

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Artists Repertory Theatre presents the world premiere of**  
***The Hillsboro Story***  
**A historical multidisciplinary theatrical experience**  
**spans past, present and future**

**Written & Directed by Susan Banyas**

**PORTLAND, OR – September 22, 2010** – Real stories from 1954-56 Hillsboro, Ohio bring to life the not-so-distant history of school desegregation in the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. *The Hillsboro Story* weaves spoken word, movement and jazz with a trajectory of school and community outreach. Previews begin October 13, 2010; Opening Night is Friday, October 15, 2010. Limited run, production is two weeks only at Artists Rep. All tickets are \$20 and available at [www.artistsrep.org](http://www.artistsrep.org) or by calling the box office at 503.241.1278.

*The Hillsboro Story* is a unique performance piece integrating movement, monologues, and visual images, backed by an evocative original music score by jazz composer, David Ornette Cherry. It tells the story of the first test case for *Brown v. Board of Education* (May 1954) in the North, in the playwright's hometown of Hillsboro, near the Mason-Dixon Line. A third-grade witness the local "colored school" in flames and the five African-American mothers who took legal action, Banyas returned home in 2003 as a cultural detective interviewing more than 50 community members and Civil Rights leaders to create this engaging theatrical piece.

This work is more than a simple play. It is the confluence of many artists and community reflecting on memory, historical facts and storytelling to invite audiences as creative activists and collaborators in upholding civil rights and shaping the future.

"This is not just a theater piece but a constant dialogue, and engaging and meeting of minds and personal stories," says playwright and director Susan Banyas. In Ohio, Banyas talked with lawyers, mothers, children, teacher and women who were cleaning the houses of the white women. "There was this whole beehive of activity that happened completely under the radar of white people, these memories are active not passive - we dignify our lives through our reclamation of history," said Banyas.

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"The music was built in the alleys, streets and crevices of Hillsboro," said jazz score composer David Ornette Cherry. "I explored the texture and the rhythm of the times as subtle support to the story."

Scenic designer Jeff Seats says of his design for this production, "actors will still work in open, empty space where movement and story are best emphasized - the environmental design focus in the lobby, creating an environment that will expose audience members to imagery, people, place, sound and music of the time period."

## **CAST**

Susan Banyas, LaVerne Green, Jennifer Lanier, K.B. Mercer

## **DESIGNERS**

Music composed by David Ornette Cherry

Choreography by Gregg Bielemeier

Scenic Design: Jeff Seats

Costume Design: Rusty Terwelp

Lighting Design: Peter West

Stage Manager: Tozzi Laney

## **:: JUST THE FACTS ::**

### ***The Hillsboro Story***

by Susan Banyas

Directed by Susan Banyas

**Dates:** October 13-October 24

**Performances:** Wednesday - Sunday @ 7:30pm; Sunday matinees @ 2:00pm  
Opening Night is Friday, October 15

**Location:** Artists Repertory Theatre's Alder Stage (1515 SW Morrison St.)

**Tickets:** Tickets \$20  
503.241.1278 or [www.artistsrep.org](http://www.artistsrep.org)

**On the Web:** [Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)

## **SYNOPSIS**

*The Hillsboro Story* is a warm-hearted, hard-hitting narrative, set in the writer's hometown, near the Mason-Dixon Line, during one of America's most powerful turning points.

The story opens in Hillsboro, Ohio on July 5, 1954 when the "colored" elementary school went up in flames. The fire sparked a "school fight" led by five African American mothers that became the first test case for the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (May, 1954) in the North. Banyas was in the third grade, and the memory of those times sparked this cultural detective story. *The Hillsboro Story* is the culmination of over 50 interviews with major players, their children and national figures in the Civil Rights movement. *The Hillsboro Story* is an inspired weaving of spoken word, movement, monologues, and visual images, backed by an evocative original music score.

## **PHOTOS**

Advance photos available for download here: <http://www.susanbanyas.com/PR/shots.html>

Photo credit: Julie Keefe

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**VIDEO TRAILER:** <http://vimeo.com/14816649>

## **HILLSBORO STORY ENRICHMENT EVENTS**

Post-show discussion after each show as Act II  
Hosted by a guest moderator with Susan Banyas and cast.

