

# IMPACT THEATRE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NOW IMPACT IS A MAN— IMPACT THEATRE ANNOUNCES ITS “BAR MITZVAH” 13TH SEASON

Featuring new plays by rising playwrights, a classic comedy, and *Briefs* hitting puberty

**BERKELEY, CA, AUGUST 4, 2008**—Impact Theatre, coming off a strong 2007–08 season that culminated with the company being named “Best Small Theatre Company” by the *East Bay Express*, launches its ambitious 13th season in September. Referencing the rite of passage of Jewish 13-year-olds, Impact is calling this its “Bar Mitzvah” season.

“We’re calling it our Bar Mitzvah season not just because the company is run by two Jews,” Artistic Director Melissa Hillman explained, referring to herself and Managing Director Cheshire Isaacs. “This season we’re taking some large leaps forward. It really is a rite of passage for us.”

The season begins with local playwright Lauren Yee’s irreverent new comedy *Ching Chong Chinaman*. Winner of the 2007 Yale Playwrights Festival and other honors, CCC made its debut at the New York Fringe Festival that year, receiving positive reviews (“too smart and funny to miss,” NYTheatre.com wrote). Teenager Upton Wong dreams of World of Warcraft superstardom; his sister Desi dreams of early admission to Princeton. Unfortunately, Upton’s chores and homework get in the way of his 24/7 videogaming, and Desi’s math grades don’t fit the Asian-American stereotype. Then Upton comes up with a novel solution for both problems: he acquires a Chinese indentured servant. Skewering every cliché about Asian-American identity, CCC will have its first full production and West Coast premiere at Impact under the direction of former Impact Associate Artistic Director Desdemona Chiang, who is now finishing her directing MFA at the University of Washington.

CCC represents Impact’s drive to find talented local emerging playwrights; the play was presented as part of the company’s staged reading series earlier this year. Yee, a Bay Area native who graduated from Yale in 2007, is the founder and executive director of the San Francisco Young Playwrights Festival. An accomplished young artist, Yee has received PlayGround’s June Anne Baker prize, a Theatre Bay Area CA\$H grant, and fellowships with the Byrdcliffe Artist Colony, the New York Mills Art Retreat, and the Edward F. Albee Foundation.

The season continues with *Tallgrass Gothic*, a new drama from Melanie Marnich, another playwright with a rising national profile. A spare, haunting play based on the Jacobean tragedy *The Changeling*, *Tallgrass* takes place in the Great Plains, where Laura yearns to leave her hometown and escape her abusive husband. A lover appears to promise her a way out, but that path leads to a devastating climax. *Tallgrass* was featured as part of the 2004 Humana Festival and won the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune’s* award for best new play of 2006. Though Marnich’s works have been seen on some of the most prominent national stages, such as Steppenwolf, The Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, the Guthrie Theatre, and Actors’ Theatre of Louisville, this production marks Marnich’s Bay Area professional debut.

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“This play is full of dark, beautiful language,” Artistic Director Hillman says. “It’s a huge step for us financially, but everyone felt it was worth the risk. **Melanie Marnich is definitely a playwright whose work should be seen in the Bay Area.**”

**In February 2009, Hillman directs the company’s seventh classic, but there’s a twist: this time she takes on Shakespearean comedy.** Previous outings—*Henry IV*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Measure for Measure*—have been dramas. Now she turns her attention to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the beloved romantic comedy. Hillman, once again displaying her talent for modernizing classic texts while retaining the original language, sets her production in the world of 1980s nightclubs. Marissa Keltie, most recently seen at Impact in Hillman’s blistering production of *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, is slated to play Helena.

**The season concludes in the spring with the return of *Impact Briefs*.** Directed by Alan Goy, the latest collection will focus on puberty as its central theme. Though once again the submission process will be open, the company is planning on developing more of the plays both in-house as well as with some of its favorite playwrights.

“Impact may be growing up in many ways, but we’re still 13 years old,” Hillman laughs. “I think puberty describes exactly where we are in our development. That said, no matter how old we get, we’re always going to have this streak in us.”

The company is maturing in other ways as well. **This season, for the first time, Impact audiences will be sitting in actual theatre seats.** Well, kind of: they were donated by a local school that recently upgraded its auditorium. **The best part of all: the seats have fold-out desks that will handily accommodate audience members’ pizzas and pints of beer.**

**Also for the first time, Impact will be offering subscription packages.** For a full season subscription, subscribers pay only \$13 per show and receive guaranteed seats plus a special gift from Impact for being charter subscribers: a limited-edition deck of Impact playing cards.

And finally, **with the success of its first two major fundraisers, Impact has already set the date for *Full Houses 3*, Impact’s third annual poker tournament.** The event will be Saturday, July 11, 2009; once again, it will feature dozens of great prizes, free pizza and desserts, pro-level dealers, and a thrilling evening.

“The growth in our Bar Mitzvah season is huge for us,” Hillman says, “but when it’s over, we won’t be done yet. **Just wait and see where we go three years from now—at our sweet sixteen!**”

For more information, please visit [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com).

## **ABOUT IMPACT THEATRE**

**Since 1996 Impact Theatre has spoken to a new generation of theatregoers and enthusiasts alike who want to see something fresh and bold on stage.** Impact’s audience ranges from students to professionals to seniors, all of whom share a taste for exciting, unpretentious theatre that doesn’t conform to stale assumptions of what constitutes high culture. Impact’s primary mission is to directly contribute to the future of American theatre through focusing on new plays by emerging playwrights. **Impact has produced 17 full-**

length world premieres, including 12 by local playwrights, as well as dozens of world-premiere ten-minute plays by burgeoning writers nationwide in the *Impact Briefs* series. Impact also prides itself on its fast-paced, vital, contemporary spins on classic drama. Impact shows compel, provoke, and inspire, at prices everyone can afford. And nowhere else in the Bay Area can you eat pizza and drink beer while you're watching a play. The *East Bay Express* named Impact "Best Small Theatre Company" in its 2008 Best of the East Bay issue.

## FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

**PRODUCTIONS:** *Ching Chong Chinaman* by Lauren Yee, directed by Desdemona Chiang  
September 5–October 10, 2008 · Thu–Sat 8pm

*Tallgrass Gothic* by Melanie Marnich  
November 14–December 20, 2008 · Thu–Sat 8pm (no show 11/27)

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, directed by Melissa Hillman  
February 6–March 14, 2009 · Thu–Sat 8pm

*Impact Briefs: Puberty* directed by Alan Goy  
May 1–June 6, 2009 · Thu–Sat 8pm

**SPECIAL EVENT:** *Full Houses 3: A Poker Tournament to Benefit Impact Theatre*  
Saturday, July 11, 2009  
Special admission price: \$50, with optional \$25 rebuys

**WHERE:** La Val's Subterranean, 1834 Euclid Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709

**ADMISSION:** Advance tickets: \$15 general / \$10 students, seniors, and TBA members  
At the door: \$17 general / \$10 students, seniors, and TBA members  
Pay-what-you-wish rush tickets available first two weekends (excluding opening night)

**MORE INFO:** [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com)

**BOX OFFICE:** [impacttheatre.com](http://impacttheatre.com) · [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com)

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