

For photos, interviews, etc., contact:
Terence Keane, Director of Public Relations
(510) 647-2917, tkeane@berkeleyrep.org

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MASTER DRAMATIST ATHOL FUGARD IS COMING HOME TO BERKELEY REP
Gordon Edelstein directs a new work by “the greatest playwright since Shakespeare”

DECEMBER 9, 2009 – In January, South Africa’s master dramatist comes back to Berkeley Repertory Theatre with his latest show: *Coming Home*. **Gordon Edelstein** directs this poignant new script by **Athol Fugard**, whom the *New York Times* dubbed “the greatest playwright writing in English since Shakespeare.” Featuring **Lou Ferguson**, **Roslyn Ruff**, and **Thomas Silcott**, *Coming Home* begins previews on Berkeley Rep’s intimate Thrust Stage on **January 15**, opens **January 20**, and closes **February 28**, 2010. The executive producers are Bill Falik and Diana Cohen and the Strauch Kulhanjian Family; the production sponsor is the Bernard Osher Foundation. The season sponsors for Berkeley Rep’s 41st year of fearless theatre are BART and Wells Fargo. *Coming Home* is presented in association with Lorraine Hansberry Theatre.

“I remember working in Berkeley with great fondness,” **Fugard remarks**, “beautiful people, a wonderful stage, and a first-class audience. I look forward to returning. I was drunk with freedom when I wrote *Valley Song*, intoxicated with the potential of our fledgling democracy. Fourteen years later, I’ve taken stock of the situation with *Coming Home*. Many things went terribly wrong in the new South Africa: corruption, violence, the tragic denial of the AIDS epidemic. Yet, whenever I am back in the country, I find a thousand reasons to hope because the people of the country are just amazing – especially the youth. So, while this show contains a sort of sober reckoning, it still offers promise and possibility by way of the little boy.”

“I’m pleased to bring a new work from Athol Fugard to our stage, and glad that Gordon will direct at Berkeley Rep,” says **Tony Taccone**, the Theatre’s artistic director. “With a touching story, an accomplished cast, and a consummate writer, this show is the perfect complement to the diverse work our audiences have already enjoyed this season.”

Time magazine calls Athol Fugard “the greatest active playwright in the English-speaking world,” and now his latest show arrives at Berkeley Rep. Ten years after running off to pursue her dreams in the city, Veronica returns in rags. Among her meager belongings, she carries a desperate secret – and determination to plant the seeds of a new life for her son. Fugard’s scripts have earned countless accolades, including the Academy Award, Obie Award, and Tony Award.

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RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

Berkeley Rep produced three of his previous plays: *A Lesson from Aloes* in 1983, *The Road to Mecca* in 1988, and *Valley Song* in 1998. With ***Coming Home***, the playwright once again confronts the hard truths of his homeland while celebrating the unquenchable power of hope.

It's a "sad, sweet, and gently moving" show, declares the *New York Times*, "a beautifully acted production directed by Gordon Edelstein... As one might expect from a writer of fierce commitment to political and social justice, *Coming Home* quietly condemns the shameful policies of the South African government, which failed to confront the reality of AIDS. But as always with Mr. Fugard, censure of policy comes only through careful observation of its human costs. Mr. Fugard doesn't need to raise his voice, or even have Veronica raise hers, to make his points... Ms. Ruff gives a superb performance."

"This great writer has given us **another unforgettable glimpse into modest lives of unfathomable grandeur**," adds TheaterMania. "It's a tribute to Fugard's skill as a playwright – and Ruff's as an actress – that the play manages to skirt the shoals of bathos while boldly, methodically, and often humorously charting a course for certain heartbreak."

Born in 1932 in Middleburg, in the Karoo desert region of South Africa, **Athol Fugard** battled to bring the stories of all South Africans to the world, even under the darkest years of Apartheid, the abusive system that had one set of laws for whites and another for people of color. A recipient of many awards and honorary degrees, in 2005 he was given South Africa's highest honor, the Ikhamanga Medal. His best-known plays include *The Bloodknot* (1961), *Boesman and Lena* (1969), *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972), *The Island* (1973), "*Master Harold*"... and *the Boys* (1982), and *My Children! My Africa!* (1989). His latest plays performed in South Africa are *Bootjie and the Oubaas* and *Victory*, which was also performed in England and the United States. His published work includes journals, novels, short stories, and screenplays. In 2006, the film *Tsotsi*, based on his 1961 novel, won the Academy Award and top awards at various film festivals. His latest plays, all stories of his country, are *Exits and Entrances* (2004), *Bootjie and the Oubaas* (2006), *Victory* (2007), *Visions and Dreams* (2007), and *Coming Home* (2008), which can be considered a sequel to *Valley Song* (1995) and a continuation of Veronica's story. His plays are now part of the international canon, constantly performed and taught in schools. A prose work, *Karoo and Other Stories*, was published in 2005.

