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TEENS PERFORM PLAY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE FOR AREA HIGH SCHOOLS

The Ferndale Repertory Theatre is pleased to present a riveting and cautionary tale about school violence entitled *Bang, Bang, You're Dead*, by award-winning playwright William Mastrosimone for the Rep's 15th annual all-teen production. It opens at the Rep for one weekend only on Thursday, March 6, Friday, March 7 and Saturday, March 8 at 8:00 P.M. with one matinee Sunday, March 9 at 2:00 P.M. Ticket prices are \$10 for general admission and are **free** for all students. Daytime performances will also be held on Thursday and Friday for local schools. Please call (707) 786-5483 for tickets and information.

The area's teens will go on the road with this 40 minute drama and present it over the next three weeks to local high schools and middle schools for the sixth through the twelfth grades. "Schools have applauded our offer to present this production for their students, and we hope to generate some healthy talk about a very serious subject that affects us all", says Marilyn McCormick, the Rep's Executive Director. Performances are being arranged at the Ferndale Rep for Ferndale and Charter Schools/Independent Study, Fortuna, Eureka, Arcata, Zoe Barnum, and McKinleyville High Schools. There will be a question and answer period with the cast, production staff, and a counselor at the end of the show. Performances are free to the schools. Other schools interested in attending should call the theatre for information on the dates and times of the schools' presentations. Study Questions for Teachers to the show are also available upon request as well as schedules for school performances. Also, this information is also available on the Rep's web site, www.ferndale-rep.org.

Mastrosimone, who lives near Seattle, says he was inspired to write the play a few days after the Springfield incident when his 15-year-old son came home from school with an alarming story. A student had scrawled on the blackboard, "I'm going to kill everyone in this class and the teacher too." The student later said it was all a joke. But, the author says, "I, like every other parent, was shaken to my core because we understood that our kids are no longer safe anywhere. The national tragedy of kids killing kids sweeps the country, and no one, not the schools, not the parents, not the pundits nor the government, has a clue," Mastrosimone says. The play has no answers, he added, but he said that he hopes its message will derail potential future school violence with its message of opportunities tragically lost.

There's absolutely nothing in this show that either glorifies or glamorizes violence. It focuses largely on the lasting consequences of an impulsive violent act, for the shooter as well as the victims. It also shows the rippling consequences for family, friends, schools and communities. Mastrosimone wisely encouraged his young actors to improvise while lamenting what they have forever lost. The real-life particulars of teen life - "cruising, windows down, music up" - ring true. The spare depiction of consequences also argues against suicide; a student in the Bend said, "As someone who's considered suicide many times, it really did make me think about what I'd miss if I was dead." The show effectively indicts the violent television movies and video games that desensitize our kids to violence and train them to find amusement in killing. It also reminds teens of the potentially deadly effects of teasing, taunting and ostracizing troubled classmates.

The wonderful and talented cast, led by co-directors Nanette Voss-Herlihy and Victor Howard are: Justin Brown, Brittany Gonzales, Brooke Marino, Michael Roscoe, Sam Cord, Rebecca Rose Morris, Daniel Amaral, Lexus Landry, Haley Brannon, Alison Ehrstrom, and Brittany Travis. Additional support is from teens Madison Cho, Claire Hull, Nicki Garoutte, and Denim Ohmit. Gary Franklin designs the lights and set.

We are so thankful to our sponsors KHSU, and to the Bertha Russ Lytel Foundation.

Mastrosimone says, “*Bang, Bang, You're Dead* is a resource for dealing with a broken world that's violent, unhealthy, unfair, and beyond the power of anyone to fix except today's generation. The play is a free gift for students to perform in schools, garages, street corners, parks, houses of worship -- anyplace there can be communication and discovery about how we've made the world's violence our own. And, how we can change it. It's about a theater of life.” For tickets and information, please call the Rep at (707) 786-5483.