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SF PLAYHOUSE & PLAYGROUND ANNOUNCE GROUND-BREAKING THREE-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

SUPPORTING PRODUCTION OF NEW PLAYS BY LOCAL PLAYWRIGHTS

SAN FRANCISCO, (February 11, 2010) – SF Playhouse and PlayGround announced today the launch of a three-year partnership to develop and produce new plays by local playwrights. The first project in the partnership is Geetha Reddy’s **Safe House**, originally commissioned and developed by PlayGround, which opens tomorrow night as part of SF Playhouse’s new Sandbox Series on their second stage in a PlayGround co-production. *Safe House* will run through March 6. Over the next two seasons, SF Playhouse and PlayGround will collaborate to develop and mount the world premiere production of two additional PlayGround commissioned works in either the SF Playhouse main season or Sandbox series.

The two organizations have collaborated on two previous projects – Aaron Loeb’s *First Person Shooter* and Loeb’s *Abraham Lincoln’s Big Gay Dance Party*. Both were commissioned and developed by PlayGround and went on to receive Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for “Best Original Script”. SF Playhouse, PlayGround and Blue Rare Productions later remounted the SF Playhouse production of *Abraham Lincoln’s Big Gay Dance Party* at the 2009 New York International Fringe Festival, where the play sold out in advance and went on to win “Outstanding Performance” honors. Bill English, Artistic Director of SF Playhouse, said, “Formalizing this invaluable partnership and drawing on the strengths of our two organizations, we can offer playwrights a clear path from commission to developmental readings to full production.” PlayGround Artistic Director Jim Kleinmann added, “We’re so thrilled to be able to expand upon our prior collaborations with SF Playhouse and introduce to local audiences the Bay Area’s best new writers. It’s a very exciting development for the theatre community and one we’re proud to support.”

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Founded by **Bill English and Susi Damilano** in 2003, **The SF Playhouse** is San Francisco's fastest growing and most awarded Theater Company and hailed as a "small delicacy" by *SF Weekly*, "eclectic" by the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and "local theater's best kept secret" by *San Francisco Magazine*. Located in Union Square, The SF Playhouse offers intimate, professional theatre with top notch actors and world class design. It has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting and design including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award, Bay Guardian's Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award. The *San Francisco Chronicle* raved, "*One of the most meteoric rises [of the decade] has been that of SF Playhouse, Bill English and Susi Damilano's 7-year-old-start-up that has been attracting more top-notch actors, directors, and scripts every year.*" The SF Playhouse has become the intimate theatre alternative to the traditional Union Square theatre fare, providing a creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theatre lovers converge to create works that celebrate the human spirit.

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. PlayGround recently announced the first recipients of its New Play Production Fund, supporting local production of Bay Area playwrights: San Jose Stage Company for Trevor Allen's *Lolita Roadtrip*

(commissioned and developed in 2009) and Just Theater for Erin Marie Bregman's *Nightmare Play* (commissioned and currently in development). 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.

For more information, visit <http://playground-sf.org>. For more information on PlayGround's new play commissioning programs, visit <http://playground-sf.org/commissioning.shtml>.

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