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PLAYGROUND ANNOUNCES NEW PLAY PRODUCTION FUND WINNERS

SAN JOSE STAGE COMPANY & JUST THEATER TO SHARE \$20,000 IN SUPPORT OF PREMIERES BY LOCAL PLAYWRIGHTS TREVOR ALLEN & ERIN MARIE BREGMAN

SAN FRANCISCO, (February 1, 2010) – And the envelope please.... PlayGround announced today the first recipients of the New Play Production Fund, launched in December to support Bay Area production of new plays by local playwrights: **San Jose Stage Company** and **Just Theater**. San Jose Stage Company will receive \$15,000 to fund the world premiere production of **Trevor Allen's *Lolita Roadtrip*** as part of the South Bay theatre's 2010-11 season. Just Theater will receive \$5,000 to fund the premiere of **Erin Marie Bregman's *Nightmare Play*** next season at Berkeley City Club.

Allen's *Lolita Roadtrip* was originally commissioned and developed by PlayGround last season as part of the 2009 Best of PlayGround Festival. This darkly comic play follows Julia (a rebellious Stanford graduate student researching her thesis) and Danny (a hitchhiking teenaged runaway she picks up) as together they retrace novelist and lepidopterist Vladimir Nabokov's actual 1941 roadtrip from New York to Stanford. A series of cross country adventures ensues bringing them closer to Julia's climactic confrontation with Professor Drake (the man who stole her innocence and plagiarized her journal). Nabokov's spirit visits them and somewhere between the Grand Canyon and Los Vegas they confront their own dark pasts and discover what really causes a chrysalis to transform into a butterfly. *Lolita Roadtrip* will mark Trevor's second world premiere with San Jose Stage Company, following the 2005 hit *Tenders in the Fog*, originally commissioned and developed by PlayGround. He is currently working on a third PlayGround commission, *Golden Gate Fair* (set in the Bay Area), which will receive a staged reading on Sunday, May 30 as part of the 2010 Best of PlayGround Festival at Thick House. San Jose Stage Company Artistic Director Randall King shared on learning of the award: "The

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San Jose Stage Company has a long standing commitment to the Bay Area's regional theatre Artists. We truly appreciate PlayGround's determination in assisting emerging local playwrights, especially during these trying economic times and affording the Stage Company this opportunity to premiere the work of an amazing local talent."

Erin Bregman is winner of the 2009 June Anne Baker Prize, for which she was commissioned to write *Nightmare Play*. A father and his ten-year-old daughter have only each other, so when the girl begins to share her father's terrible nightmares night after night, he struggles to stay awake so she can sleep in peace. A play of nightmares and the hallucinations of extreme sleep deprivation, reality blurs until father and daughter cannot tell reality from dreams. Erin's short play, *John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton's Bid to Save the World*, was featured in the 2009 Best of PlayGround Festival. She has had work produced or developed with PlayGround, Just Theater, The Lark, furyFactory, and the Playwrights Foundation, where she is currently a resident playwright. On news of the award, Just Theater Co-Artistic Director Jonathan Spector said: "I've been a fan and advocate of Erin's since first encountering her work three years ago. She has a distinct and alluring rhythm in her language and a compelling sense of theatricality. I'm thrilled that PlayGround created this opportunity for her and for our company."

Since 1994, PlayGround has been a leading incubator for some of the Bay Area's most promising new playwrights, developing more than 500 original short plays by 150 Bay Area emerging playwrights. In the past seven years, PlayGround *itself* has emerged, as one of the leading commissioners of new full-length works by Bay Area writers. Twenty-two full length plays have been developed to date and six new works are currently under commission for presentation in the 2010 Best of PlayGround Festival, taking place at Thick House, May 6-30, 2010, including works by Trevor Allen, Tim Bauer, Erin Marie Bregman, Daniel Heath, Brady Lea and Ken Slattery.

