you only that nothing I read prepared me for the show's exuberance and vibrancy."

***Passing Strange* won a Tony Award, two Obie Awards, three Drama Desk Awards, four Audelco Awards, two Theatre World Awards, and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.** It made its world premiere at Berkeley Rep in 2006 and transferred to an extended off-Broadway engagement at The Public Theater in 2007. It enjoyed a six-month Broadway run at the Belasco

(MORE)

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Theatre in 2008, produced by The Shubert Organization and Elizabeth Ireland McCann in association with Berkeley Rep and The Public. *USA Today* proclaimed it the Best Original Musical of 2008, and the *New York Times* placed it among the Top 10 plays of 2007 and 2008.

*Passing Strange* features a book and lyrics by **Stew** with music by Stew and **Heidi Rodewald**. The cast includes **de'Adre Aziza**, **Daniel Breaker**, **Eisa Davis**, **Colman Domingo**, **Chad Goodridge**, and **Rebecca Naomi Jones**. Stew and Rodewald perform alongside the cast with an onstage band of musicians, including **Christian Cassan**, **Christian Gibbs**, and **Jon Spurney**. The show's design team includes **Karole Armitage** (choreography), **David Korins** (scenic design), **Elizabeth Hope Clancy** (costume design), and **Kevin Adams** (lighting design).

**See tomorrow's plays today at Berkeley Rep.** The Theatre's offerings in the New Year include five more hot new shows: the world premiere of *Girlfriend* from Todd Almond and Matthew Sweet, the world premiere of *The Wake* from Lisa Kron and Leigh Silverman, the world premiere of *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* from Naomi Iizuka and Les Waters, and local debuts for *Coming Home* and *Aurélia's Oratorio*. 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, 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 52 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.

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