

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** Cynthia Bowman  
(415) 681-2141  
[Cynthia\\_Bowman@sbcglobal.com](mailto:Cynthia_Bowman@sbcglobal.com)

**A RENAISSANCE IN THE HEART OF RICHMOND**

**East Bay Center for the Performing Arts celebrates the completion of \$16 million renovation with a month-long series of art, performances and events**

**Richmond, CA (July 20, 2011)**... East Bay Center for the Performing Arts in Richmond has completed an extensive \$16 million renovation of its historic facility in Richmond's "Iron Triangle." Transformed from an aging and ailing building back to its original glory, the vibrant community arts center that works with thousands of children and young adults each year is poised to be the fulcrum for a neighborhood renaissance. The Center invites the community to celebrate with a month-long series of performances and special events beginning October 1, 2011.

"We're thrilled to welcome the community to our transformed home –to deepen the beauty and soul of a vital gathering place and anchor for the transformation of this entire neighborhood," said Jordan Simmons, the Center's Artistic Director. "What we've built here is a ship that will carry the Center's students over the next fifty years as they work to train in the arts, imagine, and create a better life for themselves and their community."

Originally built in 1924 as a dance hall, music store and flower shop, the Winters Building became home to the Center in 1973. Over the past few decades, the Iron Triangle neighborhood has dramatically changed, gaining notoriety as center of violence and chaos in Richmond. At the same time, even as the Center's programs were providing more than 2,500 children and young adults each year with high-quality artistic instruction and direction, the building's exterior began to age and fade, reflecting the changes in the neighborhood.

A public-private partnership that included the City of Richmond, the Richmond Community Redevelopment Agency, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation and the California Cultural and Historical Endowment embarked

on a campaign to reinvigorate the neighborhood starting with the renovation of the Winters Building into a vital community center. The two-year, \$16 million renovation has added an additional 7,500 square feet of public spaces, dramatically transforming the building into a more open and welcoming facility ready to accommodate students and visitors of all ages and physical abilities.

Helping to create this new center has been such pleasure,” said architect Mark Cavagnero, who developed the design for the renovation. “I can’t teach music, drama or dance, but when I first visited, I couldn’t help but get excited and want to be a part of it. For me, this has meant the opportunity to give them a great place to come together, a place that has character and excites them. This is what architecture strives to do. I want our effort to be worthy of what they do and who they are.”

The building’s exterior has been dramatically restored to its original glory, with ornate Renaissance detailing in addition to new first floor windows and doors. Inside, the new features include a new climate-controlled 2,500 square-foot ground floor theater, a 200-seat second-floor proscenium theater, and an additional 5,000 square feet of rehearsal and teaching space. In addition, the building is now fully accessible, with large modern restrooms and other amenities designed to make audiences of all ages and physical abilities feel welcomed and comfortable.

“The East Bay Center is one of the best kept secrets in Richmond,” said Rep. Miller. “Year after year, it has provided young people and the community with so many opportunities and shown what is possible—even with relatively modest resources—when a cultural center grows organically from the community. This renovation might well be a linchpin for a broader revival in a neighborhood that has had a shortage of good news.”

“The new building means a new home for me,” said Cuauhtemoc, 16 year-old student at the Center. “It means love for the students and teachers and that the staff and community care about the students. They rebuilt the old building to make it better for us and for Richmond, to give Richmond a good name. We can show people all around that

Richmond has talent.”

Established in 1968, immediately following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., East Bay Center for the Performing Arts engages young people and the community in developing works of art, events and performances that are inspired and driven by the locale, history, events and rich ethnic culture of the area. The Center focuses on helping students produce “community driven” works as part of its ongoing core work of raising young engaged artists. These include films, photo exhibits, poetry days in the park, original theater productions, historical narratives, dance theater works, ceremonies of remembrance and heritage and more. The Center provides a welcoming place with engaging programs that teach young people to artistically express their feelings, experiences and hope in a way that develops qualities to help them grow and flourish.

During the month of October, the public is invited to a series of events and performances to re-christen and launch the Center into its next chapter of service to the community.

The events include:

- Saturday, October 1 – **Premiere Gala** (ticketed event)
- Thursday, October 6 – **Community Launch Party**
- Saturday, October 8 – **Iron Triangle Legacy Family Day**
- Sunday, October 9 – **Encuentro de Son, and Fandango Jarocho**
- Friday, October 14 – **Hip Hop International**
- Saturday, October 15 and Sunday, October 16 – **World Premiere of Konyifafa**
- Friday, October 21 – **Jazz Heritage Concert**
- Saturday, October 22 – **Mien Ceremonial Feast and Cultural Festival**
- Sunday, October 23 – **Iron Triangle Legacy Film Screening**
- Wednesday, October 26 – **La Colmenita**
- Friday, October 28 – **Iron Triangle Legacy Theater Showcase**
- Saturday, October 29 – **World Master Artist Series**
- Sunday, October 30 – **Youth Symphony Concert**

For more information and an updated schedule of events, visit [EastBayCenter.org](http://EastBayCenter.org)

#### **About the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts**

Founded in 1968, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts engages youth and young adults in imagining and creating new worlds for themselves and new visions for their communities through the inspiration and discipline of rigorous training in world performance traditions.

We at East Bay Center for the Performing Arts passionately believe in the power of art to create beauty and new ways of seeing the world. We believe in the ability of the performing arts to give voice to the silent, to unite peoples of diverse backgrounds, and to help realize the fullest potential of communities and the individuals who live in them. We affirm the importance of connecting the creative and uplifting powers of the arts with children and youth who in their daily lives must contend with systemic poverty, violence, and other barriers to peace, justice, and prosperity. We welcome all who find resonance with and are committed to these beliefs.

Our programs serve more than 2000 teens and young adults each year. We offer diverse youth and young adults opportunities to grow and excel as learners, creators of art, and contributors to their communities. We provide broad and strategic community-based and public school performing arts access programs; rigorous individual and ensemble training; an intensive four-year, interdisciplinary diploma program; advanced internships; and commissions for new works of art. Our students, partners, and audiences deepen their experience and engagement with the life-affirming and community-building impact of music, theater, dance, and media-making from a critical selection of the world's great cultures.

The focus of instruction and performance ranges from blues to jazz, classical European chamber music to ballet, West African music and dance to traditional Mexican music and dance. In addition, theater and film/media production opportunities help young artists – and renowned master artists – build works about issues ranging from environmental pollution to urban violence and HIV/AIDS. For its work, the Center has received recognition and funding from local, state, and national sources, including the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information or to make a gift to the Center, please visit [EastBayCenter.org](http://EastBayCenter.org)

###