



For more info, images, or to set up an interview contact  
pr@southernrep.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## SOUTHERN REP INTRODUCES INNOVATIVE ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM "YO NOLA"

*New Orleans* – Southern Rep, in our 24<sup>th</sup> year of bringing New Plays to New Orleans, is thrilled to announce the pilot program of **YO NOLA (Youth Onstage New Orleans, LA)**. **YO NOLA is a free after school program that will run in partnership with Success Preparatory Academy, a charter school in the Treme-Lafitte neighborhood. This unique new program offers kids ages 7 to 12 the chance to learn all of the skills necessary for running their own theatre company.**

Members of the YO NOLA ensemble will take classes in acting, writing, directing, design, stage management, marketing, fundraising, and theatre business management. The company will produce original works, created by the ensemble, which will draw on current events and peer issues, as well as classic literature, fairy tales and myths.

The two year pilot program of YO NOLA has been generously funded by a grant from the **TCG/Metlife A-Ha! Do It!** program.

**This exciting program will be led by our newly hired Arts Education Director, Gamal Chasten.** Gamal was recently seen on stage in the Southern Rep @ Le Chat Noir production of **ZOMBIE TOWN**, and on the Southern Rep mainstage in last season's presentation of **AMERIVILLE**. Gamal is a founding member of the performance ensemble **UNIVERSES** (the creators of **AMERIVILLE**) and is a singer, playwright, poet, actor and educator. Gamal has been working in arts education with high risk and underserved youth for ten years, with students ranging from grade school to graduate school. He has worked closely with incarcerated youth and led workshops in introductory creative/poetry writing, ensemble work, and acting across the United States and abroad. As a Program Director in New York, Gamal worked with the Department of Juvenile Justice. While at the Bronx Council on the Arts, he acted as the primary liaison for arts programming.

In addition to the many local talents who will participate in the program, guest artists who have signed on to mentor future YO NOLA classes include **John Goodman ("Treme," "Roseanne")**, **Michael Cerveris, (Tony Award winning actor of SWEENEY TODD)**, playwright/screenwriter **Stephen Belber (*The Laramie Project, Management*)**, and **UNIVERSES**.

*I have found over the past 15 years as a founding member of one of our countries premiere theatre ensembles, and as a teaching artist, that being a performer and an ensemble member have benefits beyond the obvious. Preparing for a production and performing on stage can help build confidence and self-esteem. Bringing theatre to the classroom can also enhance the academic process by allowing kids to learn about topics in a way that are fun and relevant to their lives. Working in an ensemble setting teaches the value of ones contribution to a process, including teamwork and the importance of coming together as a group. But we also won't forget one of the most important benefits when working in education. It should be fun! Yes, they should learn, and trust me they will. The skills they acquire through this partnership will be those they can use throughout their adult lives. This is why we know that this partnership makes sense. The Success Preparatory Academy and YO NOLA share the same goals to help prepare young people for their place in the world.*

- Gamal Chasten, Arts Education Director



For more info, images, or to set up an interview contact  
pr@southernrep.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## SOUTHERN REP INTRODUCES INNOVATIVE ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM “YO NOLA”

**Success Preparatory Academy** is an open-enrollment, Kindergarten through 4th grade, extended-day school whose mission is to develop college bound students for leadership and lifelong learning. They are driven by results in everything they do and have a rigorous focus on Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. To further cultivate their 21st century scholars, Success Preparatory Academy offers a nurturing environment where students are taught Art, Music, Spanish, and Physical Education on a daily basis.

**MetLife/TCG A-ha! Program:** A program for TCG member theatres that supports creative thinking and action in two ways: *Think It* grants (\$25,000) give theatre professionals the time and space for research and development, *Do It* grants (\$50,000) support the implementation and testing of new ideas. The intent of the program is to enable theatres to dare to try new approaches to problem-solving artistic, managerial, production and/or technological challenges-to try things the organization doesn't and couldn't normally do. The MetLife/TCG A-ha! Program doesn't want to encourage theatres to create programs that are only a reflection of the latest novelty or trend, but to discover and identify new strategies that will have far-reaching effect in helping organizations do their best work.

**Southern Rep** continues its 24th season as the region's premiere professional theatre, producing bold world and regional premieres under the leadership of Artistic Director Aimée Hayes and Managing Director, Marieke Gaboury. In addition to an exciting Mainstage season that takes us on a journey from the dining room table to a 19<sup>th</sup> Century doctor's examining table to a magical realm inhabited by mythical creatures, Southern Rep @ Le Chat Noir offers a second stage season of eclectic, smart, silly and audacious theatrical fare. Southern Rep continues to offer educational programs such as free student matinees, \$10 student rush tickets and Academy SRT; as well as providing an artistic home to new works in development in the annual *New Play Bacchanal*. In Fall 2010, Southern Rep launched a new play award for women of color playwrights, The Ruby Prize, named in honor of civil rights advocate Ruby Bridges.

*Southern Rep is the most important driving force in contemporary drama in the Gulf South.* - Theodore P. Mahne, *The Times-Picayune Lagniappe*

###