

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE TO PRESENT
THE WEST COAST PREMIERE OF
*JAJA'S AFRICAN HAIR BRAIDING***

Written by Jocelyn Bioh and directed by Whitney White, *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* follows the uproarious escapades of a group of West African immigrant hair braiders and their clientele over the course of a single day

Berkeley Rep's Peet's Theatre
November 8–December 15, 2024

BERKELEY, CA (September 25, 2024)—Direct from a twice-extended run on Broadway, Berkeley Rep will present the West Coast premiere of **Jocelyn Bioh's** Tony Award-winning new comedy, ***JAJA'S AFRICAN HAIR BRAIDING* (November 8–December 15, 2024)**. Press night will be held on Wednesday, November 13, 2024. Single tickets are available now online at berkeleyrep.org or by phone at 510-647-2949 (Tue–Sun, 12–7 p.m.). *Ticket prices are subject to change without notice.*

Step into the vibrant world of *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*, a beloved Harlem hotspot where West African immigrant braiders work their magic on the locals' locks. Amidst the lively buzz of a scorching summer, love ignites, dreams soar, and secrets unravel. But beneath the surface lies a current of uncertainty, pushing this close-knit community to confront the challenges of being outsiders in their own neighborhood.

From the pen of acclaimed Tony Award-nominated Ghanaian American playwright **Jocelyn Bioh** (*Goddess, School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play*) and directed by Tony Award nominee and Obie Award winner **Whitney White**, ***JAJA'S AFRICAN HAIR BRAIDING*** is “a play that is equally affecting as it is hilarious,” hails *Entertainment Weekly*. *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* is a co-production with Arena Stage, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and La Jolla Playhouse, in association with Madison Wells Live & LaChanze.

“I am so proud to bring Jocelyn's beautiful play, in Whitney's glorious production, to the West Coast for the first time,” said **Berkeley Rep Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer**. “*Jaja's African Hair Braiding* is a celebration of community and culture that offers a vibrant and complex look into the lives of the women who make Harlem's hair braiding salons such vital spaces. Part of Jocelyn's brilliance is her ability to take a particular setting, which may or may not be familiar to audiences, and allow us each the capacity

to connect the stories of the women who inhabit this shop to our own narratives of identity and ongoing search for home.”

The cast of *Jaja’s African Hair Braiding* includes (in alphabetical order) **Kevin Aoussou, Melanie Brezill, Renea S. Brown, Leovina Charles, Victoire Charles, Debora Crabbe, Yao Dogbe, Mia Ellis, Onye Eme-Awkari, Yetunde Felix-Ukwu, Tiffany Renee Johnson, Jordan Rice, Morgan Scott, Awa Sal Secka, Aisha Sougou, and Bisserat Tseggai.**

The creative team for *Jaja’s African Hair Braiding* includes **David Zinn** (Scenic Design), **Dede Ayite** (Costume Design – Tony Award for Best Costume Design of a Play), **Jiyoun Chang** (Lighting Design), **Justin Ellington** (Original Music and Sound Design), **Stefania Bulbarella** (Video Designer), **Nikiya Mathis** (Hair and Wig Design - Special Tony Award), **Manna-Symone Middlebrooks** (Associate Director), **Yetunde Felix-Ukwu** (Vocal and Dialect Coach), **Mandisa Reed** (Stage Manager), and **Brilliant Qi-Bell** (Assistant Stage Manager).

Jaja’s African Hair Braiding was nominated for five 2023 Tony Awards, including Best Play and Best Direction of a Play, and winning for Best Costume Design (Play), plus a special award for Nikiya Mathis’s Hair and Wig design. In addition, the production was nominated for three 2023 Drama Desk Awards, including Outstanding Play, Outstanding Wig & Hair, and Outstanding Featured Performance in a Play. Berkeley Rep recognizes the generous support of **BART** and **Peet’s Coffee**, Berkeley Rep’s official season sponsors. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to recognize the support at the season sponsor level from **Stephen & Susan Chamberlin, Yogen & Peggy Dalal, Bruce Golden & Michelle Mercer, Frances Hellman & Warren Breslau, Wayne Jordan & Quinn Delaney, Jonathan Logan & John Piane, Gisele & Kenneth F. Miller, Jack & Betty Schafer, The Strauch Kulhanjian Family, Kelli & Steffan Tomlinson, and Gail & Arne Wagner.**

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ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its ambition, relevance, and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 6 million people have enjoyed more than 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 85 world premieres. Berkeley Rep shows have gone on to win eight Tony Awards, nine Obie Awards, 11 Drama Desk Awards, a Grammy Award, a Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Through its annual seven-play season, together with up to four special event presentations, Berkeley Rep invites audiences to enjoy an eclectic range of theatrical experiences featuring diverse artistic voices, themes, and perspectives. To formalize, enhance, and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre, The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work was launched in 2012. Serving some 20,000 people a year, Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre ensures broad access to dynamic arts educational activities, especially for Bay Area youth, and provides immersive training for current and future theatre makers. In 2021, Berkeley Rep launched In Dialogue, a program that places its theatre-making skills and resources in service of the community. Using storytelling as an anchor, In Dialogue is developing long-term collaborations with local, socially centered organizations, as well as educating and activating our audiences around organizations whose work aligns with the themes of our productions. Berkeley Rep’s bustling facilities—which include the 600-seat Roda Theatre, 400-

seat Peet's Theatre, Medak Center, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley—are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org.