



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BERKELEY PLAYHOUSE OPENS SIXTH SEASON WITH
THE EAST BAY PREMIERE OF
A LITTLE PRINCESS
featuring
TONY AWARD-WINNER WILSON JERMAINE HEREDIA
October 30–December 8, 2013**

Music by Andrew Lippa • Book and Lyrics by Brian Crawley

Based on the children's novel of the same name by Frances Hodgson Burnett

High-resolution photos for **A LITTLE PRINCESS** are available at
berkeleyplayhouse.org/about/press-room/press-photos

Berkeley, CA (September 26, 2013) – **Berkeley Playhouse** opens its sixth season with the East Bay premiere of **A LITTLE PRINCESS**, a new musical by **Brian Crawley** and Tony-nominated composer **Andrew Lippa** (*Big Fish*, *The Addams Family*, *The Wild Party*) and directed by Berkeley Playhouse Artistic Director **Elizabeth McKoy** (*The Sound of Music*, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*). Tony Award-winning actor **Wilson Jermaine Heredia** makes his company and East Bay debut as Pasko. **A LITTLE PRINCESS** runs from **October 30** through **December 8** (press weekend: Saturday, November 2, 6 p.m. and Sunday, November 3, 12 p.m. or 5 p.m.) at the Julia Morgan Theater. Tickets (\$17 - \$60) are now on-sale at www.berkeleyplayhouse.org or by phone at **(510) 845-8542 x351**.

Frances Hodgson Burnett first introduced the story of young Sara Crewe in 1888; 125 years later, her story has been expanded into a novel (1905), made into three major motion pictures (1917, 1939, 1995), television movies/episodes, theatrical adaptations, and Berkeley Playhouse's sixth season opening show. **A LITTLE PRINCESS** is the story of Sara Crewe who is treated like a little princess by her adventurer father until he is reportedly killed searching for the mysterious city of Timbuktu. She is then made to work as a servant in her new boarding school by the dour headmistress, Miss Minchin. However, Sara never loses her grace and virtue and uses her imagination to transform a drab institution into a place of magic and mystery.

BERKELEY PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS "A LITTLE PRINCESS"

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"This new version of the *A Little Princess* story incorporates fantastical images as it melds Sara's memories and dreams of colonial Africa, Mali, and London. The vivid, imaginative landscape the story paints is so rich and varied we needed some inspired unifying magic, which drew me to shadow dancing. Inspired by the work of Attraction, the Hungarian shadow theatre company, and Pilobolus' *Shadowland*, I couldn't wait to integrate the use of shadows to tell parts of this story, weaving this gorgeous medium into our unique musical storytelling style for the Berkeley Playhouse," says **A LITTLE PRINCESS** Director Elizabeth Mckoy.

In addition to the use of shadow dance, this production includes a boon for Berkeley Playhouse, the casting of Tony-award winning actor **Wilson Jermaine Heredia** as Pasko. Heredia won his Tony for the role of Angel Dumott in *Rent*. After television and film work that included *Flawless* (1999), *Rent* (2005), *Descent* (2007), he returned to Broadway in 2011 in *La Cage aux Folles*.

"We are beyond elated to welcome Mr. Heredia to this talented cast. He is a remarkable actor, and is sincerely generous with his time and attention. It is an honor for our company to have this caliber of actor wanting to work with Berkeley Playhouse. He'll be an inspiration for all the young actors in the ensemble, who are terrifically excited to meet him," say Managing Director **Lauren Hewitt**.

