From Berkeley Rep to New York

Born in a storefront, Berkeley Rep has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. Known for its core values of innovation and excellence, the Theatre provides a safe haven for emerging and established artists to take creative risks. Many plays have their world premieres at Berkeley Rep before going on to greater success; other shows are honed in Berkeley, where actors, directors, and designers benefit from the skilled staff, experienced artisans, and educated and adventurous audience. As Tony Kushner wrote after a grueling rehearsal process, “The staff at Berkeley Rep are the platonic ideal of a theatre staff.”

Twelve shows seen at Berkeley Rep have ended up on Broadway. More than 12 arrived off Broadway, two moved to London, two turned into films, and others have toured the nation. *Chinglish* conquered Asia with a sold-out run in Hong Kong and *American Idiot* landed in Tokyo and Seoul. In fact, this ambitious nonprofit has helped deliver 34 shows to New York in the last 30 years! These plays have earned six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, five Outer Critics Circle Awards, four Lucille Lortel Awards, a Grammy Award, a Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Here’s a closer look at this remarkable track record:

2019: *What the Constitution Means to Me*
When Heidi Schreck was in high school she delivered speeches about the Constitution in American Legion Halls all over the country in order to earn money to pay for college. Today the witty Obie Award-winning performer radically reinvents the speech she gave at 15 and discovers the profound effect this document has had on four generations of women in her family. The piece culminates in a fierce impromptu debate between Heidi and a local high-school debater over the future of our inalienable rights.

2019: *Ain't Too Prouc—The Life and Times of The Temptations*
An electrifying new musical about the life and times of The Temptations, the greatest R&B group of all time (Billboard Magazine 2017). They were five young guys on the streets of Detroit when they were discovered by Berry Gordy, who signed them to his legendary new label. After 24 attempts, they finally had a hit and the rest is history—how they met, how they rose, the groundbreaking heights they hit, and how personal and political conflicts threatened to tear the group apart as the nation fell into civil unrest.

2017: *Latin History for Morons*
John Leguizamo the outrageous, multifaceted performer attempts to teach his son (and the rest of us) about the marginalization of Latinos in U.S. history and the vital roles they played in building this country.

2017: *Amélie, A New Musical*
Amélie captured our hearts in the five-time Academy Award-nominated 2001 French film. Now she comes to the stage in an inventive and captivating new musical directed by Tony Award winner Pam MacKinnon.

2016: *Head of Passes*
Tarell Alvin McCraney’s journey of family and faith, trial and tribulation wowed audiences in Berkeley. Helmed by Tina Landau, the play opened at the Public Theater in March 2016.

According to the *New York Times*, “Berkeley Rep has a tradition of playing host to formidable talents before their big breaks, like Anna Deavere Smith, Mary Zimmerman, and Mary-Louise Parker. And it has long been a leader in producing writers of color. In recent years Mr. Taccone has put his weight behind producing another underserved group: emerging writers, including Stew, Ms. Ruhl (a recent recipient of a MacArthur ‘genius’ grant), and Jordan Harrison. Mr. Taccone’s approach – to offer emerging writers the same resources as established ones and to hold them to the same standards – has helped yield a string of hits. He is also able to offer new plays a very educated, broad-minded audience... And artists appreciate Berkeley Rep’s intimate 600- and 400-seat theatres, in which no seat is more than 49 feet from the stage... Increasingly, Berkeley Rep’s galvanizing productions have been traveling to New York [and] the company continues to pride itself on producing provocative, often overtly political theatre, the kind that generates loud and clamorous debate.”
2014: The Pianist of Willesden Lane
After a sold-out run in the Theatre’s Thrust Stage fall 2013, The Pianist of Willesden Lane, starring internationally acclaimed pianist Mona Golabek, made its off-Broadway debut at 59E59 the following summer. Golabek’s unforgettable performance was one of the biggest hits in the Theatre’s history, selling out virtually all 52 performances of its originally scheduled engagement and all 29 performances of its extension. Its record-breaking run landed The Pianist of Willesden Lane as one of 10 shows in the last 25 years of the Theatre’s history to draw more than 30,000 patrons.

2013: No Man’s Land
Legendary actors Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart came to Berkeley Rep in August for a pre-Broadway engagement of Harold Pinter’s masterwork. Directed by Sean Mathias, the show played only 34 performances in the Roda Theatre before moving to New York the fall to play in repertory with their revival of Waiting for Godot.

2013: The Wild Bride
In 2011, Berkeley Rep teamed up with Knee high for the American premiere of The Wild Bride. The show married terrific reviews with audience ovations—and extended for three weeks into 2012! That splendid reception led to a honeymoon engagement in 2013, with three more romantic weeks in the Roda Theatre, before this Bride ran away to play off Broadway at St. Ann’s Warehouse.

2012: Emotional Creature
Tony Award-winning author and activist Eve Ensler selected Berkeley Rep to stage the world premiere of a show based on her bestselling book. In June, Emotional Creature debuted in the Roda Theatre. Then, in October, the original cast began a three-month run off Broadway at the Romulus Linney Courtyard Theatre.

