



**Berkeley Rep
School of Theatre**

Student Matinee Study Guide



BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE IN ASSOCIATION WITH LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS
STEPPEWOLF THEATRE COMPANY'S PRODUCTION OF

Study guide written and compiled by

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after the quake

based on "honey pie" and "superfrog saves tokyo"

FROM THE NOVEL *after the quake* BY

HARUKI MURAKAMI

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE AND DIRECTED BY

FRANK GALATI

prologue

from artistic director Tony Taccone

Healing stories from the realm of the unconscious

All art traffics in the unknown. All art is an attempt to marry the impulses and movements of the unconscious with those of the conscious mind. Each arena informs the other; is intertwined with the other; changes, shapes, and defines the other. However exploited by the artist, the relationship between the unconscious and conscious self is the centrifugal force of all creativity. To learn how to move within, among, and between those two worlds is the job of the artist; to learn to dream while fully awake, to make visible the invisible, to live simultaneously in darkness and light.

This journey is on full display in *after the quake*, an adaptation for the stage of two short stories by Haruki Murakami. Conceived by the eminent director Frank Galati and first produced by our highly respected colleagues at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, *after the quake* is, on one level, an examination of the psychological upheaval caused by an earthquake: the shocks and aftershocks that serve to remind us of the fragility of life, the fear of death, the relief of having survived.

But Murakami and Galati are interested in a deeper set of experiences than those described by first reactions to the physical event of an earthquake. They move, literally and figuratively, into the realm of the unconscious to discover not only the source of our personal and collective trauma, but the source of our healing. Galati has ingeniously fused two stories to illuminate this landscape: a child cannot sleep at night and needs the balm of a story, a story so powerful that it has the magical ability to speak about the unspeakable; a superhero in the person of a Frog tries to stave off a cataclysmic earthquake by enlisting the help of an unassuming bureaucrat. Together, the two stories weave a different tale about the limitations of the visible world; about the mysterious forces of change swirling all around us; about the very nature of our precarious existence. The “quake,” in Murakami’s world, shatters the assumptions of everyday life to reveal a strange, parallel universe full of ruthless power and terrible beauty; incomprehensible simplicity and comic truth. And we, audience and performers alike, armed with only our vulnerability and imagination, travel through the darkness into the light of each other, unified by what we can never truly know.

And left feeling more fully alive for it.

Enjoy this wonderful show.

Haruki Murakami: quiet visionary goes global

By Madeleine Oldham

At 58 years old, Haruki Murakami shows no signs of abandoning the generations of young people who look to his books for their literary fix. Refusing to conform to established literary tradition and convention in his native Japan, Murakami invented his own prose style unlike anything his country had previously seen. He refers to the writings of Japanese literary purists as “getting more and more refined, to the point where they resemble a kind of bonsai,” implying that though they may be beautiful, they are also constrained and repressed. Murakami prefers his writing to let loose, to communicate energy, power, freshness, and freedom. In the United States, he has transcended cult status to become an extremely well-known author—particularly among readers in their 20s and 30s—and his fans stretch across Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

His writing is directly influenced by the global pop culture fusion that began emerging in the '60s and '70s (coinciding with the worldwide proliferation of television) and has only exploded since then. American culture in particular heavily influenced the young Murakami, who grew up on jazz, rock and roll, and hardboiled detective novels. In a conversation with author Jay McInerney, Murakami described America's cars and clothes and

television at that time as impossibly “vibrant.” Young Japanese people embraced and adored American culture: “It was so shiny and bright that sometimes it seemed like a fantasy world. We loved that fantasy world. In those days, only America could afford such fantasies.”

