For Immediate Release

Contact: Emma Palzere-Rae
Phone: 860-961-6067
Email: eprae@EmersonTheaterCollaborative.org

Emerson Theatre Collaborative Announces Production of *Harriet²*

Harriet Tubman and Harriet Beecher Stowe Brought to Life in Double Bill of *Harriet Tubman's Dream* and *Aunt Hattie's House*

February 20, 2009/Mystic, CT . . . The lives of two extraordinary American women come together in a compelling evening of theatre in ***Harriet²***, two one-act dramas that explore the lives of anti-slavery activist Harriet Tubman and author Harriet Beecher Stowe. These two very different women, one black and one white, are united by a common cause – ending slavery. In *Harriet²*, **Camilla Ross** is abolitionist Tubman in *Harriet Tubman's Dream,* which was written by **Lisa Giordano**; **Emma Palzere-Rae** portrays writer Stowe in *Aunt Hattie's House*, a work Palzere-Rae also authored. **Aaron Arbiter** directs the **Emerson Theatre Collaborative** production, which runs March 20 – 29 at Union Baptist Church in Mystic. More information can be found at www.EmersonTheaterCollaborative.org.

Harriet Tubman was an African American, abolitionist, anti-slavery activist, suffragist and one of the greatest American humanitarians that ever lived. After escaping slavery, into which she was born, she made thirteen missions to personally rescue over seventy slaves with the help of the Underground Railroad and helped another 60 slaves plan and carryout their own escapes. She worked closely with many well-known abolitionists including Frederick Douglass and John Brown. During the Civil War, she worked as a nurse, scout and spy for the Union Army without financial compensation. Throughout her life, she worked tirelessly and selflessly to end injustice and to obtain freedom, equality and dignity for all people. To help support herself, the fugitive slave community and to finance her rescue missions, Harriet Tubman worked as a cook, domestic servant and gave dramatic storytelling performances of her life. At parlor socials or at church meetings, she performed to great acclaim for many prominent abolitionists, suffragists

and the literary elite in New England. In *Harriet Tubman's Dream*, Tubman is portrayed giving one of her storytelling performances in Boston.

Connecticut-born **Harriet Beecher Stowe** was also an anti-slavery activist. Her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depicted life for African-Americans under slavery; it reached millions around the world, and made the political issues of the 1850s regarding slavery tangible to millions. Her impact is summed up in a commonly quoted statement apocryphally attributed to Abraham Lincoln. When he met Stowe, it is claimed that he said, "So *you're* the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!" *Aunt Hattie's House* is set in Hartford in 1864, a time when Mrs. Stowe built a home, having returned to Hartford a celebrity. As she is interviewed for yet another story of her life, we learn of the struggles of being a 19th century working mother and what compelled the authoress to pen *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

Emerson Theater Collaborative serves youth, underrepresented communities, and artists with an emphasis on diversity by producing innovative and exhilarating theater in southeastern Connecticut. By exploring timely themes and issues through original works and modern theatrical classics, ETC develops and nurtures emerging and professional artists by collaborating with the Emerson College network of alumni and students.

Harriet Tubman's Dream is performed by **Camilla Ross.** Ross is the current president and co-founder of the Emerson Theater Collaborative, and a graduate of Emerson College in Boston. Camilla spent time studying with the Actor's Workshop of Boston under the direction of Lila Sadd and Jerry Michaels. Drawing on over 20 years of theatrical experience, ranging from commercials to regional theater, Camilla is leading and shaping ETC from the ground up as one of the first professional theaters in southeastern Connecticut. She is the theatrical advisor and acting coach for the SPAG Players at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT. She is a current board and choral member with the Connecticut Lyric Opera of New London. Camilla is past board member and acting instructor for the Writer's Block, Ink of New London, CT. Camilla is currently a part-time business faculty member of the Three Rivers Community College, teaching a variety of business courses. She currently sits on the Emerson Alumni Board,

as one of the Co-presidents of the CT Chapter. As an actress, she was seen most recently in John Patrick Shanley's play *Doubt*, playing the role of Mrs. Mueller.

Harriet Tubman's Dream is written by **Lisa Giordano**. Ms. Giordano is a board member of the Emerson Theater Collaborative. Her play, *True Nature of All Being*, received an Honorable Mention in the Clauder Competition, the New England Playwrights Festival held in Maine, and received an Honorable Mention in the International Eco-drama Playwrights Festival in California. Locally, two of her musical plays for children, *Rock Around the Sound* and *To Bee or Not To Bee and Other Bug Tales* were performed at the Garde Arts Center in New London, CT as part of their Kids on Stage program. Her plays have been workshopped at UConn's Avery Point Theater and have received staged readings through the Planning Stage and by the students of the Writer's Block, Ink of New London, CT, where she is a member of the faculty and board. Ms. Giordano is an associate member of the Dramatist Guild and belongs to the Writers' Roundtable of Southeastern Connecticut.

Aunt Hattie's House is written and performed by **Emma Palzere-Rae**, who has over 20 years experience working in all areas of professional theater including performance, artistic administration, playwriting, and producing. Ms. Palzere-Rae worked extensively in the New York City entertainment community for over fifteen years, most recently serving as the Artistic Director of Plays for Living. As an actress, Ms. Palzere-Rae has appeared Off-Broadway, at regional and stock theaters, and has been spotted in various films, commercials and soaps over the years. Locally, she has appeared at NewGate Theatre in Providence and in *Lantern Light Tours* at Mystic Seaport. As a producer, Ms. Palzere-Rae is the founder of Be Well Productions which tours several critically-acclaimed one-woman plays to schools, libraries, senior communities, civic organizations and professional theaters. Ms. Palzere-Rae has portrayed Harriet Beecher Stowe since 2000 when *Aunt Hattie's House* was commissioned by the Missouri Humanities Council for its Civil War Chautauqua. Since that time, Ms. Palzere-Rae has played Mrs. Stowe to countless audience members throughout the northeast and midwest, engaging them in conversations about being a 19th century working mother and activist. Ms. Palzere-Rae is proud to have played Sister Aloysius in ETC's inaugural production of John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*.

Harriet^2 is directed by **Aaron Arbiter**. Mr. Arbiter is currently an Advanced Directing student at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in New London, where last semester he was a student at the National Theater Institute. Arbiter is also the 2009-2010 Artistic Director of Brandeis University's award-winning Free Play Theatre Cooperative. His directing credits at Brandeis include *City of Angels* and John Patrick Shanley's *Savage in Limbo*.

Key Dates and Information

What: Emerson Theatre Collaborative's production of *Harriet*^{2}*,* incorporating the one-act plays *Harriet Tubman's Dream* and *Aunt Hattie's House*.
When: March 20, 21, 27, and 28 at 8:00 p.m.; March 22 and 29 at 4:00 p.m.
Where: Union Baptist Church, 119 High Street, Mystic CT
How: Tickets are $20 ($18 for students and seniors) and can be obtained by calling 860-705-9711. $5 of each ticket will benefit Union Baptist Church's youth mission trip to New Orleans. Additional information is available at EmersonTheatreCollaborative.org.

###

Contact: Emma Palzere-Rae, 860-961-6067, **eprae@emersontheatercollaborative.org**

Photos available on request or at: http: //www.emersontheatercollaborative.org/press.php

Creative team available for **interviews** by appointment.