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CHRISTOPHER DURANG’S LATEST BROADWAY HIT COMES TO BERKELEY REP

New season begins when Richard E.T. White directs Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike

APRIL 10, 2013 – Today, Berkeley Repertory Theatre revealed the seventh show selected for its upcoming season. The Tony Award-winning nonprofit will begin its 46th year of smart and adventurous shows with Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, the hilarious Broadway hit from three-time Obie Award-winner Christopher Durang. Respected director Richard E.T. White returns to the Bay Area to stage this hugely popular show in September.

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike rounds out a vigorous and versatile season at Berkeley Rep, which looks at love and family through comic and tragic lenses. The ambitious slate blends seminal works from prominent artists with compelling new plays from vital new voices. October offers up The Pianist of Willesden Lane, a poignant true story of war-torn Europe from Mona Golabek and Hershey Felder. Then Kneehigh comes back for the holidays with the irresistible West Coast premiere of Tristan & Yseult. The New Year begins with the world premiere of The House That Will Not Stand, a captivating script commissioned from Marcus Gardley and staged by Patricia McGregor. Next Steven Epp and Christopher Bayes reunite for a criminally funny take on Dario Fo’s Accidental Death of an Anarchist. Then Jonathan Moscone directs an emotional production of Nina Raine’s Tribes, and Artistic Director Tony Taccone teams up with Tony Kushner for the West Coast premiere of an epic play called The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures. Best of all, since Berkeley Rep insists that extraordinary art should be accessible and affordable, theatregoers can see three or more shows for as little as $25 each!

“I’m always looking for a way to start the season with a show that celebrates life, and this will be a really wild and fun ride,” Taccone remarks. “Christopher Durang has been one of our nation’s leading social critics for a long time due to his singular comic sense as a playwright, essayist, and raconteur. This show isn’t only funny, it has a deep and bittersweet undercurrent that really taps into the zeitgeist. I’m looking forward to sharing it with our audience – and to welcoming Richard E.T. White back to Berkeley Rep’s stage. He has a particular understanding of comedy and absurdity that will serve this play well.”

(MORE)
Durang – the renowned author of rollicking comedies such as *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You* and *The Marriage of Bette & Boo* – turns Chekhov on his head with this witty and incisive farce. In bucolic Bucks County, Vanya and Sonia fritter their lives away in their family's farmhouse amid regret, angst, and the alarming prophecies of an addled housecleaner. Enter Masha, a self-absorbed movie star with her prized boy toy Spike, and the stage is set for an absurd weekend of hilarity and global warming. This year's Broadway sensation, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* delights audiences with its abundant comedy while paying loving homage to Chekhov's themes of heartbreak and hope.

“*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* is brainy and witty and clever and cute,” *Variety* vows. “In this hilarious mashup, classic themes of existential loss and longing are given both a modern spin and endlessly inventive comic twists.” “Deliriously funny,” declares the *New York Times*. “The theater erupts in booming gusts of laughter… I can imagine many satisfied patrons leaving the theater muttering, 'Now if only real Chekhov plays were this funny maybe I wouldn’t keep falling asleep.'” “Hilarious,” raves the *Hollywood Reporter*. “This is a work by a mature playwright taking stock and illuminating countless universal truths… He also demonstrates the enduring currency of Chekhov's themes, showing that for all our supposed progress in the era of mass connectivity, despair and disappointment are as present as ever. Just like our Russian brethren more than a century ago, we are inescapably creatures of our time.”

