

**PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Theatre Manager: Sky A. Rappoport 831-649-4495

Director &amp; Theatre Arts Co-Chairman: Gary Bolen 831-646-4085

July 2010

**Monterey Peninsula College Theatre Company to open the Groundbreaking Broadway Musical  
"RENT"****August 5 - 22, 2010****Tickets on sale now!**

**Monterey, CA** - Performances will run August 5 - 22, 2010. Tickets for **RENT** are priced from \$10 - \$25, with Young Adult (16-25) and group discounts available. Performances are Thursday August 5<sup>th</sup> (Preview) 7:00 PM, Friday August 6<sup>th</sup> (Opening) 8:00 PM, Saturday August 7<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Sunday August 8<sup>th</sup> 2:00 PM, Thursday August 12<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM, Friday August 13<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Saturday August 14<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Sunday August 15<sup>th</sup> 2:00 PM, Thursday August 19<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM, Friday August 20<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Saturday August 21<sup>st</sup> 8:00 PM, and Sunday August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2:00 PM.

**RENT** is recommended for 16 and over. For tickets, go to [www.mpctheatre.com](http://www.mpctheatre.com), call the MPC Box Office at 831-646-4213, or visit the Box Office on the MPC Campus, Wed through Frid from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

**The Musical:**

Jonathan Larson's Pulitzer-prize winning Broadway musical, **RENT**, details one year in the life of seven modern day artists & musicians, living in New York's run down "Alphabet City" in the late 1980s. It is loosely based on Giacomo Puccini's opera, *La Boheme*, which dealt with the lives of poor artists living in tuberculosis plagued, Nineteenth Century Paris. As this modern day circle of friends struggles with life, love, infidelity, and the usual hopes & fears of modern day life, they must also cope with drug addiction and the rising spectre of AIDS. In the midst of all this, one of them attempts to capture all of their lives on film, hoping to make artistic sense of it all.

**RENT** was first seen in a limited three-week workshop run at the New York Theatre Workshop in 1994 that quickly sold out. This same New York City off-Broadway theatre was also the musical's initial home following its official January 25, 1996, opening. Tragically, the show's creator, Jonathan Larson died suddenly from an undiagnosed aortic aneurysm the night before the off-Broadway premiere.

**RENT** opened on Broadway at the Nederlander Theatre, April 29, 1996. It went on to win every major best musical award, including the Tony Award, as well as the Pulitzer Prize for drama. **RENT** played its final performance at the Nederlander Theatre on September 7, 2008, after 5,124 performances and 16 previews. **RENT** is the seventh longest running show in Broadway history and grossed over \$280 million during its Broadway run. Over the course of its groundbreaking 12-year New York run, **RENT** transformed the definition of musical theater – and changed Broadway forever.

Tours of **RENT** have crisscrossed the country almost continuously since late 1996 and the U.S. national tours have grossed over \$330 million. The musical has been translated into every major language and been performed on six continents, including in the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Director Gary Bolen has assembled an amazing cast of young actors for this Central Coast premiere. **Daniel Renfer** plays the role of Mark Cohen, a struggling documentary filmmaker and best friend of Roger Davis, an

HIV-positive musician who is recovering from heroin addiction, played by **Kenneth Neely**. **Camilla de la Llata** is Mimi Marquez; a sexy HIV-positive stripper and dancer, who is also a heroin junkie, and Roger's love interest.

**Beth Elderkin** plays a spunky performance artist Maureen Johnson, who is Mark's ex-girlfriend and current girlfriend of Joanne Jefferson, a tough, headstrong Harvard-educated lawyer played by **Natalie Hall**.

Tom Collins, the HIV-positive philosophy teacher, friend and former roommate of Roger, Mark, and Maureen is played by **Michael Blackburn**. **Will Griffith, Jr.** is cast in the role of Angel Schunard, an HIV-positive Drag Queen with a heart of gold, and Tom Collins' love interest. Benjamin "Benny" Coffin III, played by **Tyler Vocolka**, is the former friend and landlord of Mark, Roger and Mimi's apartment.

The rest of the cast includes: Arick Arzadon, Warwick Cruz, Ayla Glim, Tara Lucido, Denice Luna, Tomas Reyes, Erin Shields, Reina Vasquez, Nick Kelley and Corinne Walker

**Michael Blackburn** *Tom Collins* - is thrilled to be performing the role of Collins in MPC's cast of RENT. He was last seen in Pacific Repertory's production of The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Michael is a musician as well, and spends much of his time musically directing, especially children's musical theatre.

**Camila de la Llata** *Mimi Marquez* - is 20 years old and going into her third year at Cal State, Fullerton. She has grown up doing theater in the area. She was part of PacRep's High School Musical team, performing as Taylor during its three year marathon. This is her third show at MPC. Camila was in Guys and Dolls (Hot Box Dancer/Havanna Dancer) and the Producers (Showgirl). She is very excited to be playing one of her dream roles in RENT and being reunited on stage with some of her oldest friends. This has been such a wonderful cast to work with, and she is so excited to be a part of this production. No Day But Today.

