



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SILK ROAD THEATRE PROJECT PRESENTS
THE MIDWEST PREMIERE OF MOTTI LERNER'S
*PANGS OF THE MESSIAH***

Chicago, IL—**Silk Road Theatre Project** begins its 2009 season with the Midwest Premiere of *Pangs of the Messiah* by renowned Israeli playwright **Motti Lerner**. The production, directed by Piven Theatre Workshop Artistic Director **Jennifer Green**, runs **March 19 – May 10, 2009**, in Pierce Hall at The Historic Chicago Temple Building, 77 W. Washington St, Chicago. **The press opening is Saturday, March 28, 2009, at 4:00 pm.**

Set in 2012 amidst the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians, Motti Lerner's *Pangs of the Messiah* is an apocalyptic yet fiercely humane drama about eight West Bank Jewish settlers pitted against an Israel they feel betrayed by. The play focuses on a religious family that finds itself torn between fighting to stay in their settlement and obeying their government's decision to dismantle it. Left hanging in the balance is the legacy of their beliefs.

Silk Road Theatre Project **Artistic Director Jamil Khoury** comments that "I am utterly bound up and wound up by this play. *Pangs of the Messiah* embodies everything that Silk Road Theatre Project audiences have come to cherish about the company's repertoire. It's an intelligent, provocative, and emotionally compelling play that allows audiences to arrive at their own conclusions." Khoury adds, "I come to this play with lived experience of the issues at hand. During the first Intifada [Palestinian uprising in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip], I worked with and advocated for Palestinian refugee communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank as a United Nations Refugee Affairs Officer. Thus *Pangs of the Messiah* speaks to me and challenges me on deeply personal levels. The play elicits within me sympathy for the settler family depicted, at times empathy, and in so doing, it creates a distinct discomfort, a fear of committing betrayal and of forgetting, particularly as an Arab American. But it was while swimming in those initial feelings of anxiety and unease that I knew instinctively we *had* to produce this play."

Pangs of the Messiah features a cast of eight, led by **Bernard Beck** and **Susan V. Adler**. The designers are **Kurt Sharp** (Set), **Carol J. Blanchard** (Costumes), **Rebecca A. Barrett** (Lighting), **Robert Steel** (Sound) and **Mike Tutaj** (Projections). The stage manager is **Michelle Dane**.

Previews are **March 19 - 27, 2009**. **The opening press performance is Saturday, March 28 at 4:00 p.m.** The production runs through **May 10, 2009**. Curtain times are Thursdays at 7:30; Fridays at 8:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. and Sundays at 4:00 p.m. Tickets are available at the **Silk Road Theatre Project box office**, 77 W. Washington St.; by phone, **(312) 857-1234 ext. 201**; and online, **www.srtp.org**. Three show **subscriptions** are also available, including *Pangs of the Messiah*, the special concert event *Silk Road Cabaret* (October 24, 2009), and *The DNA Trail* (Winter 2010).

Discounted parking is available for \$6 at System Parking, just 3 blocks from the theatre, at 230 W. Washington St.

Silk Road Theatre Project showcases playwrights of Asian, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean backgrounds, whose works address themes relevant to the peoples of the Silk Road and their Diaspora communities. Through the creation and presentation of outstanding theatre, we aim to promote discourse and dialogue among multi-cultural audiences in Chicago.

(more / selected biographies / fact sheet / photos)

***Pangs of the Messiah* / SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES**

Motti Lerner (Playwright) is an Israeli born playwright and screenwriter who also teaches playwriting at Tel Aviv University. He has been active in the Israeli peace movement since 1973 and frequently lectures at European and American Universities on playwriting, the Israeli theatre, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among his plays are: *Kastner*, *Pangs of the Messiah*, *Paula*, and *Pollard*, all produced by the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv; *Exile in Jerusalem* and *Passing The Love of Women* at Habima National Theatre; *Autumn* at the Beit Lessin Theatre, Tel Aviv; and *Hard Love* at the Municipal Theatre in Haifa. His play *The Murder of Isaac* about the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was produced at the Heilbron Theatre in Germany (1999). US productions include *The Murder of Isaac* at Centerstage Theatre and in the New Work Now! festival at the Public Theatre; *Exile in Jerusalem* at Williamstown Festival, Jewish Ensemble Theatre, La Mama ETC, and Theatre J; *Hard Love* at Theatre Or, Victory Gardens, and JTS; *Passing The Love of Women* and *Pangs of the Messiah* at Theatre J (Helen Hayes Award Nomination for Best Play); *Coming Home* at Golden Thread Productions; and *Benedictus* at Golden Thread Productions and LATC. Besides Israel and the US, his plays have been produced in the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Australia. He has written screenplays for the films *Loves in Betania*, *The Kastner Trial*, *Bus Number 300*, *Egoz*, *Spring 1941*, *A Battle in Jerusalem*, *The Silence of the Sirens*, *Altalena*, and the 12 episodes of the TV drama series "The Institute." He received the Israeli Motion Picture Academy award for best TV drama in 1995 and 2004, and is also a recipient of the Meskin Award for best play and the Prime Minister of Israel Award for his creative work.

