BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES FIVE CAPTIVATING SHOWS FOR UPCOMING 2014–15 SUBSCRIPTION SEASON

A roster of stellar artists — with more to come — takes center stage for the Theatre’s 47th season

MARCH 5, 2014 – Known nationally and internationally for thrilling audiences with captivating and esteemed productions, Berkeley Rep is poised to present yet another compelling collection of shows for its 47th season. Today, Berkeley Rep’s Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone reveals five of seven productions that will comprise the 2014–15 subscription programming. This September, Kneehigh’s Emma Rice (Tristan & Yseult and The Wild Bride) is back to direct an electrifying world premiere: An Audience with Meow Meow, starring international singing sensation and über-diva Meow Meow. Then theatre ensemble UNIVERSES teams up with Berkeley Rep’s Associate Director Liesl Tommy to deliver a powerhouse performance about the legacies of the Black Panthers and Young Lords in Party People. Next, two-time Tony and Academy Award nominee Kathleen Turner makes her Berkeley Rep debut in the acclaimed Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins, directed by renowned director David Esbjornson. Spring 2015 will see audience favorite Steven Epp and celebrated director Dominique Serrand reunite for Molière’s satire on religious hypocrisy, Tartuffe. Making its West Coast premiere is the poignant and poetic new play Head of Passes by McArthur “Genius” grant awardee Tarell Alvin McCraney, directed by preeminent Steppenwolf Theatre company member Tina Landau.

“Each season at Berkeley Rep we strive to present an arresting and enthralling collection of stories featuring the most entertaining and daring artists in the world,” says Taccone. “This year we’re proud to present a number of immensely gifted artists who will be performing at Berkeley Rep for the first time. We can’t wait for audiences to meet the deliciously outrageous cabaret diva Meow Meow. She teams up with the ingenious Emma Rice to bring us a larger-than-life performance. The acclaimed theatre trio known as UNIVERSES brings us a story about the Black Panthers and the Young Lords that will resonant deeply here in the Bay Area. Directed by our own Liesl Tommy, this production is a brand-new incarnation from the one staged at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Tarell Alvin McCraney, who has quickly established himself as one of our most gifted playwrights, teams up with Tina Landau in Head of Passes, his play dealing with faith and redemption. We also welcome world-renowned actress Kathleen Turner. Ms. Turner applies her phenomenal talent to create a portrait of the indomitable Molly Ivins, whose fiery wit and political wisdom serve as a tonic for our times. Dominique Serrand and Steven Epp, the masterful duo behind The Miser and Figaro, reunite in Tartuffe. All in all, it’s a season filled to the brim with challenging, sophisticated, and deep work. The audience is in for a spellbinding theatrical experience.”

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The season opens in September with the world premiere of *An Audience with Meow Meow*. Named one of the top performers of 2010 by the *New Yorker*, post-post-modern diva Meow Meow creates a unique brand of kamikaze cabaret and performance art exotica that has hypnotized audiences globally. The captivating Meow Meow has rendezvoused with fellow superstars Mikhail Baryshnikov, Pina Bausch, and David Bowie. Now she’s entangled with the endlessly inventive director Emma Rice (*The Wild Bride, Tristan & Yseult, Broadway’s Brief Encounter*) in a musical world premiere of gargantuan proportions featuring sizzling songs, sequins and satire, blow-torch wit, and divine mayhem! Notes the *New York Times*, “The term ‘kamikaze cabaret’ has been applied to the charming, shape-shifting diva Meow Meow...Her act celebrated a far-reaching cosmopolitanism that erases boundaries between cultures and languages. If you think of her changeability as a series of surprise attacks, the term kamikaze may apply after all.” Adds the *London Times*, “Cabaret was always supposed to be transgressive and subversive; Meow Meow puts the beauty and the beastliness of it back where it belongs: out on the edge and in your face.” Penned by Meow Meow, *An Audience with Meow Meow* is filled with beauty, hilarity, and heart.

