For Immediate Release

FULL CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM ANNOUNCED FOR SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY
Jocelyn Bioh’s award-winning comedy comes to Berkeley Rep

February 3, 2020 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced the full cast and creative team for its production of School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play by Jocelyn Bioh, directed by Awoye Timpo.

Paulina, the reigning queen bee at Ghana’s most exclusive boarding school, has her sights set on the Miss Universe pageant and the glamorous life that’s sure to follow. But her plans and even her very reputation are shaken up when Ericka, a new student who’s strikingly beautiful and talented, captures the attention of the pageant recruiter — and Paulina’s hive-minded friends.

Winner of the 2018 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play and the Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award, School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play is a biting comedy that tackles the universal issues of beauty and self-worth that face teenage girls across the globe.

“I fell in love with Jocelyn’s voice as a playwright several years ago when I worked with her on the development of her play Nollywood Dreams. School Girls soon followed, and as I was programming this season, it was one of the first plays I put on my list,” said Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer. “Part of Jocelyn’s brilliance is the way she uses humor in her work. She creates worlds that are politically aware and highly insightful, while also being wildly entertaining. While School Girls takes place in a boarding school in Ghana, the concerns of these young women will feel familiar. I can’t wait to introduce them, and Jocelyn, to our audience.”

School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play begins on Thursday, March 19 and runs through Sunday, May 3. Individual tickets range from $30-97 (half price if you’re under 35) and can be purchased online at berkeleyrep.org or by phone at 510 647-2949. Press night will be on Thursday, March 26, 2020.

Jocelyn Bioh (Playwright) Jocelyn is a first-generation Ghanaian-American writer/performer from New York City. Jocelyn is a commissioned playwright with Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Atlantic Theater Company, and was a Tow Playwriting Fellow in 2018/19. Her plays include the multi-award-winning School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, which had two celebrated runs at MCC Theater and is also playing at the Goodman Theatre this spring; Nollywood Dreams (Powerhouse Theater at Vassar College, 2016; upcoming at MCC Theater this spring; Kilroy’s List 2015); and the new musical Goddess (Powerhouse Theater at Vassar College, 2019), of which she is the book writer. She has her BA in English and Theatre from The Ohio State University and MFA in Theatre-Playwriting from Columbia University School of the Arts.

Awoye Timpo (Director) Awoye’s off-Broadway directing credits include In Old Age (New York Theatre Workshop), Good Grief (Vineyard Theatre), The Revolving Cycles Truly and Steadily Roll’d (The Playwrights Realm), and The Homecoming Queen (Atlantic Theater Company). Regionally she has
directed *Pipeline* at the Studio Theatre, *Everybody Black* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, and *Paradise Blue* at Long Wharf Theatre. Additional credits include *Carnaval* at the National Black Theatre, *Sister Son/Ji* at the Billie Holiday Theatre, *The Vanished* (site-specific), *Skeleton Crew* at Chester Theatre Company, and *Ndebele Funeral* at 59E59 Theaters, Edinburgh Festival/Summerhall, and the South African tour. She is the producer of CLASSIX, a series exploring classic plays by Black playwrights.

**CAST**

**Afua Busia** (Ama) Afua has previously appeared in Berkeley Rep’s *An Octoroon* and is thrilled to be returning! Other regional credits include *A Christmas Carol* (American Conservatory Theater) and *The Little Mermaid* (Imagination Stage). Afua is a recent graduate of ACT’s MFA program, class of 2019.

**Santoya Fields** (Eloise) Santoya is excited to be making her debut at Berkeley Rep. New York theatre credits include *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* (Everyday Inferno Theatre Company) and *Rachel* (New Brooklyn Theatre). Regional productions include *Men on Boats* (American Conservatory Theater), *Black Odyssey* (California Shakespeare Theater), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Marin Shakespeare Company), and the West Coast premiere of James Ijames’ *White* (Shotgun Players). For her performance in *White*, Santoya was nominated for a Theatre Bay Area and San Francisco Bay Area Theater Critics Circle awards.

