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Eastenders Repertory Company presents
PRIDE OPEN

Conceived of and directed by Playwright in Residence Charles E. Polly
March 2009 Tour
April 2-April 11, 2009, Thursdays – Sundays
Exit Stage Left (156 Eddy Street, San Francisco)

Full calendar listing on page 4

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRIDE OPEN

Previews APRIL 2, 2009

Opens APRIL 3, 2009

(San Francisco, CA – March 9, 2009) **Eastenders Repertory Company** closes Season 2008-2009 with ***PRIDE OPEN***, an ensemble-created story-telling project exploring our contemporary conceptions of sexual identity. Conceived of and directed by Eastenders Founding Artistic Director and Playwright in Residence Charles E. Polly, the production features an ensemble of Eastenders company members and local performers, including Reg Clay, John Hutchinson, Rachel L. Jacobs, Suzan Kendall, Aaron Martinsen, Adeola Role and Vidya Sundaram. ***PRIDE OPEN*** previews on April 2, 2009, opens on Friday, April 3 and runs through April 11 at the Exit Stage Left, 156 Eddy Street in San Francisco. In advance of the April performances, during the month of March Eastenders presents, free to the public, excerpts from ***PRIDE OPEN*** at select locations around the Bay Area. For information about dates, times and locations of the free public performances and/or about the production, please call **510.568.4118**.

PRIDE OPEN or ***PRIED OPEN?*** The tantalizing thing about tackling the topic of sexual *identity* is that there are or should be no boundaries. It's scary for most everyone to question sexuality, much less identity. The more you pry open the lid, the more you're forced to look, question and discover ... and discovery may lead to change. The ***PRIDE OPEN*** project is not traditional theatre. It's a concoction of interwoven stories, personal experiences, and dramatic moments -- probing who we are as sexual

human beings and what it means to us today to define as gay, straight, queer, bi-, transgendered, intersex, or "other"?

Eastenders' Founder and Playwright-in-Residence Charles E. Polly began working with his own writers' group six months ago to develop poems, monologues, dramatic scenes, and memory vignettes dealing with the intersection of LGBT and straight culture, and the concept of sexual identity in the 21st century. Polly received submissions from all over the country and abroad. He also solicited digital stories (vignettes based on personal experiences) from LGBT youth and seniors, and these personal stories provided fertile jumping off points for the script development ensemble. Collaborating with Eastenders' music director Reg Clay and a choreographer, Polly and his writers and performers have created a provocative, cohesive cross-disciplinary piece of theatre.

In advance of the April production of the full text, excerpts from **PRIDE OPEN** travel to a variety of venues around the greater Bay Area, including the San Francisco Main Library and other branch libraries, an LGBT senior center, Palo Alto High School and San Francisco State University. These free "workshop" performances include talkbacks with audiences to solicit responses to the work, and this feedback will help shape the final collective text.

PRIDE OPEN features digital pieces from the Y.O.U.T.H. (Youth Offering Unique Tangible Help) Training Project, part of the Bay Area Academy, a social work training academy for the 12 Bay area counties.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT AND CREATIVE TEAM:

Charles E. Polly is Eastenders' Founding Artistic Director and Playwright-in-Residence. ERC produced the premieres of Chuck's critically acclaimed *TWYLA TRILOGY* (*Twyla's Boy*, *Twyla's Story* and *June Bug Music*), as well as three of his one-acts plays: *The Beginning*, *Hello's the Word* and *En Avant!* and the full-length premiere of *A Knight's Escape* in 2005. Other plays of Chuck's have been produced at Theatre Rhinoceros and New Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, and Columbus Stage Centre in Ohio.

Music/Sound Director, Reginald Clay, has been a member of Eastenders Repertory Company since 2003 and was last seen in the Ensemble of Brecht's *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* and *100 Years of Queer Theatre* at Theatre Rhinoceros. Reg is a graduate of Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington DC and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He has assisted with sound design for the Company on numerous productions.

Choreographer, Peter Matthews has worked most recently with ERC on its *100 Years of Sex Acts* choreographing for "And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens." Artistic Director of Boxcar Theatre and a member of DOUBLE VISION, he has choreographed for various companies in the Bay Area and in his home state of Pennsylvania. He received his degree in Dance from the Pennsylvania State University School of Theatre Arts.