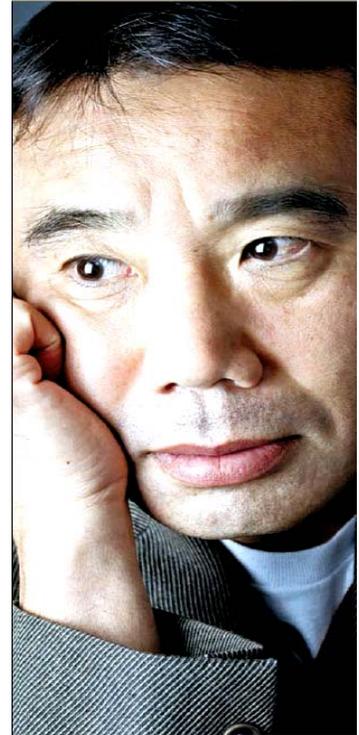
The press regularly dialogues about how Japanese Murakami's writing is, or, more specifically, isn't; and how Japanese he intends it to be. A common criticism accuses him of worshipping the United States and ignoring his own culture, which in Japan amounts to a kind of betrayal. In typical Murakami fashion, he dismisses such questions: he writes what he writes; he is Japanese; there it is.

Born in Kyoto and raised in Kobe, Murakami grew up the son of not one but two teachers of Japanese literature. (He admits that his later career may have partially stemmed from rebellion against that.) Determined not to succumb to the societal pull of becoming a company man, Murakami dropped out of college, where he had been majoring in cinema and theatre arts, and started a jazz bar that he ran for seven years.

It was not until the age of 29 that Murakami wrote his first work of fiction. He points to a particular moment where the idea became real to him: he was watching a baseball game, someone hit a double, and suddenly the thought hit him that he could write a novel. So he did. This moment essentializes the kind of opaque simplicity that characterizes Murakami's writing—what otherwise might be an incomprehensible leap of logic instead simply creates its own logic in Murakami's books. His prose is direct and pleasingly accessible, but it belies his complex dreamscapes and intricate plot-weaving; his deceptively simple language and imagery add up to something much richer than the sum of their parts.

Murakami's writing explores the inner lives of characters living on the outskirts of public life. In the United States, we have a long legacy of celebrating the individual and idealizing the loner. The opposite is true in Japan, where success is often measured in how well a person can blend in with a group; it lacks a national appreciation for nonconformists. Murakami notes, “Japan is such a group-conscious society that to be independent is very hard. For instance, when I looked for an apartment in Tokyo, the real estate people didn't trust me because as a writer, I was self-employed and didn't belong to any company. Many people, especially young people, would like to be more independent and on their own. But it is very difficult and they suffer from feelings of isolation. I think that is one reason why young readers support my work.”

Murakami wrestles in his writing with questions of individualism and identity (which, incidentally, the Japanese language has no word for), as well as a recurring theme of abnormal things happening to normal people—people so ordinary that should they disappear, the world might not even notice. Some sort of outside force descends, often in the form of a fantastical person or creature, and confronts these



nobodies with a challenge they cannot run from. Catapulted back into the throes of life, Murakami's ordinary heroes often discover a newfound sense of place and purpose, albeit quietly. They transform—quintessential examples of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey—but do not aspire to the end glory that other heroes do. McInerney describes:

Even when he's writing about relatively fantastic subjects, like spirit possession in sheep, Haruki Murakami's sensibility is that, I think, of a skeptical realist. His narrator is inevitably everyman, contemporary Tokyo edition, a kind of thirtyish urban male in a low-key white-collar job, like advertising or public relations, a somewhat passive fellow who doesn't expect much out of life and who takes what comes to him with jaded equanimity.

Remarkable things do tend to befall these antiheroes of Mr. Murakami's fiction. Their girlfriends commit suicide. Their friends turn into sheep. Their favorite elephants disappear into thin air. But they will be damned if they're going to make a big deal out of it.

Unable to maintain his own status as an ordinary Joe, his popularity snowballed and Murakami became a household name in Japan. His celebrity made him uncomfortable and he left Japan for the United States in search of a return to anonymity. His self-imposed exile afforded him an opportunity to write about Japan from the outside. In keeping with his personal fascination with people who drop out of society, he became one himself.

