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BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES AN EXHILARATING NEW SEASON OF PLAYS

2011-12 Main Season features three world premieres, a classic Molière comedy, the legendary Rita Moreno, and Tony Award-winning *Red*

MARCH 9, 2011 – As two shows seen on its stage rock Broadway, one extends its stay off Broadway, and another just wrapped a local run that grabbed national headlines, Berkeley Repertory Theatre proudly announces a new year of exhilarating plays. For its 2011-12 Main Season, the Tony Award-winning nonprofit promises a line-up that includes three world premieres, a classic Molière comedy, the legendary Rita Moreno, and a remarkable script that recently won the Tony Award for Best Play.

In September, the five-play Main Season begins with a stunning series of world premieres. First it's *Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup*, a captivating show created specifically for this outstanding actress; next Kent Nicholson directs *How to Write a New Book for the Bible*, Bill Cain's poignant new play about caregiving, followed by *Ghost Light*, a haunting fable about San Francisco written by Artistic Director Tony Taccone and staged by Jonathan Moscone. Then Steven Epp returns to unleash another Molière masterpiece with *A Doctor in Spite of Himself*, and Associate Artistic Director Les Waters tackles John Logan's Tony Award-winning *Red*. Two additional shows that complement this compelling collection of work will be announced later for Berkeley Rep's Limited Season.

Best of all, since Berkeley Rep insists that exciting theatre should also be accessible and affordable, the cost of a subscription remains exactly the same as last year – so theatre lovers can **see three or more shows for as little as \$27 each!** This entire experience is generously supported by BART and Wells Fargo, who have renewed their commitment as Berkeley Rep's official season sponsors.

"Berkeley Rep has a long history of presenting work that is fresh and alive and engaged in meaningful dialogue with the contemporary world," **Taccone comments**. "That takes a certain amount of vigilance on our part, and it relies on our relationships with many extraordinary artists. We're excited to move that agenda forward. We continue to stretch ourselves with this new season, and I look forward to sharing this eclectic selection of shows with our audience."

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RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

BERKELEY REP'S EXHILARATING NEW SEASON / 2 OF 5

Thanks to its adventurous audience, Berkeley Rep has grown from a storefront stage to a national leader in innovative theatre. Since 1968, it has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists, encouraging them to lovingly revive classics and increasingly to create bold new work. The **total number of premieres through the years tops 100** – 60 world premieres, 41 West Coast premieres, and four American premieres – with nearly half of those debuting in the last decade. This devotion to imagination and excellence has delivered **19 shows to New York for 19 straight years.**

As the *San Francisco Chronicle* recently remarked in a front-page story, "Berkeley Repertory Theatre is fast emerging as one of Broadway's most important 'farm teams.'" At the moment, two shows cultivated here are on the Great White Way: Green Day's *American Idiot*, which won two Tony Awards and the Grammy Award for Best Cast Album, and John Leguizamo's *Ghetto Klown*. All told, **six shows have moved from Berkeley Rep to Broadway in the last six years.** This list of hits also includes *Bridge & Tunnel*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Passing Strange*, and *Wishful Drinking*. The latter two were even released as films.

In the last several months, Berkeley Rep enjoyed its **second transatlantic transfer** when *Tiny Kushner* traveled to London's Tricycle Theatre, and two shows enjoyed **off-Broadway runs** at The Public Theater in Manhattan: Lisa Kron's *In the Wake*, which was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and Rinne Groff's *Compulsion*, a commission that just made the short list for the Steinberg New Play Award as Mandy Patinkin reprises his leading role in New York alongside a marionette of Anne Frank. Now the curtain rises on another year of inventive and intelligent plays back in Berkeley...