Writing Ensemble: William M. Balin, Danny Cartaina, Reg Clay, Jennifer Daly, Isaiah Dufort, John Hutchinson, Rachel L. Jacobs, Gene Mocsy, Charles E. Polly, Raymond Rea, Vidya Sundaram, Jeff Thompson, Aaron Tworek, Mike Vega, David White.

ABOUT THE COMPANY: The mission of **Eastenders Repertory Company** is to provide a collaborative, mentoring environment for theatre artists to produce both original and established works in repertory and to develop educational programs in theatre arts. ERC is dedicated to providing a stimulating environment for theatre artists and high-quality, affordable and accessible theatre for the Bay Area community. Past Eastenders productions include *FROZEN* by Bryony Lavery, 3 *VANĚK PLAYS: Audience, Unveiling, and Protest* by Václav Havel, *FEAR AND MISERY OF THE THIRD REICH* by Bertolt Brecht, *PINTERESQUE* (Harold Pinter's *The Lover* and original short pieces inspired by that one-act), our prior seven annual one-act festivals (*100 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE*, a co-production with Theatre Rhinoceros, *100 YEARS OF SEX-ACTS*, *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF POLITICAL THEATRE*, *EIGHT x TENN*, *106 YEARS OF COMEDY*, *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF EURO-ONE-ACTS* and *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ONE-ACTS*), the spring 2005 world premieres of Charles E. Polly's *A Knight's Escape* and Scott Munson's *WWJD?*, *Three Hotels* by Jon Robin Baitz, the local premieres of *Wonder of the World* by David Lindsay-Abaire and *[sic]* by Melissa James Gibson, and *TENN in 2002!* (Williams' *The Long Goodbye* and new short works inspired by that one-act); the world premiere of Founding Artistic Director Charles E. Polly's *THE TWYLA TRILOGY* (*Twyla's Boy*, *Twyla's Story* and *June Bug Music*); Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*; and the Bay Area premiere of Tennessee Williams' *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*.

CALENDAR LISTINGS

WHO: Eastenders Repertory Company

WHAT: "PRIDE OPEN" an ensemble-created story-telling project exploring our contemporary conceptions of sexual identity.

Conceived of and directed by Founding Artistic Director and Playwright in Residence Charles E. Polly

Cast: Reg Clay, John Hutchinson, Rachel L. Jacobs, Suzan Kendall, Aaron Martinsen, Adeola Role and Vidya Sundaram

TOUR INFO: See Below

PERFORMANCE DATES:

Thursday, April 2 Preview @ 8pm

Friday April 3: OPENING GALA

THROUGH April 11

SHOWTIMES: Plays Thurs-Sat evenings @ 8pm
and Sunday, April 5 @ 3pm

CLOSES: April 11

VENUE: Exit Stage Left (156 Eddy Street, San Francisco, CA)

TICKETS: \$20 general admission; \$15 preview; \$25 Opening Night Gala; \$15 tickets available for students/seniors and members of KQED, KTEH, and TBA. Group rates available

BOX OFFICE: (510) 568-4118 and ticketweb.com

TOUR DATES & VENUES: FREE TO THE PUBLIC

Sat. March 7, 2009 Golden Gate Valley Branch Library, 1801 Green St., SF; 2:00 p.m.

Sun. March 8, 2009 SF Main Library, presented by the James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, Lower Level, Latino/Hispanic Community Meeting Room, 100 Larkin St., SF ; 3:00 p.m.

Thurs. March 12, 2009 SFSU, as a part of Women's History Month, Humanities 133,1600 Holloway, SF; 8:30 p.m.

Sat. March 14, 2009 Excelsior Branch Library, 4400 Mission St., SF ; 1:00 p.m.

Sun. March 15, 2009 The Residences at Lake Merritt Hotel, an LGBT-Friendly Senior Community, 1800 Madison St., Oakland; 4:30 pm

Thurs. March 19, 2009 "Evolution of Families" - Special Event of the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library; LGBT Community Center, Fourth Floor, Rainbow Room, 1800 Market St., SF; 7:00 p.m.

Sat. March 21, 2009 Mission Bay Branch Library, 940 Fourth St., SF; 2:00 p.m.

Sun. March 22, 2009 Noe Valley Branch Library, 451 Jersey St., SF; 2:00 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TOUR, THE PUBLIC SHOULD CALL: 510/568-4118

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