But in 1995, two national tragedies left Japan reeling in their wake. A devastating earthquake struck Murakami's childhood home of Kobe, the large-scale loss and destruction the likes of which he had never before seen. His parents survived, but their house did not. Following hard upon the heels of the earthquake, the Aum Shinrikyo cult bombed the busy Tokyo subway system at rush hour with poisonous sarin gas, killing 12 people and severely wounding over 50 others. Murakami realized that the time had come for him to return home. In a 2000 conversation with author Jonathan Lethem, Murakami describes the six stories in *after the quake* as

...having one theme: what happened in February 1995. There was an earthquake in Kobe in January 1995, a month before. And there was a Sarin gas attack in March 1995. So, February 1995 is sandwiched between the two incidents... And I think 1995 is a very critical year for my country. It was a turning point of our history. I was in the States when those things happened in 1995. I was in Cambridge, Mass. I heard that news and I thought, this is a time for me to come home. It's just like F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1929. He was in Europe when he heard news of the market crash.... and he thought, it's time for him to come home...

Murakami now resides in Tokyo. His worldwide popularity continues to grow—his work has been translated into over 30 languages. His literary investigations into the strange world of subconscious dreams and identity, and their intersection with reality, have found a mass audience hungry for his unique perspective. The 15th English language Murakami book, *After Dark*, had its U.S. release in May of 2007. His name has even been mentioned as a serious contender for the Nobel Prize for Literature. One hopeful website for a Japanese library convinced that he would win, overzealously reported that he had. But it may very well be only a matter of time until that does, in fact, happen.

Haruki Murakami's English publications:

After Dark
Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman
Kafka on the Shore
after the quake
Sputnik Sweetheart
Underground
The Wind-up Bird Chronicle
The Elephant Vanishes
South of the Border, West of the Sun
Dance Dance Dance
Norwegian Wood
Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World

BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE,
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BASED ON "HONEY PIE" AND "SUPERFROG SAVES TOKYO"
FROM THE NOVEL *after the quake* BY

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cast

(in order of appearance)

Narrator / Frog

Junpei

Sala

Sayoko / Nurse

Katagiri / Takatsuki

Cello

Koto

Keong Sim*

Hanson Tse*

Gemma Megumi Fa-kaji

Madison Logan V. Phan

Jennifer Shin*

Paul H. Juhn*

Jason Mcdermott

Jeff Wichmann

Scenic Design

Costume Design

Lighting Design

Sound Design &

Original Composition

Stage Manager

Casting

James Schuette

Mara Blumenfeld

James F. Ingalls

Andre Pluess

& Ben Sussman

Malcolm Ewen*

Erica Daniels

Amy Potozkin

* member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

Assistant Director

Marissa Wolf

Assistant Lighting Designer

Keith Parham

Assistant Sound Designer

Rick Sims

Music Arrangers

Andre Pluess

Jeff Wichmann

Jason McDermott

East Mirrors West: Comparing Historical Events

In *after the quake*, characters struggle with feelings of isolation and loss. Some critics believe that these feelings reflect a climate of national grief in Japan that followed two major tragedies: the 1995 Kobe earthquake and terrorist gas attack on Tokyo's subways.

Study the timeline below to learn more about events leading up to these tragedies and to gain an understanding of the challenges Japanese citizens have faced in recent years. In what ways might this timeline be similar to recent history in the United States? Use the column to the right, and brainstorm a list of events in America that parallel events in Japanese history. Begin with the earthquake that hit northern California in the late 1980s.

Japanese History:

1984

A citizen named Chizuo Matsumotohe starts a publishing house and yoga school to gather followers. He renames himself Shoko Asahara ("Bright Light") as the cult expands to include scientists who assist him in bioterrorist experiments.¹

1987

Asahara's cult gains recognition with the name Aum Shinrikyo ("Supreme Truth"). A mixture of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, the group's ideology is shaped by the prophecies of end times and the promise of salvation through following Asahara.²

1988

Labor Standards Law is revised, creating shorter work week for employees (from 6 to 5 work days).³

1990

Western critics use the word "bubble" to describe economic stagnation that they believe exists behind Japan's image of prosperity. They cite corruption and mismanagement of banks as a cause.⁴

1993

Asahara's cult spends millions of dollars to develop specific weapons like Sarin, a nerve gas known to Nazis in World War II.⁵