Christopher Durang’s work has appeared on Broadway, off Broadway, across America, and around the world. His many plays include *The Actor’s Nightmare*, *Baby with the Bathwater*, *Betty’s Summer Vacation* (Obie Award), *Beyond Therapy*, *For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls*, *Laughing Wild*, *The Marriage of Bette and Boo* (Obie Award), *Media Amok*, *Miss Witherspoon* (Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Mrs. Bob Cratchit’s Wild Christmas Binge*, *Sex and Longing*, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* (Obie Award), and *Why Torture is Wrong and the People Who Love Them*. Durang earned a Tony nomination for Best Book of a Musical with *A History of the American Film* and also wrote the book for *Adrift in Macao*. He co-wrote *The Idiots Karamazov* with Albert Innaurato, and co-wrote and performed the cabaret *Das Lusitania Songspiel* with Sigourney Weaver. Durang has been co-chair of the playwriting program at the Juilliard School since 1994. He was recently inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame, and his other honors include the Dramatists Guild Hull Warriner Award, the Harvard Arts Medal, and the PEN/Laura Pels Award for a Master American Dramatist. *Beyond Therapy* made its West Coast premiere at Berkeley Rep in 1983.
Richard E.T. White directed nine shows at Berkeley Rep between 1985 and 1993, including *Blue Window*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Hard Times* (West Coast premiere), *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *In the Belly of the Beast*, *Painting It Red* (West Coast premiere), *Reckless*, *The Sea*, and *Tooth of Crime* (with Sharon Ott). In 1987, his production of *Hard Times* was selected for the American Theatre Exchange in Manhattan, becoming the first show in Berkeley Rep’s history to transfer to New York. White served as artistic director of San Francisco’s Eureka Theatre and Chicago’s Wisdom Bridge Theatre. He has also worked with Alliance Theatre Company, American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, Court Theatre, the Empty Space Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Northlight Theatre, The Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company. With Paul Dresher and Rinde Eckert, he co-created the electronic opera *Slow Fire*, which toured internationally and appeared at Lincoln Center. His recent work includes *Red* at Seattle Repertory Theatre and the Arizona Theatre Company, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Lion in Winter* at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. White has been chair of the theatre department at Cornish College of the Arts since 1995 when he returned from a three-year residency in Japan, which included teaching at Toin and Gaukushuin Universities and serving as resident director for Theatre Company Subaru in Tokyo.

The season producer for Berkeley Rep’s 46th year is the Strauch Kulhanjian Family. The entire experience is also supported by BART and Wells Fargo, who serve as Berkeley Rep’s official season sponsors for the ninth straight year – and now they’re joined by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Get the best seats for all of these shows at the consistently lowest prices by subscribing to Berkeley Rep. The Main Season package guarantees tickets for *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *The House That Will Not Stand*, *IHO*, *The Pianist of Willesden Lane*, and *Tristan & Yseult*, while the Full Season package also includes seats for *Tribes* and *Vanya*. Alternatively, you can “choose your own season” by selecting three or more plays that appeal to your palate. 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 *George Gershwin Alone*. Best of all, subscribers have guaranteed seats to sold-out plays while others are turned away.
Ticket packages begin as low as $125. Berkeley Rep also offers generous discounts for senior citizens, theatregoers under 30, and employees of nursery, elementary, and secondary schools – so discounted subscriptions start at only $67.50. Purchase a ticket package now, because individual seats don’t go on sale until August.

Berkeley Rep has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its core values of imagination and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, 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. Its bustling facilities – the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. A not-for-profit organization, the theatre welcomes an annual audience of 200,000, serves 23,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups every year, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 330 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 click berkeleyrep.org.

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2013-14 SEASON SCHEDULE

**VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE**
Limited Season Play #1 – Roda Theatre
Written by Christopher Durang
Directed by Richard E.T. White
September 20 – October 20, 2013
Opening night: September 25, 2013

**THE PIANIST OF WILLESDEN LANE**
Main Season Play #1 – Thrust Stage
Based on the book *The Children of Willesden Lane* by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen
Adapted and directed by Hershey Felder
October 25 – December 8, 2013
Opening night: October 30, 2013

**TRISTAN & YSEULT**
Main Season Play #2 – Roda Theatre
West Coast premiere
Adapted and directed by Emma Rice
Written by Carl Grose and Anna Maria Murphy
November 22, 2013 – January 6, 2014
Opening night: November 26, 2013

**THE HOUSE THAT WILL NOT STAND**
Main Season Play #3 – Thrust Stage
World premiere
Written by Marcus Gardley
Directed by Patricia McGregor
January 31 – March 16, 2014
Opening night: February 5, 2014

**ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST**
Main Season Play #4 – Roda Theatre
Written by Dario Fo
Directed by Christopher Bayes
March 7 – April 20, 2014
Opening night: March 12, 2014

**TRIBES**
Limited Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage
Written by Nina Raine
Directed by Jonathan Moscone
April 11 – May 11, 2014
Opening night: April 16, 2014

**THE INTELLIGENT HOMOSEXUAL’S GUIDE TO CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM WITH A KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES**
Main Season Play #5 – Roda Theatre
West Coast premiere
Written by Tony Kushner
Directed by Tony Taccone
May 16 – June 29, 2014
Opening night: May 21, 2014

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