

## **The Group Repertory at the Lonny Chapman Theatre Names Ernest A. Figueroa New Artistic Director**

September 2009...North Hollywood, CA...The Group Rep at the Lonny Chapman Theatre has chosen Ernest A. Figueroa as its new Artistic Director to succeed longtime Artistic Director Lonny Chapman, who was at the helm of the Group Repertory Theatre Company for more than three decades, until his death in 2007. Figueroa, who also recently joined The Broad Stage as Associate Producer, assisting on the programming and production at the newly opened 541-seat state-of-the-art presenting house in Santa Monica, brings more than 20 years of event and theater producing and directing experience to the 36 year-old North Hollywood institution.

“Ernest’s intent is to keep Lonny’s legacy alive while moving the membership of the theater forward with new and innovative ideas,” said Janet Wood, newly elected Board President.

“With his vast theater experience as a producer, director, playwright and actor, Ernest has both a strong artistic sensibility and solid business savvy. In addition, he epitomizes an exciting energy and direction for our theater. Already, everything is moving forward at a fast clip, with a new board, a new season, new ideas and untold possibilities.” It is a rebirth of sorts for the 36 year-old theater company.

For the past ten years, Ernest A. Figueroa, an alumnus of the New York Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, has served on the Producing Steering Committee for Directors Lab West in Los Angeles, that itself currently boasts over 300 directing alumni. He has worked in artistic and administrative capacities, at several regional theaters, including the Pasadena Playhouse, and as Associate Artistic Director of the Sacramento Theatre Company, where he directed and produced several productions as well as serving as casting director and literary manager. He represented the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab at the American Living Room Festival @ HERE directing the New York Premiere of *Dos Corazones*. Local award-winning productions have included *Oleanna* at the Third Street Theatre and *The Effect of Gamma Rays*...at the Alternative Repertory Theatre.

Figueroa is a Drama League Fellow having worked as the Associate Director on Charles Randolph Wright's *Blue* starring Phylicia Rashad. He first worked on the production at the

Roundabout Theatre Company in New York and subsequently shepherded the national theater tour which opened at the Pasadena Playhouse starring Diahann Carroll and traveled to the Arizona Theatre Company, Phoenix and Tucson, the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami, and finally, to the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey then starring Leslie Uggams.

In addition to his theatrical experience, Mr. Figueroa served five years as the Grants and Programs Manager with the City of Pasadena leading the way on the bi-annual city-wide event called “ArtNight Pasadena” that grew in attendance from 4,000 to 14,000 people in attendance in less than five years.

For the past several years, Mr. Figueroa has also served as Associate Producer and Director with Bonnie Franklin’s Outreach Theatre Program, Classic and Contemporary American Plays, CCAP, providing literacy programming to LA County Schools.

“It is beyond a privilege to be asked to head up this theatre. Its legacy and history of excellence is a wonderful foundation from which to continue to serve the greater Los Angeles community,” said Mr. Figueroa. “I am excited that everyone with the company is very passionate about the legacy and potential of this company, and very supportive of setting out a new path for the future. I feel at home here and have been welcomed with open arms.”

The Group Rep is a 36 year-old company of actors, directors, writers and technicians. The non-profit 501(c)(3) company has produced over 200 productions including more than 37 World Premieres. Currently, there are more than 80 active company members, from those with notable careers to those building new careers. The company has been home to untold numbers - many of whom continue successful careers in Theatre, TV, and Film today. The Group Rep members look forward to traveling the new path set forth by Ernest A. Figueroa, while honoring the legacy and leadership left behind by the late Lonny Chapman.

Mr. Figueroa is a native Angeleno (Temple City). He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Speech and Theatre Education from McPherson College in Kansas and a Masters of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Figueroa has held teaching positions at Fairfield

University Connecticut, University of Hawaii at Manoa, University of Alaska at Fairbanks, Citrus College and the Alliance for Drama Education in Hawaii.

Ernest A. Figueroa will start his new position this fall. His first task - - the announcement of the new 2009/2010 Season, the 36th for The Group Rep at the Lonny Chapman Theatre.