October 16

6:30-7:15, Artists Repertory Theatre

[Self-Enhancement, Inc.](#), sounds of Soul Mass Choir, directed by Cinda Jackson

October 23

6:30-7:15, Artists Repertory Theatre

[David Ornette Cherry](#) Quartet

Expressions of Energy

## **PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Two high-school teachers at Portland Public Schools developed a 5-week curriculum based on the script of *The Hillsboro Story* for 11<sup>th</sup> grade language arts students. This curriculum is one of several developed over the past summer and has been added to a list of curricula teachers can access. It is not required curriculum, but it is one of several choices for teachers to choose from and adapt to their needs. It is designed to use with just the script, but can be enhanced by a performance. Matinee school performances are scheduled for this purpose. Roll out of this curriculum took place on August 26. For more information: <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/news/4367.htm>.

## **TOURING**

As part of our ongoing commitment to education and outreach, Artists Rep will be touring this production of *The Hillsboro Story* to schools and community centers throughout Oregon and Ohio. Portland Public Schools has developed curriculum using the script of *The Hillsboro Story* with performance centered enhancement options. Additionally, *The Hillsboro Story* will begin a national tour in March with scheduled performances at: the [Brown Foundation Education Site](#), National Parks, in Topeka, Kansas on March 6, 2011; the [National Underground Railroad Freedom Center](#), in Cincinnati, Ohio on March 11, 2011.

## **DRAMATURGICAL NOTES**

### **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

The piece was first presented as a monologue at an oral history conference, co-sponsored by Columbia University and NYC Library of Performing Arts. During a 2009 summer residency at Artists Rep, the play was developed into an ensemble work-in-progress. In 2010, *The Hillsboro Story* was Artists Rep's entry in the [Fertile Ground Festival of New Works](#) in January and then traveled to Hillsboro, Ohio in April.

### **PLAYWRIGHT**

Susan Banyas' artistic roots as an improviser, dancer, and experimental performance artist led to collaborations through SO&SO&SO&SO Inc. She has an MA in performance and documentary art, ran Dream Well Studio for 12 years that featured experimental, low-tech dance and performance, raised her son, Jack, and developed her teaching forms -- Everyday Dancing, Soul Stories, Performance Lab,  
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Who Owns Your Mind? (media literacy). She has taught these forms in studios, universities, and residency programs. Recent performance projects, *No Strangers Here Today*, and *The Hillsboro Story*, are centered in Highland County, Ohio (where she was raised) 100 years apart and dance between memory and American history. She has toured *No Strangers* around the country with collaborator, David Ornette Cherry. *Everyday Dancing, A Dance Lecture*, originally delivered at an academic conference, is in development as a dance-story quintet and photography project, titled *It's Been a Busy Week*. More information at [www.susanbanyas.com](http://www.susanbanyas.com).

### The Origins of *The Hillsboro Story* by Susan Banyas

On July 5, 1954, Lincoln School, the “colored” elementary school near Smokey Row, in Hillsboro, Ohio went up in flames; and my sweet, segregated hometown was suddenly awake. The county engineer, a white man, decided to force integration and struck the match on that hot summer night that sent him to the state penitentiary (and into the FBI files) and sparked five African American mothers to stage a two-year protest.

The “school fight” caught the attention of Thurgood Marshall at NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) headquarters in New York City. Marshall, who led the powerful team of attorneys to the *Brown v. Board of Education* victory (May 1954), sent one of his chief strategists, Constance Baker Motley, to Ohio to represent the Mothers in the first test case for the *Brown* decision in the North. I was in the third grade, absorbing the cultural commotion, quickly and quietly thrown into the dump heap of history and reduced to a one-liner. “The Negro women were trouble-makers and the County Engineer was crazy.” Fifty years after seeing the Marching Mothers outside of Mrs. Mallory’s classroom window, I went back to my hometown to find them and piece together a warm-hearted, hard-hitting cultural detective story. The investigation is informed by historical research, photography, and extensive interviews with key players locally and nationally, whose voices form the heart of the story.

For additional information about the show and Banyas, visit: <http://susanbanyas.com/PR/index.html>

The 2010/11 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by U.S. Bank. The 2010 print media sponsor is The Oregonian, the season radio sponsors are KINK.FM and All Classical 89.9. Season Hotel Sponsors are Hotel deLuxe and Mark Spencer Hotel. *The Hillsboro Story* is supported by the Oregon Cultural Trust and individual producer is Ben Earle.

Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest running professional theater company in Portland. Artists Rep strives to challenge artists and audiences with plays of depth and vibrancy in an intimate setting. Artists Rep explores the strengths, frailties, and diversity of the human condition primarily through regional premieres, commissioned works and selected classics appropriate to contemporary issues.

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