**Omozé Idehenre** (Headmistress Francis) Omozé’s film and TV credits include *On the Road* and *This Is Us*. Off-Broadway credit: *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* (Classic Stage Company). Other theatre credits include *What You Are* (Old Globe San Diego); *Her Portmanteau* (Boston Court Pasadena); *Good Grief* (Kirk Douglas Theatre); *Runboyrun* (Magic Theatre); *Gem of the Ocean, The Convert, Seven Guitars* (Marin Theatre Company); *The Comedy of Errors and Richard III* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Black Odyssey, The Winter’s Tale, Spunk, Macbeth* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Clybourne Park, Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Scorched, A Doll’s House, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (American Conservatory Theater). Education: American Conservatory Theater and The Groundlings. She is grateful to be part of this gifted cast and crew.

**Paige Mays** (Gifty) Paige is thrilled to make her official Berkeley Rep debut after understudying Misha in *White Noise*. Her most recent regional credits include *Single Black Female* (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre), *Vinegar Tom* (Shotgun Players), *Jazz* (Marin Theatre Company), *The 48 Hour Play Festival* (Harlem 9), and *For Colored Girls…* (African American Shakespeare Company), where she was nominated for Outstanding Ensemble of a Play and Outstanding Performer in a Featured Role in a Play. Paige is from Aurora, CO and studied Performing Arts at Arizona State University.

**Gabriella Momah** (Nana) Gabby (they/them) is delighted to be on Berkeley Rep’s mainstage for the first time. Regional theatre credits include *Watch Me* (The Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep), *Top Girls* (American Conservatory Theater), *Cardboard Piano* (New Conservatory Theatre), *A Letter to My Ex* (Spectrum Queer Media), *They/Them* (Those Women Productions), *Token and Shipping and Handling* (Crowded Fire Theater: Matchbox Series), *FLEX* (Bay Area Playwrights Festival), *Can I Hold You, The Color Purple, The Bluest Eye* (Stanford TAPS), and numerous productions with Killing My Lobster, Bay Area Children’s Theatre, and the National Queer Arts Festival. Gabby has trained at Stanford University, San Francisco Mime Troupe, and The Actors Space.

**Al-nisa Petty** (Mercy) Al-nisa is an actor and voice-over artist from Newark, New Jersey. She is thrilled to be making her Berkeley Rep debut. Regional: *A Raisin in the Sun* directed by Nambi E. Kelley (TheatreWorks Colorado Springs) and *Slut: The Play* (New Jersey Performing Arts Center). New York: *On Strivers Row* (Metropolitan Playhouse), *Masque* (Ensemble Studio Theatre), and *Street Scene* and *The Long Christmas Dinner* (Brave New World Repertory Theatre). Film: *Darling* (Screen Media Film) and
Strive (Aletheia Films). She studied at Shakespeare’s Globe in London and received her BFA in Acting from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. @alniisa al-nisa.com

Lily Santiago (Ericka) Lily is delighted to be at Berkeley Rep for the first time. She has appeared off Broadway as Claudio/Elbow in Measure for Measure (The Public Theater), Macduff in Macbeth (Red Bull Theater), and previously in the New York Shakespeare Festival’s production of Othello. Regional credits include Juliet in Romeo and Juliet (Huntington Theatre Company) and Emmy in A Doll’s House, Part 2 (George Street Playhouse). She is a proud graduate of Northwestern University (BA in theatre) and LaGuardia Performing Arts HS.

Akilah A. Walker (Paulina) Akilah is a classically trained actor and filmmaker who is moved by transformation, collaboration, and nuanced storytelling that explores the lives of women and people of color. Akilah is elated to be making her Berkeley Rep debut. Akilah also recently appeared at Aurora Theatre Company as Bunny in Detroit ’67 and was nominated for Best Supporting Actress by the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle. Originally from Atlanta, GA, Akilah is a recent graduate of American Conservatory Theater, where she received her MFA, and is also a proud alumnus of Fordham University. Selected roles: Lady M in Macbeth, Gremio in Taming of the Shrew, and Lincoln in Topdog/Underdog. akilahawalker.com IG/Twitter: @Akthewayy