2012: In Paris
When legendary performer Mikhail Baryshnikov teamed up with other Russian artists for this romantic show, Berkeley Rep signed on to produce one of the first stops in the United States. A sold-out three week run in the Roda Theatre helped lead the show to a limited run at Lincoln Center in August.

2011: The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs
In January, Mike Daisey performed a provocative play about our nation’s love affair with technology in Berkeley. Then, after runs in Seattle and Washington, DC, it received an extended run at the Public Theater. After an appearance on This American Life, Daisey found himself at the center of a controversy because he admitted to fabricating parts of his story.

2011: Ghetto Klown
Emmy and Obie Award-winning performer John Leguizamo came to Berkeley Rep in June 2010 to workshop his new solo show as part of the Fireworks Festival. This hilarious and heartfelt tale—known in Berkeley as Klass Klown—enjoyed an extended run at Broadway’s Lyceum Theatre under the moniker Ghetto Klown, earning Leguizamo the Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Solo Performance.

2011: Compulsion
Berkeley Rep and The Public commissioned this compelling script from Rinne Groff, and produced the world-premiere production with Yale Repertory Theatre. After an initial run in New Haven, Oskar Eustis refined the show at Berkeley Rep in the fall of 2010. Then he directed an extended off-Broadway run at the Public in February 2011. Forward magazine ranked Mandy Patinkin’s bravura turn as Sid Silver among the five most important Jewish performances of 2010.

2010: The Great Game: Afghanistan
The Great Game: Afghanistan, a sweeping cycle of short scripts by 12 top playwrights, caused a sensation in 2009 when it debuted at the Tricycle Theatre in London. In 2010, while Berkeley Rep sent its production of Tiny Kushner to the Tricycle, it helped produce a four-city American tour of The Great Game. After making its West Coast premiere in Berkeley, this epic show went on to play at the Skirball Cultural Center in Manhattan—and then the nation’s leaders requested a special performance in Washington, DC to educate personnel at the Pentagon!

2010: In the Wake
In conjunction with Center Theatre Group, Berkeley Rep staged the world-premiere production of In the Wake in May 2010. That fall, Lisa Kron’s script enjoyed an off-Broadway production at the Public, also directed by Leigh Silverman, with many of the same designers and actors. It ranked among the Top 10 off-Broadway shows of 2010 in The New Yorker and topped the list of the year’s best plays in Time Out New York.

2010: American Idiot
In September 2009, Berkeley Rep drew international attention when it presented the world premiere of Green Day’s American Idiot, directed by Tony Award-winner Michael Mayer. The record-breaking run brought in the biggest advance sale in the Theatre’s history, the biggest day at the box office, and 18 of the top 20 days ever. Due to ticket demand, it was extended before it even played its first performance—and it eventually ran for five extra weeks. It was no surprise, then, that it announced a Broadway transfer less than two months later. American Idiot began its Broadway run in March 2010 and quickly earned two Tony Awards, a Drama Desk Award, an Outer Critics Circle Award, the Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album, and numerous other honors.

2009: In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)
Berkeley Rep commissioned this stimulating script from MacArthur genius Sarah Ruhl. Associate Artistic Director Les Waters staged its world premiere in the Roda Theatre in January; then both artists made their Broadway debuts when Lincoln Center Theater produced the show at the Lyceum that fall. In the Next Room was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. USA Today named it Best Play of the Year, The New Yorker proclaimed it the Top Moment in Theatre for 2009, and the New York Times declared it one of “the four best new plays to be produced in New York this year.”

2009: Wishful Drinking
After an initial run in Los Angeles, Hollywood legend Carrie Fisher came to Berkeley Rep to work on her solo show with Artistic Director Tony Taccone. In 2008, Wishful Drinking broke box-office records during its extended run in Berkeley. Then it became a New York Times bestseller and played for sold-out crowds on a seven-city national tour. When the tour brought this outrageous show to Broadway, it received rave reviews and played an extended run at Roundabout Theatre’s Studio 54. Fisher won the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Solo Performance and then turned the show into a popular HBO film.

2008: Taking Over
In 2007, Danny Hoch came to Berkeley Rep to workshop his first new solo show in 10 years with Tony Taccone. In 2008, the world premiere of the resulting work enjoyed an acclaimed, extended run in Berkeley before the pair launched it on a national tour, which included free shows in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx as part of the Hip-Hop Theater Festival and an extended off-Broadway run in Manhattan at the Public. Taking Over won the Los Angeles Critics Circle Award for Best Solo Performance in 2010.

2007: Passing Strange
The provocative rock musical created by Stew and Heidi Rodewald made its world premiere at Berkeley Rep in 2006. A co-production with The Public, it enjoyed an extended off-Broadway run in 2007 and then transferred uptown in 2008 to Broadway’s Belasco Theatre with its original cast intact. Berkeley Rep was one of the proud producers of this Broadway run, which earned Stew a Tony Award for Best Book. Passing Strange also won three Drama Desk Awards including Best Musical, two Obie Awards including Best New American Theatre Piece, four
Audelco Awards including Best Musical, and the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Musical. The show made the annual Top 10 list in many prominent papers – and so did the cult film directed by Spike Lee when it came out in 2009.