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Gordon Edelstein is in his eighth season as artistic director of Long Wharf Theatre, where he staged the world premiere of *Coming Home* in January and the November premiere of Fugard's *Have You Seen Us?* He will also direct *The Glass Menagerie* starring Judith Ivey at New York's Roundabout Theatre this spring. His recent productions of Arthur Miller's *The Price* and Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (which he also adapted) ranked among the Best of 2007 in the *Wall Street Journal* and numerous other publications. As a director, he has garnered three Connecticut Critics Circle Awards and the organization's Tom Killen Award, given annually to an individual who has made an indelible impact on Connecticut theatre. During his tenure at Long Wharf, the company has produced world premieres by Julia Cho, Noah Haidle, Craig Lucas, Dael Orlandersmith, Anna Deavere Smith, and Paula Vogel. Over the years, he has also directed and/or produced premieres by Philip Glass, James Lapine, Donald Margulies, Martin McDonagh, Charles Mee, Arthur Miller, Paula Vogel, and Mac Wellman, among many others, and has directed a diverse body of work from Sophocles to Pinter and Shakespeare to Beckett. Edelstein has staged countless plays and workshops for Long Wharf Theatre including the world premieres of *BFE*, which transferred to Playwrights Horizons; *A Dance Lesson*; *The Day the Bronx Died*, which traveled to New York and London; and *The Times*. Prior to assuming leadership of Long Wharf, Gordon helmed Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre for five years.

Edelstein has assembled a prodigious cast to portray this homecoming. **Lou Ferguson** (Oupa Jonkers) performed on Broadway in *The Playboy of the Western World*, *Seven Guitars*, and *Two Trains Running*. His regional credits include *The Bluest Eye*, *Drowning Crow*, *Everyman*, *The Hasty Heart*, *Les Blancs*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Playland*. On television, he has been seen in *Another World*, *Attica*, *General Hospital*, *Jonny Zero*, *Law & Order*, and *Third Watch*, and his film credits include *I Like It Like That*, *The Interpreter*, *Maid in Manhattan*, *No Place to Hide*, *Radical Jack*, and *Stone Mansion*. **Roslyn Ruff** (Veronica Jonkers) won an Obie Award for her performance in *Seven Guitars* at Signature Theatre Company. Her other off-Broadway credits include *The Cherry Orchard* and *Macbeth* at the Classical Theatre of Harlem, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *Things of Dry Hours* at New York Theatre Workshop, and *Killa Dilla* at Working Theater. Her screen appearances include *Life During Wartime* and *Rachel Getting Married*, and her extensive regional experience includes *August Wilson's 20th Century Cycle* at the Kennedy Center, the world premiere of *Gee's Bend* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and *Gem of the Ocean* at American Conservatory Theater. Both Ferguson and Ruff appeared in the world premiere of *Coming Home*; they are joined for this production by **Thomas Silcott** (Alfred Witbooi). In New York, Silcott appeared in *Broken Jug* at Lincoln Center

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and *The Color of Justice* at the New Victory Theatre. He performed in *Coming Home* at the Fountain Theatre and in the national and international tours of *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*. His other regional credits include "*Master Harold*"... and *the Boys* at the Colony Theatre Company, *Paint Your Wagon* at the Geffen Playhouse, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* at the Alliance Theatre. His films include *The Boxer, Brothers, Gods and Generals*, and *Mercy Street*, and his television appearances include *Desperate Housewives, Dirt, Entourage*, and *Girlfriends*. The cast also features several local children.