CREATIVE TEAM

Jason Ardizzone-West (Scenic Designer) Jason is happy to be making his Berkeley Rep debut. Recent work includes Jesus Christ Superstar Live (NBC – Emmy Award & Art Directors Guild Nomination), The Michaels (The Public Theater), Blue Man Group (national tour), Uncle Vanya (Old Globe, Hunter Theater Project, WNET 13 TV), Once on This Island (Cincinnati Playhouse and Actors Theatre of Louisville), Native Gardens and The Royale (Cleveland Play House), Good Grief (Vineyard Theatre), Dermot Kennedy (EU/UK/U.S. concert tour). Upcoming projects include Bliss (5th Avenue Theatre), The Bluest Eye (Huntington Theatre), Macbeth (Geffen Playhouse), Grace (Actors Theatre of Louisville). ardizzonewest.com Instagram: @jasonardizzonewest

Karen Perry (Costume Designer) Off Broadway: runboyrun & In Old Age (New York Theatre Workshop). Regional: Breath, Boom (Huntington Theatre); Lackawanna Blues (Mark Taper Forum, Three Rivers Theatre Company); Mothers (Playwrights Realm); Jazz (Manhattan Theatre Club); Black Superhero Magic Mama (Geffen Playhouse); Fun Home (Baltimore Center Stage); Steel Magnolias, Hair, Dreamgirls (Dallas Theater Center); Oklahoma! (Houston Ballet at TUTS); Cinderella (Eglevsky Ballet Company); Danai Gurira’s Familiar (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Guthrie Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre), Cabin in the Sky (Encores!); Blues for an Alabama Sky (Pasadena Playhouse); Crowns, Stop-Reset, Trinity River Trilogy (Goodman Theatre, STC, Dallas Theater Center/Arena Stage); The Trip to Bountiful, The Fall of Heaven (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); The Brother/Sister Plays (The Public Theater/McCarter Theatre); Having Our Say (McCarter Theatre); A Time to Kill, Resurrection (Arena Stage). She has designed nine of the 10 August Wilson plays including Gem of the Ocean, The Piano Lesson, King Hedley II, Radio Golf, Two Trains Running, Seven Guitars, Joe Turner’s Come & Gone. Television: Gregory Hines Show, Saturday Night Live, and The Brother from Another Planet.

Stacey Derosier (Lighting Designer) Credits include Stew (Page 73); Copper Children (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); Men on Boats (Baltimore Center Stage); for all the women who thought they were Mad (Soho Rep); White Noise conceived by Daniel Fish (NYU Skirball); the bandaged place (NYSAF Powerhouse); Playing Hot! (Pipeline Theatre Company); The Climb (Cherry Lane Theatre - Mentor Project); Mies Julie and Dance of Death (Classic Stage Company); Novenas for a Lost Hospital, No One Is Forgotten, Lewiston/Clarkston (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater); The Revolving Cycles Truly and
Steadily Roll’d (Playwrights Realm). Stacey was the 2018 Lilly Award recipient of the Daryl Roth Prize.
staceyderosier.com

Jake Rodriguez (Sound Designer) Jake is a sound designer and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area who last worked with Berkeley Rep on Angels in America. His regional credits include An Octoroon and the world premieres of X’s and O’s: A Football Love Story, Girlfriend, and Passing Strange at Berkeley Rep; The Christians at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Playwrights Horizons, and the Mark Taper Forum; Between Two Knees at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; The Great Leap and A Thousand Splendid Suns at American Conservatory Theater; Everybody at California Shakespeare Theater; the world premiere and revival of Oedipus el Rey at Magic Theatre; and Woman Laughing Alone with Salad at Shotgun Players. Jake is the recipient of a 2004 Princess Grace Award.

For the 2019-20 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes BART, Peet’s Coffee, and Wells Fargo, who have generously renewed their commitment as Berkeley Rep’s official season sponsors. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to have Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer, Michael and Sue Steinberg, Jack and Betty Schafer, and The Strauch Kulhanjian Family on board as season sponsors. School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play is made possible by lead sponsors Kelli & Steffan Tomlinson and executive sponsors Susan Chamberlin, and Kerry Francis & John Jimerson.

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 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, which have gone on to win six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, one Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. 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. The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre engages and educates some 20,000 people a year and helps build the audiences of tomorrow with its nationally recognized teen programs. Berkeley Rep’s bustling facilities — which also include the 400-seat Peet’s Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize a renowned city. Be a Rep.

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