Several plays developed with direct PlayGround support have gone on to have successful productions at theatres throughout the Bay Area and around the country, including, most recently, Aaron Loeb's *Abraham Lincoln's Big Gay Dance Party* which won "Outstanding Performance" at the 2009 New York International Fringe Festival, following its 2008 SF Playhouse premiere. Loeb is a two-time winner of the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for "Best Original Script" (both for PlayGround commissions). Other PlayGround commissioned works that have premiered in the Bay Area in just the past four years include: Garret Jon Groenveld's *Missives* at Theatre Rhinoceros (which also received its New York debut in a PlayGround co-production in 2008 at 59E59 Theaters); Trevor Allen's *Tenders in the Fog* at San Jose Stage; Aaron Loeb's *First Person Shooter* at SF Playhouse (in a PlayGround co-

production); Martha Soukup's *Manumission* at Exit Theatre; and, opening this month, Geetha Reddy's *Safe House* in a PlayGround-SF Playhouse co-production in the Playhouse's new Sandbox Series. In addition, PlayGround writers and commissioned works have been featured in some of the Bay Area's top new play programs, including the Playwrights Foundation's Bay Area Playwrights Festival and Aurora Theatre Company's Global Age Project.

Founded in 1983, San Jose Stage Company is recognized as The Bay Area's Premiere Off-Broadway Theatre, and known for its devotion to new and cutting edge work and for its commitment to showcasing high-quality local talent. In 1986, San Jose Stage Company set precedence as the first arts organization to negotiate and receive support from the Redevelopment Agency and the City of San Jose when over \$500,000 was appropriated in support of the development of a new 200-seat theatre featuring a ¾ thrust stage which opened in 1990. Now in its 27th Season, SJSC continues to center its operations in this facility and has successfully produced over 130 productions and premiered 39 new works, including 9 world premieres and is acclaimed for maintaining high artistic standards, investing in local talent and supporting the region's community of working artists while taking artistic risks. In addition to its core programming, San Jose Stage Company offers five core education and outreach programs and has housed over 200 independent performance groups. San Jose Stage Company is a vital force in the community and has earned a reputation for artistic excellence by providing high-quality, edgy theatrical experience that engage, educate and provoke audiences. San Jose Stage Company serves an audience base of 25,000 and is recognized as a leader in the arts for a theatre of its size.

Just Theater provides an artistic home to theatrically adventurous voices addressing morally complex questions. Since 2005 they have developed new work with local artists, and brought exciting new voices to the Bay Area for the first time, Highlights include Caryl Churchill's *Far Away*, and the West Coast Premiere's of Melissa James Gibson's *Current Nobody* and Anne Washburn's *I Have Loved Strangers* (East Bay Express Top Ten Show of 2007). In May, they will present the Bay Area Premiere of Jason Grote's *1001*, a delirious, time-bending riff on the Arabian Nights, by way of the kaleidoscopic visions of Jorge Luis Borges and Edward Said.

PlayGround will open the second round of the New Play Production Fund in June 2010 with an anticipated deadline of December 1, 2010. All PlayGround commissioned works not yet having received a world premiere are eligible, including the remaining five commissions currently under development. Each will receive a staged reading as part of the 2010 Best of PlayGround Festival at Thick House.

The complete schedule of readings is:

Mon 7pm, May 10 – **Truffaldino Says No** by Ken Slattery, directed by Matthew Graham Smith

Sun 2pm, May 16 – **Seven Days** by Daniel Heath, directed by Lee Sankowich

Mon 7pm, May 17 – **Nightmare Play** by Erin Bregman, directed by Mina Morita

Sun 2pm, May 23 – **The Sum of All Parts** by Brady Lea, directed by Jessica Heidt

Mon 7pm, May 24 – **The Secret Rulers of the World Go to Camp** by Tim Bauer, directed by Barbara Oliver

Sun 2pm, May 30 – **Golden Gate Fair** by Trevor Allen, directed by Mark Rucker

For more information, visit <http://playground-sf.org>. For more information on the commissioned works of PlayGround, visit <http://playground-sf.org/commissioning.shtml>.

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