Jan 1995

Earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale decimates the port city of Kobe, while also damaging parts of Kyoto and Osaka. 6,433 citizens die, and 415, 000 are injured in the quake and its aftershocks.⁶

March 1995

Terrorists attack Tokyo subways, killing 12 and injuring thousands with Sarin gas.⁷

2000

Murakami publishes *after the quake*.⁸

2006

After years of claiming mental incompetence before a court, Asahara is sentenced to hang in 2007 for organizing the subway attack.⁹

U. S. History

1989

Dozens of lives are lost, hundreds of homes damaged in the Loma Loma Prieta quake that hits the Bay Area.

Earthquake Anxiety in Japan

"The Earthquake Man just keeps coming...."

--Sayoko from *after the quake*

Did you know...

Earthquakes in Japan are measured on the "shindo" scale, not the Richter. The scale includes levels 1 through 7, with 7 being the most severe.

The Richter scale is similar but measures damage through a magnitude of 8.

The worst quake Japan has experienced hit Tokyo in 1923 with a Richter measurement of 7.9.

Many people believe that the "Great One," or the worst earthquake in history, is yet to come and will probably, once again, strike Tokyo.

Those living in the heart of Tokyo feel earthquakes almost every week.

Intersection of three tectonic plates that cause geological disturbances is actually located far from Kobe, where the 1995 quake hit. Other major cities can be found in dangerous proximity to this instable region.

Part of an earthquake's power comes from not only the shifting of the ground's interior plates but also from sound (seismic) waves that come from this shifting.

Another way to measure quakes is the Modified Mercalli Scale. It measures intensity, which is subjective and based on survivor accounts. One reporter said that the Kobe quake made him think that the room he stood in was "made of jelly."

Study Questions: Pre-Show Discussion

As you prepare to visit Berkeley Repertory Theatre's production, we offer you these topics for consideration:

1. The play you are about to see includes references to a quake that struck Kobe, Japan in early 1995--an event characterized by destruction and loss of life in several major cities. On a similar note, the Loma Prieta earthquake that hit the Bay Area in 1989 and the arrival of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 are events that have tested Americans' abilities to deal with suffering and death. How does tragedy shape us as individuals, and in what ways do we approach life differently after they occur?
2. In the same year that the earthquake hit Japan, a bioterrorist attack occurred in the subways of Tokyo. Americans experienced a similar attack in 2001, as the World Trade Center was destroyed by terrorists. How do these assaults on metropolitan communities affect citizens' attitudes toward public life and daily activity?
3. An essential plot ingredient of *after the quake* is the love triangle that exists among three close friends and the loneliness that unfulfilled desire may cause. A common theme in literature and poetry is the notion of unrequited love, or love that is not returned by the object of someone's affection. Why does this theme continue to interest audiences?
4. In the past decade, tales about magic and fantastical creatures have become a major part of mainstream culture. The success of Peter Jackson's film adaptations of *Lord of the Rings* and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books are two examples of this trend. Even television shows are using the ideas of magic and heroism to communicate their stories to viewers (NBC's *Heroes* being the most obvious example). Why is there now such a large audience for this type of story?

5. Most stories address the archetypal hero's journey, where an ordinary individual is transformed by extraordinary events or asked to complete a difficult quest for the betterment of society. For example, a hero may be asked to climb an impenetrable mountain or find a hidden, magical object in order to discover answers to the world's problems (this idea is essential to the story of *Argonautika*, which opens at Berkeley Rep in November).

However, Murakami, the author of the stories upon which *this* play is based, often focuses on extraordinary individuals who are trapped by ordinary environs. In *after the quake* a loan officer named Katagiri spends every day at an office cubicle (but then has fantastical dreams and visions of rescuing the world and communicating with supernatural beings). Also, the play's protagonist, Junpei, is a writer who fears that he has disappointed his family with his career choice and avoids sharing his fears and dreams with even his closest friends.

Which story has more appeal to you as a student--the one with the ordinary hero beset by extraordinary events or the extraordinary hero who has a rich inner life of fantasy? Why?