The season kicks off in September with a long-awaited world premiere in the Roda Theatre. During her spectacular career, **Rita Moreno** has portrayed some tough women, from Anita in *West Side Story* to Maria Callas in *Master Class*. Now this legendary performer takes on the toughest woman of all – herself. The star of stage and screen returns to Berkeley Rep for the first time since her sold-out run in *The Glass Menagerie*. She recounts her improbable life in ***Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup***, an irreverent and entertaining new show that features a lively band and two expert dancers. Expect another breathtaking performance from the lady who won the Oscar, the Tony, the Grammy, and two Emmys. "Do not even think about typecasting Rita Moreno," the *New York Observer* insists. "She's done everything every other actress ever

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dreamed of, sometimes twice, and almost always better." **Tony Taccone** composed this delightful script, drawing on decades of experience creating shows with leading solo artists, and he hands the reins to a respected director: **David Galligan**. According to *Back Stage West*, "There are few other directors who have the kind of name recognition with producers and track record with audiences that David Galligan has." So come along for the ride with Rita!

Then, in October, it's the world premiere of ***How to Write a New Book for the Bible***. Every family creates a sacred story out of love. In **Bill Cain's** poignant new play, a man moves in with his mother when she becomes too frail to care for herself. Their reunion heals old wounds, opening a heartfelt and humorous new chapter in their relationship. This timeless tale from the award-winning author of *Equivocation* and *9 Circles* celebrates a mother's love and a son's devotion. Cain "strikes a rare balance between erudition and accessibility, contemplation and gut-check emotion," the *LA Times* observes. "Growing up during the civil rights era, attending Jesuit schools and tutoring in Brooklyn's tough Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, he gained an awareness of live theater as a community-binding ritual akin to religion." **Kent Nicholson** comes back to the Bay Area to stage this show on the intimate Thrust Stage. "Nicholson, for those just tuning in, has established himself as one of the Bay Area's most in-demand directors for new plays over the past decade," says the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In January, the Thrust Stage hosts another play penned by Artistic Director **Tony Taccone**, this one entitled ***Ghost Light***. In this evocative new work, he imagines a fable for San Francisco based on the assassination of Mayor George Moscone. When Jon was a boy, his father was shot – and suddenly their lives were part of history. Years later, when staging a production of *Hamlet*, the son must confront his buried feelings about a crime that shocked the nation. The ghost of the king stalks the battlements of a boy's mind – and speaks to all of us about love and loss. A poetic collage of fiction and memory, this world-premiere production is staged by none other than **Jonathan Moscone**. The *San Francisco Chronicle* asserts, "Jonathan Moscone is fearless. The artistic director of California Shakespeare Theater takes on big challenges the way a scrappy gym fighter takes on the heavyweight champion." And *Playbill* opines, "Tony Taccone may very well be the most prominent artistic director in America right now." A co-production with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, *Ghost Light* also appears in Ashland this summer.

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February takes a lighter tone with a classic comedy in the Roda Theatre: Molière comes to uproarious new life in a clever and contemporary adaptation from one of Berkeley Rep's favorite artists. **Steven Epp** delighted audiences as *Figaro* and *The Miser* – now he's back with ***A Doctor in Spite of Himself***. The traditional story of a girl feigning illness to avoid an unwanted wedding erupts into hilarity when Epp decides to play doctor. In a pitch-perfect production punctuated with live music, this ridiculous physician proves that love and laughter remain life's best medicine. It's "a fun night for everyone," declares the *Seattle Weekly*. "Director **Chris Bayes'** take on Molière's carnivalesque satire of the medical profession is a low-stakes fusion of commedia dell'arte and vaudeville – dry-rubbed with lewdness, scatology, pop music, and political incorrectness." It's "smartly choreographed anarchy, combining old gags and new," agrees the *Seattle Times*. "For cheerful, nimble, bawdy silliness, this dish of meringue is hard to resist."