Coming Home showcases a talented team of top designers. **Eugene Lee** (scenic design) has received the Tony Award, the American Theatre Wing's Design Award, the Outer Critics' Circle Award, the Drama Desk Award, the Lucille Lortel Award, and the Pell Award, and was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame. His recent work includes *Grasses of a Thousand Colors* at the Royal Court Theatre in London and *You're Welcome, America: A Final Night with George W. Bush* on Broadway. He has been the production designer of *Saturday Night Live* since 1974. **Jessica Ford** (costume design) has designed at theatres across the country, including Actors Theatre of Louisville, Barrington Stage Company, the Hangar Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare, Shakespeare & Company, Syracuse Stage, Two River Theater Company, and Yale Repertory Theatre. In New York, she has worked with The Pearl Theatre Company, The Play Company, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Second Stage Theatre, and the Summer Play Festival. **Stephen Strawbridge** (lighting design) designed *Crime and Punishment* and *The Illusion* at Berkeley Rep. His work has been seen on Broadway, off Broadway, and at most leading theatres and opera companies in the US, as well as major premieres in Bergen, Copenhagen, The Hague, Hong Kong, Munich, Sao Paulo, Stockholm, and Vienna. He is co-chair of the design department at Yale School of Drama and resident lighting designer at Yale Rep. **Corrine K. Livingston** (sound design) is the resident audio supervisor at Long Wharf Theatre, where she designed *Black Natvity, Coming Home, The Price, Rocket to the Moon*, and *Underneath the Lintel*. She has also worked on many shows at New York Stage and Film, including the world premiere of Christopher Durang's musical *Adrift in Macao, The Betty Show, Exposed, The New Americans*, and *Roulette*. **John Gromada** (original compositions) scored the Broadway productions of *A Bronx Tale, A Few Good Men, Proof, Rabbit Hole*, and *Well* and Broadway revivals of *Prelude to a Kiss, A Streetcar Named Desire, Summer and Smoke*, and *Twelve Angry Men*. His off-Broadway credits include two acclaimed shows at the New York Shakespeare Festival: he won an Obie Award for *Machinal* and a Drama Desk Award for *The Skriker*. This production also relies on **Lynne Soffer** (dialect coach) and **Michael Suenkel** (Berkeley Rep's resident stage manager).

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During the show's run in Berkeley, theatregoers can make themselves at home with dozens of **special events:**

- *Low-cost previews* take place on Friday, January 15; Saturday, January 16; Sunday, January 17; and Tuesday, January 19.
- *Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, January 15 and includes dinner, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *Coming Home*. Tickets are only \$10 for high-school students. For details, call (510) 647-2972 or e-mail school@berkeleyrep.org.
- *Opening night* festivities are held on Wednesday, January 20, including a pre-show dinner for donors at Bistro Liaison and a post-show party for the audience catered by Tomatina and Raymond Vineyards.
- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place at 7:00 PM on the following Tuesday and Thursday evenings: January 19, January 21, January 26, January 28, February 2, February 4, February 9, February 11, February 16, February 18, February 23, and February 25. There is also a special docent presentation at the Orinda Library at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, January 20.
- *Student matinees* for high-school groups are held at noon on Thursday, February 4 and Thursday, February 18. Tickets are \$10 each, and a chaperone is admitted free for every 10 students. For details, call (510) 647-2918 or e-mail groups@berkeleyrep.org.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, February 4; Tuesday, February 9; and Friday, February 19.
- And, on select evenings, patrons can whet their palates for the play with *free tastings* from these culinary artisans one hour before curtain: Ale Industries on January 31 and February 21, Almare Gelato on January 22, Artesa Vineyards and Winery on January 23, Bison Brewery on January 29 and February 6, Cupkates on February 13, Dr. Kracker on February 5, Kokomo Wines on January 30, and Raymond Vineyards on January 24.

Coming Home is part of a **daring season** with four other new shows still on the way: the world premiere of *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* from Naomi Iizuka and Les Waters, the world premiere of *Girlfriend* from Todd Almond and Matthew Sweet, the world premiere of *The Wake* from Lisa Kron and Leigh Silverman, and the local debut of *Aurélia's Oratorio*. Theatre-lovers can guarantee their seats for these shows by subscribing to Berkeley

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Rep. Choose three or more plays and get the best seats at the lowest price. In addition to significant savings, subscribers receive valuable benefits such as the right to reschedule for free, discounts when purchasing tickets for friends, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events like *American Idiot*. Berkeley Rep also offers generous discounts for senior citizens, theatregoers under 30, and employees of preschools, elementary schools, and secondary schools. **Subscriptions begin as low as \$84** – and subscribers save up to 29% on every ticket.

Individual **tickets start at only \$27** to ensure that more people can experience the best theatre in the Bay Area. Additional savings are available for groups, seniors, students, and anyone under 30 years of age – meaning **discounted seats** can be obtained for as little as \$13.50. These new prices make Berkeley Rep more affordable to people in the community who are just starting school, starting careers, and starting families – because lower prices are now available for every performance.