Study Questions: Post-Show Discussion

After *after the quake*, we invite students to discuss the show with their peers, using the questions below as a guide. Each section below reflects a different lens through which the play may be seen.

I. Theatre Arts: Exploring the Subconscious Mind

1. Were you able to distinguish between the world of reality and the world of imagination in this production? How did the performers and designers help (or hinder) your ability to make the transition? To answer this question, brainstorm some details that helped you distinguish between the world of reality and the world of imagination in *after the quake*.

| What did you... | WORLD OF REALITY (Junpei's life) | WORLD OF IMAGINATION (Junpei's stories) |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| SEE | | |
| HEAR | | |
| FEEL | | |
| THINK | | |

2. The production you saw included the presence of live musicians onstage as well as pre-recorded effects to simulate events such as an earthquake. How does the music become a character in the story, and what emotional affect does it have on the viewer? (Note that the musicians are listed as members of the **cast**, not as members of an orchestra on page 4!)

3. How has a six foot tall amphibian character named Frog been conveyed through costume in this production? What might this choice of costume design represent about his character and even the play as a whole? When Katagiri expresses doubts about Frog's existence, what specific physical choices does the actor make to prove he is "real" and to bring this character to life for us as audience members?

Classroom Activity: Staging Student Short Stories

after the quake is a play based on a combination of short stories by Haruki Murakami. Complete the exercise below to explore your own dreams and thoughts.

Note: This exercise is suitable for grades 6-12. The exercise can be altered to meet the needs of a particular classroom. You can spend as much time on the short story portion as you feel will suit the needs of your classroom. The same is true of the scene writing portion of the exercise. Have fun!

Part A: Drawing from the Subconscious

Step 1: Take out a blank piece of paper and pencil. Put the point of the pencil on the page. Without letting the pencil come off the page, scribble as many lines as you can for one full minute. Fill the entire page. Don't worry about creating anything--just keep scribbling without stopping!

Step 2: Look at your page of lines and scribbles. Imagine that the shapes of three animals or objects are within the scribbling. Having trouble? Turn the paper on its side or upside down. Keep looking until you find three things. Outline each object with heavier pencil marking.

Step 3: Choose the object or animal you like most, and put a star next to it. Choose the object or animal you like second most and put two stars next to it, and then put three stars by the third.

Part B: Character Profile

Step 1: Choose a name for the first object or animal you have chosen. Fictionalize the object by completing the profile below:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Name _____ | Goal(s) _____ |
| Age _____ | Fear(s) _____ |
| Habitat _____ | Secret(s) _____ |

Step 2: Once this is completed: do the same for the second object or animal.

Step 3: Write a brief story of the first time these two characters met. Have them meet in a location that is logical and in accordance with their profiles. Draw on the characters wants and fears. Create obstacles for them to overcome. The story must have conflict.

Step 4: Read these stories with a partner.

Part C: Playwriting

Step 1: Create a scene! Using the suggested format shown below, describe a conflict that unfolds between your characters, keeping their secrets and fears in mind. Perhaps the story has more than one scene. Each scene will include the following information:

Time: *When does the scene take place?*

Place: *Where does the scene take place?*

At Rise: *What does the audience see when the curtain raises or the lights go up?*

EXAMPLE:

Time: 11:40 pm October 31, 2007

Place: a graveyard behind the Old Stone Church

At Rise: We see a dark old graveyard with bare trees and tombstones. We hear the wind blowing. Cane the Turtle stirs a caldron over a small fire. He is chanting to himself. Brunhilda the Heart enters shivering.

BRUNHILDA

I'm sooooo cold. Can I warm myself beside your fire?

CANE (startled)

Be gone Witch!!!! Do not come near me???

BRUNHILDA

I'm not a witch. I'm just a lonely Heart out on a cold night. What are you so scared of?

CANE

I'm not scared of anything, except...

BRUNHILDA

Except what?

Step 2: If the story has more than 2 cast members, write a profile for additional characters.

Step 3: Read these scenes of dialogue with a partner.

Step 4: Stage these scenes and perform them for your class!

