FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP BRINGS BACK SMASH HIT

THE PIANIST OF WILLESDEN LANE FOR ENCORE PRESENTATION

Piano virtuoso Mona Golabek returns this February for a limited engagement.

December 10, 2014 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre is proud to announce that its critically lauded presentation of The Pianist of Willesden Lane, starring acclaimed pianist Mona Golabek, will return in February for a limited engagement. After a record-breaking run last fall and a triumphant New York premiere, Golabek is back with the true story of her mother, Lisa Jura, a young Jewish musician whose dreams are interrupted by the Nazi regime. Based on the book The Children of Willesden Lane by Golabek and Lee Cohen, the play is set in Vienna in 1938 and in London during the Blitzkrieg. In this heart-stirring show, Golabek performs some of the world’s most beautiful piano music live as she shares her mother’s riveting story of survival. Adapted and directed by Hershey Felder, The Pianist of Willesden Lane is infused with hope and invokes the life-affirming power of music. The show was one of the biggest hits in Berkeley Rep’s history, selling out virtually all 52 performances of its originally scheduled engagement and all 29 performances of its extension. The Pianist of Willesden Lane will have a three-week run February 3 – February 22, 2015 in the Roda Theatre.

"I'm thrilled to return to Berkeley Rep," remarks Golabek. "I'm truly honored that the Bay Area audience has wholeheartedly embraced my mother’s story and her music; it warms my heart. I'm excited to perform the show for a new audience and to welcome back those who have seen it before."

"Mona’s story and performance resonated profoundly with so many," adds Felder. "We were deeply moved by the audience’s appreciation of the show and couldn’t be happier to be back for a second run."

The Pianist of Willesden Lane’s Berkeley Rep debut not only captivated Bay Area audiences but also garnered effusive praise from local critics. “An astonishing tour de force...Mona Golabek doesn’t just tell a great story. Seated at a concert grand, she accompanies her tale with music that infuses, illustrates, amplifies and elevates The Pianist of Willesden Lane to make the personal universal and another generation so personal that you can’t help but feel your heart swell in response ...Stunningly good!” proclaims San Francisco Chronicle. "Deeply moving...Pianist strikes a deep chord in its audience because it uses the power of music to reveal the fragility of humanity. Based on a book by Golabek and Lee Cohen, it's a deeply moving elegy of a family struggling to hold onto what they value amid the chaos of war...There’s no denying the intensity of her narrative, the ache of her family legacy. And her mastery as a musician lends to the emotional ferocity of the play, its depth and sweep. As she sits at the Steinway, communing with the mysteries of Bach and Debussy, history turns into a symphony,” declares San Jose Mercury News / Bay Area News Group

(MORE)
American concert pianist Mona Golabek has appeared at the Hollywood Bowl, the Kennedy Center, and Royal Festival Hall. She is a Grammy nominee who has been the subject of several documentaries, including Concerto for Mona with conductor Zubin Mehta. Her syndicated radio program, The Romantic Hours, combines music with poetry. Her recordings include Carnival of the Animals and Ravel’s Mother Goose Suite featuring Meryl Streep, both recorded with Golabek’s sister, Renee Golabek-Kaye. Both daughters were taught by their mother, Lisa Jura, who is the subject of Golabek’s acclaimed book, The Children of Willesden Lane. Golabek founded Hold On To Your Music, a foundation devoted to spreading the message of the power of music. With the help of the Milken Family Foundation, Facing History and Ourselves, and the Annenberg Foundation, she created educational resources, which, with her book, have been adopted into school curricula across America.

Director and adapter Hershey Felder created and performed George Gershwin Alone, which played at Berkeley Rep, on Broadway at the Helen Hayes Theatre, at the West End’s Duchess Theatre, and through worldwide live broadcasts. He has also performed his Composers Sonata 1999-2014 – George Gershwin Alone; Monsieur Chopin; Beethoven, As I Knew Him; Hershey Felder as Leonard Bernstein in Maestro; Hershey Felder as Franz Liszt in Musik; Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin - at dozens of theatres across the U.S. and around the world, including a command performance of Monsieur Chopin for the Polish Ambassador to the United States. Felder is the winner of the 2007 Los Angeles Ovation Awards for Best Musical and Best Actor for George Gershwin Alone. His compositions and recordings include Aliyah, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra; Fairytales, a Musical; Les Anges de Paris, Suite for Violin and Piano; Song Settings; Saltimbanques for Piano and Orchestra; Etudes Thematiques for Piano; and An American Story for Actor and Orchestra. As director, he premiered The Pianist of Willesden Lane at the Geffen Playhouse in April 2012. Felder has been a scholar in residence at Harvard University’s Department of Music and is married to Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada.

Seven talented designers will help bring The Pianist of Willesden Lane to the Roda Theatre: Trevor Hay and Hershey Felder (scenic designers), Jaclyn Maduff (costume designer), Christopher Rynne (lighting designer), Erik Carstensen (sound designer), and Andrew Wilder and Greg Sowizdrzal (projection designers). Kimberly Mark Webb is the production stage manager.

The producer of The Pianist of Willesden Lane is Eighty-Eight Entertainment. Created in 2001 by Hershey Felder, Eighty-Eight Entertainment is devoted to the creation of new works of musical theatre. Current projects include the new musicals Abe Lincoln’s Piano and Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP
Berkeley Repertory Theatre 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 nearly 400 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 – 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 a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org.

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FACT SHEET

The Pianist of Willesden Lane

WHO:
Based on the book The Children of Willesden Lane
By Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen

Directed and adapted by Hershey Felder
Starring Mona Golabek as Lisa Jura

Creative team: Trevor Hay and Hershey Felder (scenic designers), Jaclyn Maduff (costume designer), Christopher Rynne (lighting designer), Erik Carstensen (sound designer), Andrew Wilder and Greg Sowizdrzal (projection designers)

WHAT:
In this heart-stirring show, Mona Golabek performs some of the world’s most beautiful music live — as she relates the real-life legacy of her mother’s quest to survive the Nazi regime. “An astonishing tour de force” lauds the San Francisco Chronicle.

WHERE:
Berkeley Repertory Theatre
Roda Theatre 2015 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Berkeley, CA 94704

WHEN:
February 3-22, 2015
- Tuesdays @ 8:00 PM
- Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
- Thursdays @ 8:00 PM
- Fridays @ 8:00 PM
- Saturdays @ 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM
- Sundays @ 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM

HOW MUCH:
Premium: $67–87 · Section A: $53–71 · Section B: $35–55
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

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