In October, get ready for a hyperkinetic mix of live video, hip hop, jazz, rock, gospel, blues, Latin rhythms, and spoken word as the explosive theatre ensemble *UNIVERSES* rocks and unlocks the legacy of the Black Panthers and Young Lords. In the 1960s these activists protected their communities and provided free food and medical care — but their cries for justice were overshadowed by the radical images embedded in our mainstream history books. Based on dozens of interviews, this high-wattage fusion of story and song imagines the Panthers and Young Lords reuniting today at an art opening curated by a couple of young counterculturists — where past, present, and generations collide. Helmed by Berkeley Rep’s Associate Director Liesl Tommy (*Ruined*), *Party People* asks, what is the price of being a revolutionary, and what happens to those who come after? Written by *UNIVERSES* co-founders Steven Sapp and Mildred Ruiz-Sapp along with core member William Ruiz, *Party People* promises to be a hypnotic performance. “*Party People* is an artful mixture of spoken poetry, hip-hop theatre, blues, jazz, gospel and rap,” proclaims KLCC Radio. “Mesmerizing monologues punctuate this well-balanced theatrical potpourri.”

In November, the Theatre rolls out the red carpet for two-time Tony and Oscar nominee Kathleen Turner, who makes her Berkeley Rep debut in *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*. The brassy, sharp-witted political journalist and best-selling author of *Bushwacked*, Ivins was celebrated for her folksy yet barbed humor. She was the rowdy raconteur stirring up trouble in the old boy’s club and ridiculing those she deemed too big for their britches — earning her a widely read syndicated column and a seat next to Mark Twain as one of America’s beloved satirists. Turner is all smarts and sass as the redheaded firebrand, recounting her political rants and personal reflections with a liberal dose of piss and vinegar. Writes the *LA Weekly*, “Turner handles the demands of the work beautifully with tremendous stamina, and even a little well placed in-character ad lib banter to realize Ivins with empathic care and a perfected execution.” Turner starred in the world premiere of *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins* at Philadelphia Theatre Company, as well as performances at Arena Stage and Geffen Playhouse.

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She received Tony Award nominations for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* As a screen icon, Turner garnered critical acclaim for her performances in various movies including *Body Heat*, for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe; *Romancing the Stone*, and *Prizzi’s Honor*, each of which earned her a Golden Globe Award; and *Peggy Sue Got Married*, which brought her both an Academy Award nomination and a Golden Globe nomination. Obie Award winner David Esbjornson — one of the nation’s most sought-after directors — has helmed productions on Broadway, the West End, and in theatres across the nation, including the Broadway production of *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*, the world premiere of *Homebody/Kabul* at Chelsea Centre in London, and Larry Kramer’s *The Normal Heart* at The Public Theater in New York.

Next Berkeley Rep welcomes back the beloved team of Dominique Serrand and Steven Epp for *Tartuffe*. “As spellbinding as a deadly snake charmed from its basket...” That’s just one of the accolades for Steven Epp and Dominique Serrand’s provocative and enjoyable revival of Molière’s satire on religious hypocrisy set to open in March 2015. A seemingly pious Tartuffe ingratiates himself to the wealthy Orgon, gaining access to the old man’s house and throwing his family into chaos. As Orgon falls for the scoundrel’s ruse, Tartuffe’s deceit takes a dangerous turn. This modern interpretation of Molière’s most popular play — featuring a hypnotic Epp in the title role — is as intense and incisive as the day it was written, and just as entertaining. Berkeley Rep audiences fell in love with the impish Epp and esteemed director Serrand when they delighted us with such legendary shows as *The Miser*. Epp has also appeared in Berkeley Rep’s *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *A Doctor in Spite of Himself*, *Figaro*, *The Green Bird*, and *Don Juan Giovanni*. He was an actor, writer, and co-artistic director at Theatre de la Jeune Lune, winner of the 2005 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, from 1983 to 2008. Serrand was co-founder and artistic director of Theatre de la Jeune Lune from 1978 until its closure in 2008. His other productions at Berkeley Rep include *Don Juan Giovanni*, *The Green Bird*, and *Figaro*.

