



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media contact: Kimberly Dooley, Executive Director and Producer
kimberly@berkeleyplayhouse.org | Office: (510) 845-8542 ext. 360

**BERKELEY PLAYHOUSE KICKS OFF THE NEW YEAR
WITH ITS FIRST EVER STAGING OF THE ICONIC MUSICAL
WEST SIDE STORY**

Limited engagement to play historic Julia Morgan Theater beginning February 15, 2019

BERKELEY, CA (January 14, 2019) – **Berkeley Playhouse** continues their eleventh season of professional theater with the iconic Broadway musical, *West Side Story*. One of the most groundbreaking and romantic musicals ever written, *West Side Story* resets Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to the 1950s and the turbulent and passionate streets of New York’s West Side. Tony is a dreamer, ready to leave his street gang behind and face the future head-on; Maria is idealistic and looking to explore womanhood and the world beyond her family’s dress shop. When the two meet, their worlds stop—and cultural divides and societal expectations give way to star-crossed love. Featuring one of the most exciting scores ever written for the stage, and a story that tackles topics of prejudice, street violence, and the need for compassion between communities, this Berkeley Playhouse premiere will rumble in your heart long after the final note is sung. Performances run Friday through Sunday, and select Thursday evenings, beginning February 15, 2019. Press night will be held on Saturday, February 16 at 7pm. **Tickets (ranging from \$20—\$40)** are available by calling (510) 845-8542 x351 or by visiting online at www.berkeleyplayhouse.org. *Ticket prices are subject to change without notice.*

“I’ve been dreaming of doing *West Side Story* at Berkeley Playhouse for years, and now is absolutely the right time for us to present this milestone in American musical theater,” says founding Artistic Director Elizabeth McKoy. “*West Side Story* feels as relevant and modern today as it did when it first premiered over 60 years ago. Its legendary score is as groundbreaking and fresh as any of our newest musicals—but its exploration of deeply rooted conflict between two communities living side-by-side is a story we’re living today. One of our core missions at Berkeley Playhouse is to produce musicals that reflect the conversations and experiences of our community, and I know that *West Side Story* is going to be as eye opening to our audiences who are just discovering musical theater as it will be for those who have an instilled passion for the artform.”

Adds Berkeley Playhouse Executive Director and Producer Kimberly Dooley, “One of the great benefits in producing *West Side Story* at the Julia Morgan is giving audiences a rare opportunity to see this beautifully written but large ensemble piece in an intimate setting. It’s going to allow audiences—and our artistic team—to truly focus in on the core relationships, and bring forth the raw human emotion that has made this musical endure for six decades. I’m thrilled by the incredibly diverse cast of two-dozen plus performers and the artistic team we have put together for our first production of 2019.”

Continuing to make theater available for all audiences, the run of Berkeley Playhouse’s *West Side Story* includes two **low-cost preview performances** (February 15 at 7pm; February 16 at 1pm), and offers two **Pay What You Can** performances, **Thursday, February 28 and March 14 at 7pm.**

ABOUT BERKELEY PLAYHOUSE: Founded in 2007 by professional theatre actor, director, and teacher for over 25 years, Elizabeth McKoy, Berkeley Playhouse’s mission is to create theatre and programs that engage, ignite, and celebrate diverse Bay Area audiences through a thriving conservatory, a professional main stage season, educational outreach, and a commitment to the development of new family musicals. In support of our mission, we maintain and enhance the historic Julia Morgan Theater. A commitment to community, diversity, inclusion, and empowerment is at the heart of our work.

Previews: Friday, February 15 at 7pm, and Saturday, February 16 at 1pm.

Opens: Saturday, February 16 at 7pm.

Press: Saturday, February 16 at 7pm, and Sunday, February 17 at 2pm.

Closes: March 17 at 2pm

Performances: Due to the unique performance schedule, please check the website for specific dates and times. All performances at Berkeley Playhouse at The Julia Morgan Theater, 2640 College Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.

TICKETS: For tickets (\$22 for previews, \$20–\$40 for regular performances) or more information, the public may call (510) 845-8542 x351 or visit berkeleyplayhouse.org. Group rates available for 10 or more people. Ticket prices are subject to change at any time.

PAY WHAT YOU CAN: There will be two “Pay What You Can” performances, **Thursday February 28 and March 14 at 7pm.** The promotion is CASH ONLY at the door one-hour prior to performance time. We request a donation of \$20 per ticket but are able to accept a minimum of \$5 per ticket.

FAMILY GUIDE: Education is central to the mission at Berkeley Playhouse. Guides created by Berkeley Playhouse staff for each production have been created to enrich the learning experience of all patrons both young and seasoned. Links to the free Family Guides can be found online at BerkeleyPlayhouse.org.

Berkeley Playhouse gratefully acknowledges support from Madonna Estates Winery; City of Berkeley Civic Arts Commission, Fleishhacker Foundation, American Eagle Outfitters, Inc., Peet's Coffee, Extreme Pizza, The Imagination Foundation, and individual donors.