Current Events/Social Science: Tragedy and the Media

1. Use the internet to research the Kobe earthquake of 1995. Frog tells Katagiri that a bigger earthquake is coming, one where the "number of dead . . . would probably exceed a hundred and fifty thousand." Why did Murakami create a character that is capable of prophecy? How might this explain our own phobia of natural disasters?

2. After Sayoko explains that her daughter suffers from nightmares about the Earthquake Man, Junpei tells Sayoko, "Try not to watch the news. Don't even turn on the TV. The earthquake's all they're showing these days." Like the citizens of Japan, Americans spent many hours viewing tragic events, such as the wreckage from the 9/11 attack and the hurricane flooding of New Orleans in 2005. Is media coverage of this extent necessary to understand tragic events? When, if ever, does it become counterproductive?

Character Psychology:

1. Editors at the National Institute of Mental Health website have described the condition known as Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome with the following symptoms:

"People with PTSD have persistent frightening thoughts and memories of their ordeal and feel emotionally numb, especially with people they were once close to. They may experience sleep problems, feel detached or numb, or be easily startled."
(nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml)

Based on the above description, which characters in this play do you believe have suffered from this condition due to destruction caused by the quake?

2. Murakami told a reporter at the *Japan Times*, "[I]n the daily world, people point fingers at other people: It's the Arabs or the Chinese, etc. Worm is a symbol of the evil inside us. It's not an outer thing, like al-Qaeda or Aum or the Russians. It's just the evil within." (search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20021201a4.html)

What examples from the production do we have of external conflict, and where do we see characters struggle with problems that are internal in nature?

3. In her published comments to the Chicago audience who first experienced *after the quake*, Martha Lavey, Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre Company, observes,

"In the case of a public and shared quake, we gain a collective reference point for what becomes our individual and private aftershock. In the more metaphorical key, we acknowledge the eruption of our personal ground as a shared human experience: to experience an earthquake is an archetypal human experience."
(steppenwolf.org/backstage/article.aspx?id=110)

Describe Junpei's own personal "quake" and what it prompts him to do at the play's conclusion.

Literary Analysis:

Key terms: frame, foil, theme, symbol, irony

1. In the adaptation of Murakami's short stories, Frank Galati has woven two separate tales from the short story collection into a cohesive whole, crafting a "story within a story," or a frame. In what ways is the frame story of *after the quake* a helpful device? On the other hand, how does this structure challenge us as readers and audience members?

2. The characters of Junpei, an English scholar and writer, and Takatsuki, a former soccer player, are complete opposites (foils) but still consider the other his best friend. Are such friendships able to withstand the test of time, or do our differences eventually cause separation? How realistic is the cliché of "opposites attract"?

3. Frog says, "I feel no personal animosity toward Worm. I don't see him as the embodiment of evil. Not that I would want to be his friend either: I just think that, as far as the world is concerned, it is in a sense *all right* for a being like him to exist." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? In what way might the trauma of the earthquake have affected Frog's view of evil? How might these words reflect the overall theme of Murakami's stories?

4. Sala's nightmare includes the character Earthquake Man and his box, which she says is "waiting with the lid open." What do you think "the box" symbolizes?

5. Junpei describes Katagiri's job at the bank in these words: "As a member of the Trust Bank Lending Division, Katagiri had fought his way through many a battle. He had weathered sixteen years of daily combat since the day he graduated from the University." What is ironic about the writer's choice of words in this context?

Journal Exercise:

Choose a routine activity from your own life, and describe it using dramatic action verbs and nouns similar to the ones in the passage above ("fought, weathered, battle, combat"). How does this affect your attitude toward the activity?

Endnotes, Sources for "East Mirrors West" Worksheet

¹"Chemical Terrorism in Japan: The Matsumoto and Tokyo Incidents." Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Adapted from the World Health Organization. Dec. 2001. opcw.org/resp/html/japan.html.

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⁸ Rabb, Jefferson, ed. "Haruki Murakami." randomhouse.com/features/murakami/site.php.

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Berkeley Rep School of Theatre

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