So come home to Berkeley Rep in 2010. The Thrust Stage is located at 2025 Addison Street, near bus lines, bike routes, and parking lots – and only half a block from BART. For **tickets or information**, call (510) 647-2949 or toll-free at (888) 4-BRT-Tix – or simply click 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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COMING HOME
FACT SHEET

WHO: Written by Athol Fugard
 Directed by Gordon Edelstein
 Designed by Eugene Lee (sets), Jessica Ford (costumes), Stephen Strawbridge (lights), Corrine K. Livingston (sound), John Gromada (original compositions), and Lynne Soffer (dialect coach)
 Starring Lou Ferguson (Oupa Jonkers), Roslyn Ruff (Veronica Jonkers), and Thomas Silcott (Alfred Witbooi)

WHAT: *Coming Home*, a poignant new script from South Africa’s master dramatist

WHERE: Berkeley Repertory Theatre
 Thrust Stage, 2025 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Berkeley, CA 94704

WHEN: **January 15 – February 28, 2010**

- Tuesdays and Fridays @ 8:00 PM
- Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
- Thursdays and Saturdays @ 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM
- Sundays @ 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
- No performance on Friday 2/26
- No matinees during previews or on 1/21, 1/30, 2/4, 2/13, or 2/18

SUN	MON	TUE ■	WED	THU ■	FRI	SAT
					15 JAN 8:00 PM	16 8:00 PM
17 7:00 PM	18	19 8:00 PM	20 8:00 PM	21 8	22 8:00 PM	23 2/8:00 PM
24 2/7:00 PM	25	26 8	27 7	28 2/8	29 8:00 PM	30 8:00 PM
31 2/7:00 PM	1 FEB	2 8	3 7	4 8:00 PM	5 8:00 PM	6 2/8:00 PM
7 2/7:00 PM	8	9 8:00 PM	10 7	11 2/8	12 8:00 PM	13 8:00 PM
14 2/7	15	16 8	17 7	18 8	19 8:00 PM	20 2/8:00 PM
21 2/7:00 PM	22	23 8	24 7	25 2/8	26	27 2/8
28 2/7						

Special Events:

Low-cost previews: Friday 1/15, Saturday 1/16 & Tuesday 1/19 @ 8:00 PM and Sunday 1/17 @ 7:00 PM

Teen night: Friday 1/15 @ 6:30 PM

Opening night: Wednesday 1/20 @ 8:00 PM

Pre-show docent talks: Tuesdays 1/19, 1/26, 2/2, 2/9, 2/16 & 2/23 and Thursdays 1/21, 1/28, 2/4, 2/11, 2/18 & 2/25 @ 7:00 PM

Post-play discussions: Thursday 2/4, Tuesday 2/9, and Friday 2/19 @ 8:00 PM

Student matinees: Thursdays 2/4 & 2/18 @ noon

Free tastings: Fridays 1/22 (Almare Gelato), 1/29 (Bison Brewery) & 2/5 (Dr. Kracker) @ 7:00 PM; Saturdays 1/23 (Artesa Vineyards), 1/30 (Kokomo Wines), 2/6 (Bison Brewery) & 2/13 (Cupkates) @ 7:00 PM; and Sundays 1/24 (Raymond Vineyards), 1/31 (Ale Industries) & 2/21 (Ale Industries) @ 6:00 PM

■ PREVIEW
 ■ TEEN NIGHT
 ■ OPENING NIGHT
 ■ POST-SHOW DISCUSSION
 ■ TASTING
 ■ DOCENT PRESENTATIONS EVERY TUE & THU 7PM

HOW MUCH: \$13.50 - \$86

	Section B	Section A	Premium
Previews.....	\$27	\$34	\$39
Tue 8 PM / Wed 7 PM / Thu 2 PM / Sat 2 PM	\$33	\$45	\$52
Thu 8 PM / Sun 2 PM / Sun 7 PM	\$37	\$51	\$57
Friday @ 8 PM.....	\$45	\$57	\$63
Saturday @ 8 PM	\$51	\$63	\$71

Discounts: • Half-price tickets available for anyone under 30 years of age
 • \$10 discount for students and seniors one hour before curtain
 • Groups of 10 or more, contact (510) 647-2918 or groups@berkeleyrep.org

PHOTOS: <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/press/photos-10ch.asp>

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