The musical has a total cast of 64, including 20 youth roles, double-cast and featuring students trained in the Berkeley Playhouse Conservatory. In addition to Mr. Heredia, the professional cast will feature **Tyler McKenna** making his company debut as Captain Crewe, Sara's father. McKenna recently appeared as Brian Ogden in *Dead Man's Wake* with West Coast Arts Foundation and as Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls* at Mountain Play, where he has played numerous other roles. **Leah Russo** returns to Berkeley Playhouse portraying Miss Minchin, having just finished *The Wiz* as Evillene and introduced the role of Mother in Berkeley Playhouse's workshop of *BRIDGES: A New Musical*. The youth cast will feature **Dakota Dry** (*The Wiz*, Charley in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*), and newcomer, **Katie Robbins** sharing duties as Sara Crewe; with **Lucy Urbano** (*The Wiz* and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*) and **Nandi Dryton** (*The Sound of Music* and the title role in *Annie*) portraying Sara's best friend Becky at alternating performances. Other featured cast members include: **Brenon Adams**, **Lexi Hart**, **Debra Harvey**, **Michele Schroeder**, **Maura Tang**, **Tyler Barnes**, **Siena Bogatin**, **Madi Chicas**, **Bella Coles**, **Niamh Collins**, **Jane Hood**, and **Majesty Smith**.

The creative team assisting Elizabeth McKoy, will be Musical Director **Kevin Roland**, with **Staci**

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Arriaga providing choreography, and resident costumer **Wendy Kaufman** providing the wardrobe. **Mark Hueske** will design lighting, with sets by **Martin Flynn**, and shadow consultant **Miayka Cochrane**.

Berkeley Playhouse was founded in 2007 by professional theatre actor, director, and teacher for over 25 years **Elizabeth McKoy**. Along with Managing Director **Lauren Hewitt**, Artistic Director McKoy has developed Berkeley Playhouse into a professional musical theatre providing children and families a unique and sophisticated experience. The Berkeley Playhouse Conservatory offers a range of skill and performance classes for ages 3–17. In 2009, Berkeley Playhouse made the historic Julia Morgan Theater its permanent home.

TOYS FOR TOTS:

Berkeley Playhouse is honored to partner with **Toys for Tots** during the run of **A LITTLE PRINCESS**. The mission of the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November and December each year, and distribute those toys as holiday gifts to less fortunate children in the community in which the campaign is conducted. "We are so pleased to work with Berkeley Playhouse to make this holiday season special for the young girls and boys Toys for Tots will be helping this year," said Staff Sargent Powell, the Toys for Tots coordinator for Alameda County.

Additionally, a 10% discount on tickets will be provided to patrons who pledge to donate a new toy. "Giving a gift is a sign of compassion and thoughtfulness; these are the very traits that make Sara Crewe the princess her father knows her to be. As we approach the holiday season, we are happy to participate in that generosity," said McKoy.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

Berkeley Playhouse opens its sixth season with the East Bay premiere of the heartwarming musical, **A LITTLE PRINCESS**. Young Sara Crewe is treated like a little princess by her adventurer father until he is reportedly killed and she is made to work as a servant in her new boarding school. However, Sara never loses her grace and virtue and uses her imagination to transform a drab institution into a place of magic and mystery. Tony-nominated Andrew Lippa's score infuses African rhythms into traditional Broadway melodies. Director Elizabeth McKoy brings this story to life through the art of shadow dance and features choreography by Staci Arriaga and music direction by Kevin Roland.

BERKELEY PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS “A LITTLE PRINCESS”

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DATES:

Previews: Thursday, October 30, 7 p.m.; Saturday, November 2, 1 p.m.

Opens: Saturday, November 2, 6 p.m.

Press: Saturday, November 2, 6 p.m., Sunday, November 3, 12 p.m. or 5 p.m.

Closes: December 8.

All performances: Thursday–Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.; Sunday 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. Thanksgiving Weekend (11/28-12/1): Friday 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.; Saturday 1 p.m. and 6 p.m.; Sunday 12 p.m.

WHERE:

Berkeley Playhouse at the Julia Morgan Theater. 2640 College Ave. Berkeley, CA 94704

TICKETS:

For tickets (\$17–\$60) or more information, the public may visit www.berkeleyplayhouse.org or call **510-845-8542 x351**. Group rates available.

PHOTOS:

High-resolution photos for **A LITTLE PRINCESS** are available at berkeleyplayhouse.org/about/press-room/press-photos or upon request by emailing ken@berkeleyplayhouse.org

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