Jennifer Green (Director) is the Artistic Director of the Piven Theatre Workshop. At Piven Theatre, Jennifer's directing credits include *Our Country's Good*, *Mad Forest* (After Dark Award: Best Ensemble), *Burn This* (Jeff Recommended), *Book of Days* (Chicago premiere), *Never in my Lifetime* (named one of the Top 10 Shows of the year by the Chicago Sun-Times), *Great Expectations* featuring Joyce Piven, *Lady Chaplin & Her Tramp* (world premiere), *Mad Dancers* (Chicago premiere) and most recently the Jeff Recommended *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*. Jennifer directed the world premiere of *For You Were a Stranger* at Chicago's Hothouse and assistant directed Sarah Ruhl's *Orlando* at the Actor's Gang in Los Angeles. Since 1997, she has been an adapter and director with Piven's Young People's Company and a Piven faculty member. Jennifer and is a recent grant recipient of the Theatre Communications Group's New Generations Program, supporting Leaders of Tomorrow, an adjunct faculty member of Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy, has been a resident artist in public and private schools with both Urban Gateways and the Illinois Arts Council, and conducts professional development workshops and corporate residencies throughout the Chicago area.

Bernard Beck (*Rabbi Shmuel Berger*) has performed in Chicago for more than forty years. He first appeared in the original production of Paul Sills's *Story Theatre* in 1968. He has worked on many Chicago stages, including Pary Productions, Organic, Victory Gardens, National Jewish Theatre, Northwestern University Theatre, Yiddish Arts Ensemble and Piven Theatre. He has taught improvisation and story theater at the Piven Theatre Workshop for more than thirty years. He last appeared in *What Dreams May Come* at Piven. He remembers fondly his appearances as Al Capone's lawyer in the locally filmed TV series *The Untouchables*, and as *Herschel* in the Yiddish Arts Ensemble's famous production of *Herschel and the Hanukkah Goblins*. Once a mild-mannered sociologist at Northwestern University, he has now been revealed as a fearless Chicago actor.

(more / fact sheet / photos)

***Pangs of the Messiah* / FACT SHEET**

Synopsis: Set in 2012 amidst the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians, *Pangs of the Messiah* is an apocalyptic yet fiercely humane drama about eight West Bank Jewish settlers pitted against an Israel they feel betrayed by. The play focuses on a religious family that finds itself torn between fighting to stay in their settlement and obeying their government's decision to dismantle it. Left hanging in the balance is the legacy of their beliefs.

Title: ***Pangs of the Messiah***
Playwright: **Motti Lerner**
Directed by: **Jennifer Green**
Featuring: **Bernard Beck***, **Susan V. Adler**, **Larry Baldacci**, **Brent T. Barnes**, **Dana Black**, **James Elly**, **Stacie Green**, and **Mark D. Hines**.

* Denotes a member of Actors Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

Dates: **Previews:** March 19 - 27, 2009
Press Opening: Saturday, March 28, at 4:00 p.m.
Regular Run: March 28 – May 10, 2009

Schedule: **Thursdays:** 7:30 p.m.
Fridays: 8:00 p.m.
Saturdays: 4:00 p.m. and 8:00p.m.
Sundays: 4:00 p.m.

No performance Thursday, April 9 for Passover.

Location: Silk Road Theatre Project, 77 W. Washington St. (lower level) Chicago, IL
Tickets: \$20 – \$22 all preview performances; \$30, Thursday and Friday evenings;
\$32 Saturday and Sunday matinees; \$34 Saturday evenings.

Box Office: The box office is located at **77 W. Washington St. (lower level), Chicago**
Please visit <http://www.srtp.org/> or call 312-857-1234 ext. 201 to purchase tickets.

NOTES OF INTEREST:

- The play was originally produced in Hebrew at the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv. Its only previous production in English, and in the US, was at Washington, DC's Theatre J. Silk Road Theatre Project is the first multi-ethnic company to produce the play.
- In addition to his work as a playwright and filmmaker, Motti Lerner is an outspoken activist in the Israeli peace movement, and a champion of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians.
- SRTP will bring playwright Motti Lerner to Chicago from Israel twice during the course of the production process.
- The Theatre J production was nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for Best Play.
- SRTP has engaged David Chack, President of the Association for Jewish Theatre, to act as community outreach coordinator for the production.
- SRTP will continue its Silk Road Sojourns audience engagement activities for *Pangs of the Messiah*, producing five television episodes, four podcasts, a magazine, and several blog entries for release before and during the production.

(more / photos)

***Pangs of the Messiah* / PHOTOS**

Photos by Michael Brosilow of *Pangs of the Messiah* at Silk Road Theatre Project. Full captions and high-resolution copies available for download at <http://www.srtp.org/pressroom/pressphotos.html>.



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