In April, Berkeley Rep presents *Head of Passes* by MacArthur “Genius” Award winner Tarell Alvin McCraney. Directed by the preeminent Tina Landau in her Berkeley Rep debut, the riveting *Head of Passes* is a poignant and poetic new play about the journey of family and faith, trial and tribulation. In a dilapidated house near the ever-shifting source of the Mississippi, Shelah’s family gathers on a stormy night for her birthday — bringing ghosts and secrets of the past with them. As her roof buckles under the weight of the rain, Shelah’s convictions begin to wash away, leaving her to excavate the truths buried below. “*Head of Passes* is a heart-wrenching, thought-provoking, and soul-stirring experience,” says Chicago Now. “It’s the type of show that continues to percolate conversation long after the curtain.” And the Chicago Tribune proclaims, “McCraney writes the richest dialogue of any scribe of his generation.” He is best known for his acclaimed trilogy, The Brother/Sister Plays: *The Brothers Size*, *In the Red and Brown Water*, and *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet*. They have been performed at McCarter Theater in Princeton, The Public Theater in New York, Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, and at a trio of theatres in the Bay Area: Marin Theatre Company, American Conservatory Theater, and Magic Theatre. Around the world, they appeared at the Young Vic in London (Olivier Award nomination) and elsewhere. He was awarded a MacArthur “Genius” grant in 2013.

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The 2014-15 season is supported by BART and Wells Fargo, who have generously renewed their commitment as Berkeley Rep’s official season sponsors for the 10th straight year. Berkeley Rep is also proud to have the Strauch Kulhanjian Family on board as a season sponsor.

Get the best seats for these shows at the consistently lowest prices by subscribing to Berkeley Rep. The Full Season package guarantees tickets for An Audience with Meow Meow, Party People, Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins, Tartuffe, and Head of Passes, as well as two more shows to be announced soon. 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 advantages such as the ability to reschedule performances for free, discounts when purchasing tickets for friends, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events. Best of all, subscribers have guaranteed seats to sold-out plays. Subscribers can renew their packages now, which start at only $125 for five plays and $175 for seven plays. Even steeper discounts are available for seniors, persons under 30, and pre–K-12 educators. New subscribers can subscribe to five or seven plays by phone only. Tickets packages of three or more plays will go on sale once the full season has been announced at a later date.

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. Its bustling facilities — which include the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize an illustrious 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. 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 visit: berkeleyrep.org.

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2014-15 SEASON SCHEDULE

AN AUDIENCE WITH MEOW MEOW
Main Season – Roda Theatre
World premiere
By Meow Meow
Directed by Emma Rice
September 5 – October 19, 2014
Opening night: Friday, September 12, 2014

PARTY PEOPLE
Limited Season – Thrust Stage
By UNIVERSES (Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz-Sapp, and William Ruiz, aka Ninja)
Developed and directed by Liesl Tommy
October 17 – November 16, 2014
Opening night: Friday, October 24, 2014

RED HOT PATRIOT: THE KICK-ASS WIT OF MOLLY IVINS
Main Season – Roda Theatre
By Margaret Engel and Allison Engel
Directed by David Esbjornson
Opening night: Tuesday, November 25, 2014

TARTUFFE
Limited Season – Roda Theatre
By Molière
Adapted by David Ball
Directed by Dominique Serrand
March 13 – April 12, 2015
Opening night: Friday, March 20, 2015

HEAD OF PASSES
Main Season – Thrust Stage
West Coast premiere
By Tarell Alvin McCraney
Directed by Tina Landau
April 10 – May 24, 2015
Opening night: Friday, April 17, 2015

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