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Acclaimed Irondale Ensemble Project Announces New Large-Scale Off-Broadway Venue In The Heart Of Brooklyn's Theatre District Opening Fall, 2008

The Irondale Center for Theater, Education and Outreach

**Down The Street From BAM At The Historic
Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church In Fort Greene**

January 11th, 2008 (New York, NY) – **The Irondale Ensemble Project**, a renowned theatrical, outreach and education outfit: **Terry Greiss**, Executive Director, **Jim Niesen**, Artistic Director, **Maria Knapp**, Managing Director, is proud to announce the groundbreaking of their new home: **The Irondale Center for Theater, Education and Outreach** or **The Irondale Center** (at the historic Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 South Oxford St, Bklyn, NY bet. Lafayette and Fulton Streets). Construction for this **\$2.5 million** renovation begins **February 27th** and will last for 6 months to be completed in July, with a grand opening in **Fall, 2008**.

Just down the street from BAM, **The Irondale Center** is housed in the **Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church's** former Sunday school that sports a grand room spanning **5,400 square feet** on the ground, with **28-foot ceilings**, a **1,900-square-foot** mezzanine/gallery, gothic-style wall paintings and stained glass windows. Irondale's plan, with design by architect **Leonard Colchamiro**, is to retain the original scale, character and details of this distinctive space. The Center will include a flexible, **168-seat performance space** (that can be expanded to 199 seats) and much-needed offices for Irondale. In addition to rentals both theatrically and otherwise, the Center will allow the resident company, Irondale Ensemble Project, to expand their programming, workshops, outreach and arts and education.

“In addition to being a home for the company's theatrical experiments and educational programs for students and community members, we are hoping to make this a destination point for American and International ensembles that are probably not on BAM's radar screen,” says Executive Director **Terry Greiss**. “Additionally, each company that comes in will have to have a community-oriented program as well as its Main Stage production.”

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The Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church has a long and vital activist history. It was originally nicknamed the “Temple of Abolition” and played an important role in the Brooklyn abolitionist movement prior to the Emancipation Proclamation. In the 1860's it sheltered runaway slaves in its basement, Alexander Graham Bell made the first telephone call in Brooklyn from the church, Frederick Douglass, Charles Dickens and PT Barnum have all spoken there, and the original pastor was one of a coterie of Brooklyn abolitionists who urged Lincoln towards emancipation. Renovation of the space as the Twyla Tharp Dance Studio was originally planned to be the first major project of the BAM LDC. For various reasons that project didn't materialize and Irondale stepped in to present the church with a compelling proposal to create

The Irondale Project, established in 1983, is a theater company that creates and presents original work, through the research and exploration of emerging themes in our society. The company has roots in improvisation, traditional Stanislavski techniques, extensive movement work, and collaborative writing techniques. The primary goal of the ensemble is to discover how theater can be utilized as an important or central aspect of daily life. Irondale has approached this mission from two different angles, through an exploration of what types of theater resonate most meaningfully with today's audiences, and through an application of theatrical techniques in non-theater situations (prisons, schools, shelters, etc.). Irondale has produced 42 major Off-Broadway shows including the American premier of Brecht's *Conversations In Exile* and 16 original pieces. During this time the company has mounted two international and three domestic tours. Irondale is a constituent member of TCG ART New York and founding member of the Network of Ensemble Theaters and is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

The campaign for the Irondale Center is supported by the Independence Community Foundation of New York, The Booth Ferris Foundation, the BAM LDC, the Samuel H. Scripps Foundation and the Holtsinger Foundation as well as the city of New York and Borough President Marty Markowitz.

The Irondale Center is going to be accessible by almost any train to Atlantic Avenue: 2,3,4,5, D, Q, N and follow the signs to BAM. Walk up Hansen St. to South Oxford, turn Left walk 1 block or the C Train to Lafayette Ave, exit at S. Oxford St.)

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