Then it's time to paint it **Red**. In March, the passionate play that swept Broadway comes to Berkeley Rep, staged by acclaimed Associate Artistic Director **Les Waters**. At the height of his fame, Mark Rothko struggles in his studio to finish a major series of murals. The brilliant master wrestles with his new apprentice in a battle of wits over a bucket of paint. **John Logan**, the Oscar-nominated author of *Aviator* and *Gladiator*, won Tony and Drama Desk Awards for this feverish 90-minute drama that spans the spectrum of human emotion. From grief and fury to joy and hope, it's all covered in *Red*. "Logan sends American abstract impressionist painter Mark Rothko into battle with his demons in this electrifying play of ideas, and the artist's howls are pure music," *Variety* raves. "Logan's intense and exciting two-character bio-drama [is] a master class of questions and answers," adds the *New York Times*. "What we see, above all, is an artist seeing, and it's impossible not to feel thrilled by the privilege." In the last six years, Waters' shows have ranked among the year's best in *The New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Time Out New York*, *Time Magazine*, and *USA Today*. Now he brings another powerful play to the intimate Thrust Stage.

Get the best seats for these shows at the lowest price by **subscribing to Berkeley Rep**. The five-play package includes all of these Main Season productions, and the seven-play Full Season also guarantees tickets for another two shows to be announced soon. Alternatively, you can "choose your own season" by selecting any three or more plays that appeal to your palate. In addition to significant savings, subscribers receive valuable benefits such as the right to

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reschedule for free, discounts when purchasing tickets for friends, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events, which in the past included solo shows with Robin Williams and David Sedaris. Best of all, subscribers have guaranteed seats to sold-out plays while others are turned away.

Ticket packages begin as low as \$81 – meaning subscribers can save as much as 30% on every ticket! Berkeley Rep also offers **generous discounts** for senior citizens, theatregoers under 30, and employees of nursery, elementary, and secondary schools. Purchase a subscription now, because individual seats don't go on sale until August.

In addition to offering steep savings on great seats for subscribers, Berkeley Rep organizes **free events nearly every night** to stretch that budget even further. Arrive at the Theatre early to enjoy gourmet tastings with local culinary artisans, pre-show talks with trained docents, and an exquisite menu of local, organic, and sustainable food at the café. Certain evenings also feature post-show chats with the artists or late-night parties that welcome a new generation of theatregoers such as Teen Night, 30 Below, and night/OUT. These free activities transform a play into an entire evening of entertainment.

In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to earn five Tony Awards, six Obie Awards, eight Drama Desk Awards, four Lucille Lortel Awards, and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its vital and versatile facility – which includes the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre – is the linchpin of a bustling arts district that is helping to revitalize downtown Berkeley. A not-for-profit organization, 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.

So come see tomorrow's shows today at Berkeley Rep. The Roda Theatre and the Thrust Stage are both located on Addison Street in downtown Berkeley, near bus lines, bike routes, and parking lots – and only half a block from BART. **For more information**, call (510) 647-2949 or (888) 4-BRT-Tix (toll-free) – or just click berkeleyrep.org.

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Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup

Main Season Play #1 – Roda Theatre

World premiere

Written by Tony Taccone

Directed by David Galligan

September 2 – October 30, 2011

Opening night: September 7, 2011

How to Write a New Book for the Bible

Main Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage

World premiere

Written by Bill Cain

Directed by Kent Nicholson

October 7 – November 20, 2011

Opening night: October 12, 2011

To Be Announced

Limited Season Play #1 – Roda Theatre

December 3, 2011 – January 1, 2012

Opening night: December 7, 2011

Ghost Light

Main Season Play #3 – Thrust Stage

World-premiere productionConceived and developed by
Jonathan Moscone and Tony Taccone

Written by Tony Taccone

Directed by Jonathan Moscone

January 6 – February 19, 2012

Opening night: January 11, 2012

A Doctor in Spite of Himself

Main Season Play #4 – Roda Theatre

Written by Molière

Adapted by Christopher Bayes and Steven Epp

Directed by Christopher Bayes

February 10 – March 25, 2012

Opening night: February 15, 2012

Red

Main Season Play #5 – Thrust Stage

Written by John Logan

Directed by Les Waters

March 16 – April 29, 2012

Opening night: March 22, 2012

To Be Announced

Limited Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage

May 26 – June 24, 2012

Opening night: May 30, 2012