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San Jose Rep Presents the West Coast Premiere of the Critically Acclaimed *Groundswell*.

***Groundswell* makes its second U.S. appearance at San Jose Rep.**

SAN JOSE, CA (October 2, 2009) — *Groundswell*, a haunting, psychological thriller about dashed dreams, enduring hope and the seductive promises of a transforming society, makes its second U.S. appearance at San Jose Rep. This critically acclaimed political drama about post-apartheid society is written by South African playwright and activist, **Ian Bruce**. *Groundswell* premiered in South Africa in 2005 and off-Broadway at The New Group in the summer of 2009. **Kirsten Brandt** returns to direct this South African masterpiece. Previews for *Groundswell* begin Saturday, October 10, and opens on Friday, October 16. The show closes Sunday, November 8, 2009. **Press Opening is Friday, October 16 at 8:00 p.m.**

"We're so pleased to be presenting the West Coast Premiere, and only the second American production, of this very special and powerful new play by the gifted South African playwright Ian Bruce," comments Artistic Director **Rick Lombardo**. "As an artist living in the whirlwind that is post-apartheid South Africa, Ian has fashioned a beautiful play that asks several questions: 'How do we live together after apartheid? Where did all the promise and hope go? Who bears responsibility for the sins of the past, and can we move beyond it?' These are wonderfully universal questions – and certainly not limited to the people of South Africa."

What would a man do for one last chance at a better life? Johan (Scott Coopwood) and Thami (Dwight Huntsman) are caretakers of a beachfront guest lodge on the jagged edge of the South African diamond coast. These two men, from starkly contrasting backgrounds, have become friends through their shared dreams of a better life. When Smith (Peter Van Norden), a wealthy businessman, arrives at the lodge on a foggy evening, the two desperate men see Smith as the perfect investor for their "get-rich" scheme to buy a government-run diamond concession. Soon, the three men find themselves in a power struggle fueled by greed, desperation and entitlement. Ian Bruce has created three incredible characters who explore the effects of politics on the individual. Each character is an emblematic representation of what the end of apartheid has meant to various groups in South Africa.

Groundswell received rave reviews during its off-Broadway run earlier this year. The New York Times hails, "engrossing ... a cross between Mamet and Fugard ... a suspense-stoked tale of desperate men willing to go to dangerous lengths to secure one last chance at a big prize." The Associated Press says *Groundswell* is "skillfully constructed ... a psychological thriller with a thoughtful examination of the after-effects of apartheid in present-day South Africa." Variety calls it, "a more eloquent argument for justice than any statistic or photograph!"

"I love plays that make you think and entertain you simultaneously," adds director **Kirsten Brandt**. "Although the play is set in South Africa, *Groundswell* invites the audience to venture into territories that desperately

need to be explored such as racial and socio-economic tensions. I am drawn to Ian Bruce's three incredibly provocative characters. These multi-faceted characters surprise you at every turn."

Playwright **Ian Bruce** was trained as an actor by Ruth Oppenheim and appeared in the early '70s on the Johannesburg stage and in SABC TV productions. During a long, politically motivated exile in Holland, he co-founded the Tekhwini Theatre Foundation with Anthony Akerman and Joseph Mosikili. It was there he began writing. In 1978, his first play, *Falls The Shadow*, won the Dutch Arts Council Best New Play Award. His only work to evade South Africa's censorship net, *My Father's House*, was produced by PACT in 1989, directed by the late Francois Swart. After his return to South Africa in the early '90s, Mr. Bruce won a Radio South Africa award for his play, *Kept In Mind*. He is currently the Executive Director of the New Africa Theatre Association.

Kirsten Brandt returns to direct this West Coast premiere. Brandt directed *Splitting Infinity*, *This Wonderful Life* and *Rabbit Hole* for San Jose Rep. She has directed at various theatres including TheatreWorks, The Old Globe, San Diego Rep, La Jolla Playhouse and Shakespeare Santa Cruz. As the Artistic Director of Sledgehammer Theatre from 1999-2005, Brandt produced 23 theatrical events, directed 15 productions and wrote *The Frankenstein Project*, *NU: Parts I & III* and *Berzerkergang*. Her new play, *The Waves*, received its world premiere at Vox Nova Theatre Company earlier this summer. She is the recipient of numerous KPBS Awards, a Backstage West Garland Award and two San Diego Critics Circle Awards. Brandt is a lecturer at UC Santa Cruz.

Peter Van Norden plays Smith, a wealthy minority from English lineage. This production marks Van Norden's tenth appearance on San Jose Rep's stage. Previously, he appeared in *Major Barbara* ('Andrew Undershaft' - San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Award for Outstanding Male Performance), *The Odd Couple* and *Nixon's Nixon*. In his native NYC, Van Norden has appeared in *Hamlet* with Kevin Kline, *Jungle of Cities* with Al Pacino, *Henry V* with Meryl Streep, *Saint Joan* with Lynn Redgrave and *Little Johnny Jones* with Donny Osmond. His film roles include leads opposite Oscar-winner Jodie Foster in *The Accused*, as Steve Guttenberg's partner in *Police Academy 2* and as Ralph Brentner in the Stephen King mini-series, *The Stand*.

Making their San Jose Rep debuts are **Scott Coopwood** (Johan) and **Dwight Huntsman** (Thami). **Coopwood** has played the title roles in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Cyrano De Bergerac*. He can also be seen this fall in the new NBC show "Trauma." **Huntsman** was last seen locally in the SF Playhouse's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and their West Coast premiere of *The Story*. Huntsman has also worked with The Cutting Ball Theater in their West Coast premiere of *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*.

A team of talented and creative designers collaborated on this production of **Groundswell**. **John Iacovelli** (Scenic Designer) has designed many sets for Broadway, such as: *Peter Pan* starring Cathy Rigby, *The Twilight of the Gods*. He received a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for Lifetime Achievement and a Bay Area Drama Critics Award for *A Streetcar Named Desire* at ACT. **Maggie Morgan** (Costume Designer) designed *The Haunting of Winchester* for San Jose Rep. Her recent designs include *The Night is a Child* and *Mauritius* at the Pasadena Playhouse, *The Heiress* at South Coast Rep and *Enchanted April* at Arizona Theatre Company and Center Rep. **David Lee Cuthbert** (Lighting Designer) has designed lights for several Rep productions including *The Kite Runner* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. He designed Billy Crystal's *700 Sundays* on Broadway and its U.S., Canadian and Australian tours. **Steve Schoenbeck** (Sound Designer) designed sound for the Rep productions of *The Foreigner*, *The Immigrant*, *Enchanted April*, *Bad Dates*, *Wintertime*, *Humpty Dumpty* and *A Flea in Her Ear*.

Groundswell is sponsored by **Hotel De Anza** and **Hotel Montgomery** and supported, in part, by a **Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San Jose**.

Tickets are available at the San Jose Rep Box Office at 101 Paseo de San Antonio or can be purchased online at www.SJRep.com or by calling 408.367.7255.

About the Rep

San Jose Rep is the premier non-profit, professional theatre company in the South Bay, presenting six main stage productions each year. As a major contributor to South Bay's cultural community for 29 years, the Rep's mission is to engage, entertain and inspire people. The Rep produces innovative theatrical performances that offer fresh perspectives into the human condition, educational programs that promote life-long learning and outreach initiatives that benefit our diverse community. For more information, visit www.SJRep.com