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WHO: Jewish Theatre Collaborative &
The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies

WHAT: **Success of Staged Reading Series and Plans for the future**

A Theatre is Born:
Jewish Theatre Collaborative (JTC) launch a success for the community.

“Israel Onstage was a runaway success, both as dramatic performance and as an educational vehicle for people of all backgrounds to understand more about life in the Jewish state,” reports Professor Michael Weingrad, director of The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at PSU. “Hunger for this kind of engaging exploration of the complexities of modern Jewish culture was reflected in the full houses and waiting lists for tickets. The buzz has still not died down,” he reflected further.

On three consecutive Tuesdays in July, Jewish Theatre Collaborative (JTC) played to increasingly packed houses as audiences turned out for *Israel Onstage, Israeli Society through Drama*. “With wit and honesty, the urgent questions of contemporary Israeli society were brought vividly and movingly to life,” states Professor Michael Weingrad. Audiences were excited by the quality of the plays and the insight they provided into the complexity of the modern Israeli experience.

The readings were followed by post show forums that featured an exciting array of guests. Dr. Aart Lovenstein illuminated a number of issues and themes embedded in *Master of the House* and *Tea*. Following the final reading, *Pangs of the Messiah*, Emily Harris, host of OPB Think Out Loud, moderated the conversation with special guest professors of religion at Reed College Steven Wasserstrom and Kambiz GhaneaBassiri.

Jewish Theatre Collaborative (JTC) has been commissioned to prepare a performance piece for the Institute for Judaic Studies upcoming conference “The impact of the émigrés from former Soviet union on the United and Israel” in September. JTC plans additional collaborations with the Oregon Jewish Museum and the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at Portland State University including a campus Purim Shpiel, an annual Shalom Aleichem coffeehouse yartzheit commemoration and another reading series. Looking further into the future, JTC plans two fully staged productions in 2009-10: *The Chosen* by

Chaim Potok and adapted by Aaron Posner of recent PCS *Sometimes a great Notion* success and *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels.

Jewish Theatre Collaborative (JTC) is a theatre company emerging under the auspices of The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at Portland State University. Led by director Sacha Reich, the company hopes to reestablish the centrality of story as a tool for making meaning of the human and communal experience.

Designed to commemorate Israel's 60th anniversary, the course provided exposure to Israeli drama and hope to deepen understanding of the challenges of the modern Israeli experience. Three plays were presented as professionally staged readings directed by JTC founder Sacha Reich and guest director Mary McDonald-Lewis: *Master of the House* by Shmuel Hasfari, *Tea* by Roni Pinkovich and *Pangs of the Messiah* by Motti Lerner.

Additional supporters of the event included the Consulate General of Israel San Francisco, the Institute for Judaic Studies in the Northwest, The Institute of Israeli Drama, the Oregon Israel Fund of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation and Portland State University.

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