**Beth Elderkin** *Maureen Johnson* - is relatively new to the MPC Theatre Community, but has many years of experience in music, theater, and dance. She is perhaps best known as the lead singer, guitarist, and lyricist for her all-sister rock band Third Eclipse. She was also a founding member of the Santa Cruz improv troupe Room for Improvement, and has performed in You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, Hans Christian Anderson's The Little Mermaid, The Fan, and several short works. She wrote and directed Next on Croc's Tame Adventures for MPC's Festival of Shorts in 2005, and has choreographed and performed dances for Cabrillo College, MPC and Hartnell College. She will be attending San Diego State University this Fall to complete her Bachelor's Degree in Journalism with a focus in wine and food writing.

**Natalie Hall** *Joanne Jefferson* - received her BFA in Drama from NYU's Experimental theater wing in the Tisch School of the Arts, and a Certificate in Shakespeare from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. Before college, she spent a lot of time playing men at Santa Catalina High School, the most exciting of which was Fagin in Oliver! Favorite roles include Joan in Melancholy Play, Jess (Natalie) in The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged), Evilline in The Wiz, and Bertram in All's Well That Ends Well (playing a man again, but this time not in high school). Natalie is thrilled to be Joanne in RENT, and thanks Gary for welcoming her to the MPC community. She intends to pursue a graduate degree in Arts Administration.

**Kenneth Allen Neely** *Roger Davis* - is delighted to be joining the MPC Theatre Company's production of RENT. A resident of LA, though born and raised on the Monterey Peninsula, Kenneth would like to thank the cast and crew, particularly Gary, Don, Susan, Ana, Shannon and Gloria for all their hard work to make this production the success that it is.

**Daniel Joseph Renfer** *Mark Cohen* - got his start in musical theater as a child with Ariel Theatrical in Salinas. He has also worked with Pacific Repertory Theater and El Teatro Campesino on projects such as Zoot Suit and Disney's High School Musical 1 & 2. Daniel is transferring to MPC this fall to pursue his degree in Kinesiology, with the intent of attending a postgraduate program to become a Physician Assistant. Daniel is very excited to be making his MPC Theater debut in RENT as Mark, a character he has always had great interest in playing.

**Tyler Vocelka Benjamin Coffin III** - attended Children's Experimental Theater at the Indoor Forest Theater for 3 years prior to writing and directing the first student-run show ever produced at North Monterey County High School, where he became president of the Drama club his senior year. Earlier this year, he appeared in ANYTHING GOES at MPC, where he is currently pursuing 3 Associates degrees in Acting, Directing, and Technical Theater. Most recently, Tyler appeared in ALICE IN WONDERLAND at the Outdoor Forest Theater.

### **The Director: Gary Bolen**

Mr. Bolen joined the MPC faculty in Fall of 1999, and is now one of the Co-Chairmen of the Department. Previously he had been a Theatre instructor at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita beginning in 1990, and served as that department's coordinator from 1994-98. He received his B.A. and M.A. in Theatre from Cal State University Fullerton and an M.F.A. in Acting from UCLA where he was the winner of the Jack Nicholson Graduate Award in Acting and a University Grant Award recipient.

A working professional actor since 1979, Gary has appeared on stages from L.A. to Houston in addition to dozens of television prime time dramas, movies of the week and sit-coms. He was Dr. Parker in "The Young and the Restless" and Harry Shaw on "General Hospital" along with numerous roles on "Days of Our Lives". He also appeared in the teen hit "Empire Records." In 1995 he was nominated and elected to the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and has served as an Emmy Blue Ribbon Peer Panel judge.

The creative team includes **Gary Bolen** (*Director*); **Susan Cable** (*Choreographers*) **Don Dally** (*Musical Director*), **D. Thomas Beck** (*Technical Director, Scenic Designer, and Lighting Designer*), **David Rigmaiden** (*Sound Designer*), and **Gloria Mattos Hughes** (*Costumes*).

Tickets for **RENT** are priced from \$10 - \$25, with Young Adult (16-25) and group discounts available. Performances are Thursday August 5<sup>th</sup> (Preview) 7:00 PM, Friday August 6<sup>th</sup> (Opening) 8:00 PM, Saturday August 7<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Sunday August 8<sup>th</sup> 2:00 PM, Thursday August 12<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM, Friday August 13<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Saturday August 14<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Sunday August 15<sup>th</sup> 2:00 PM, Thursday August 19<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM, Friday August 20<sup>th</sup> 8:00 PM, Saturday August 21<sup>st</sup> 8:00 PM, and Sunday August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2:00 PM.

**RENT** contains mature themes and language and is recommended for theatergoers 16 years and over. For tickets, go to [www.mpctheatre.com](http://www.mpctheatre.com), call the MPC Box Office at 831-646-4213, or visit the Box Office in person on the MPC Campus, Wednesday through Friday from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

### **About The MPC Theatre Company**

The performing arts have always played an important part of life on the Monterey Peninsula, and for over 55 years the MPC Theatre Company has been entertaining, educating and enriching our community. In addition to making live Theatre a major part of our local culture, some of our past students have gone on to professional careers in theatre & television, and others have started their own amateur and professional theatre companies. MPC Outreach Programs also fund and support many local performing arts organizations, including Junior High & High School Drama Departments, Children's Theatres, and Dance Companies, as well as Community and Professional Theatres, such as the Pacific Repertory Theatre, the Staff Players Repertory Theatre, and the Forest Theatre Guild.

###