**2007: Eurydice**

**2006: Brundibar**
Two legendary artists – Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak – brought their storybook to life with a gorgeous show that featured a 10-person cast, a 13-person orchestra, and a 25-voice children’s choir. The production, staged by Artistic Director Tony Taccone, debuted at Berkeley Rep before traveling to Yale Rep and the New Victory Theater in New York. Its sold-out Manhattan run was nominated for two Drama Desk Awards.

**2006: Bridge & Tunnel**
After its record-breaking off-Broadway run, Artistic Director Tony Taccone workshopped this show with Sarah Jones at Berkeley Rep before it took it to Broadway. It earned universal praise from the press, extended its run at the Helen Hayes Theatre for five months, and won a Tony Award for its star.

**2002: 36 Views**
Mark Wing-Davey directed the world premiere of Naomi Iizuka’s script at Berkeley Rep, and then the show played off Broadway in a co-production with the Public.

**2001: Metamorphoses**
Berkeley Rep helped Mary Zimmerman fully realize her vision for this show’s West Coast premiere. Only the second staging of her unforgettable play, this new production moved to the Mark Taper Forum and then to New York. It played off Broadway and then transferred to Broadway, where Mary earned a well-deserved Tony Award. The show also won four Drama Desk Awards including Outstanding New Play, three Lucille Lortel Awards including Outstanding Play, the Drama League Award for Best Play, the Obie Award for Direction, and the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Direction of a Play.

**1998: Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop**
Directed by Jo Bonney, Danny Hoch’s solo show made its world premiere at Berkeley Rep before heading to P.S. 122 in New York and 45 cities worldwide. It eventually became a cult film.

**1997: Alligator Tales**
Performed at Berkeley Rep under the titles *Hurricane* and *Mauvais Temps*, these two solo shows from Anne Galjour – the latter a world premiere – won the annual Will Glickman Award given to the best new play to debut in the San Francisco Bay Area. The scripts were combined to create *Alligator Tales*, which was staged at Manhattan Theatre Club and Seattle Rep by Sharon Ott, Berkeley Rep’s artistic director at the time.

**1997: Ballad of Yachiyo**
When Berkeley Rep commissioned *Ballad of Yachiyo* by Philip Kan Gotanda, it received the AT&T: Onstage Award, becoming the only theatre to earn this honor four times. Sharon Ott’s production – which the *Village Voice* proclaimed “mesmerizing” – journeyed to the Public, Seattle Rep, and South Coast Rep.

**1992: Dragonwings**
Berkeley Rep commissioned an adaptation of this bestselling children’s book from Laurence Yep and produced its world premiere. Originally intended for a small tour of local schools, *Dragonwings* became a holiday hit in Berkeley. It went on to enjoy an 11-week East Coast tour produced by the Kennedy Center and the Lincoln Center Institute. The show also traveled to Atlanta, Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington, DC.
1992: Dream of a Common Language
Immediately after making its world premiere at Berkeley Rep, supported by an AT&T: Onstage Award, Heather MacDonald’s play was performed at Women’s Project in Manhattan.

1990: Each Day Dies with Sleep
Berkeley Rep received its first AT&T Onstage Award to support the world premiere of Each Day Dies with Sleep, directed by Roberta Levitow. José Rivera’s script called for 10,000 unmatched socks, which the company solicited from local folks who were unlucky in laundry. When the show transferred to New York in a co-production with Circle Rep, all those Berkeley socks made their off-Broadway debut!

1990: Prelude to a Kiss
Craig Lucas and Norman René staged Prelude to a Kiss at Berkeley Rep in 1988, preparing it for an off-Broadway run. The play featured an unknown actress named Mary-Louise Parker, who earned a career-launching Tony nomination when Kiss graduated to Broadway. Her Berkeley co-star, Sydney Walker, didn’t travel to New York — but he reprised his role on film with Alec Baldwin and Meg Ryan. Prelude to a Kiss won three Obie Awards, including Best New American Play, and the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Play.

1989: Yankee Dawg You Die
Philip Kan Gotanda’s breakthrough script made its world premiere in Berkeley. Staged by Artistic Director Sharon Ott, the show was remounted at the Los Angeles Theatre Center and Playwrights Horizons. Starting a tradition that would continue with later productions – such as American Idiot, Bridge & Tunnel, Eurydice, Passing Strange, and In the Next Room – Yankee Dawg You Dierceived strong reviews in the New York Times and The New Yorker when it landed in Manhattan.

1987: Hard Times
When the Joyce Theatre Foundation decided to expose New Yorkers to the best stage work from other cities, it presented an 11-week festival at Theater 890 called the American Theatre Exchange. Berkeley Rep’s production of Hard Times, directed by Richard E.T. White, was one of only four shows chosen for the festival. The New York Times called it “exciting and witty theater.”

Please note: The year listed above indicates when each show first reached New York.