

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Performance dates/times:

Venue:

THE HARRY BRIDGES PROJECT

*Celebrating the legacies of extraordinary
leaders and social visionaries*
presents



"From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks"

LOS ANGELES – Actor-playwright Ian Ruskin portrays the legendary union organizer Harry Bridges, capturing his passion, struggles and wicked sense of humor in the one-man play, "From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks".

This vivid dramatization brings to life the San Francisco labor leader who organized the poorly paid and greatly abused dock workers – self-proclaimed "wharf rats" -- on San Francisco's piers. Bridges' ultimately successful effort to organize these workers was fraught with violence and personal consequences; he was frequently harassed, beaten and jailed. He had three wives, two bitter divorces and his time of too much Jack Daniels. Today he stands as a hero for organized labor throughout the world.

Written and performed by Ian Ruskin, the play features Harry Bridges' own words, from his rallying speeches of the 1930s to his electrifying testimony at his own trials, plus eye-witness accounts in the words of his contemporaries.

"Harry Bridges is one of the most important labor leaders of the 20th century and Ian Ruskin has captured him in his one-man show-- his persona, his ideas -- brilliantly. There were times when I forgot this was someone other than Harry Bridges speaking. It is a valuable piece of working-class history, presented colorfully and intelligently."

Howard Zinn, Historian, Playwright and Social Activist

"From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks" has been performed at union halls, colleges and universities, conferences, theaters and wherever men and women, students and workers gather to learn about American leaders such as Harry Bridges who dared take a stand for justice, dignity and improved working conditions for workers. The play had its world premiere at the **University of Washington Summer Arts Festival** in 2001.

"It was wonderful to meet Harry Bridges through your splendid performance as part of the University of Washington's Summer Arts Festival...The work is excellent and important...our children and students need to learn about the past struggles in our country..." Sarah Nash Gates, Ex. Director, School of Drama, University of Washington.

Actor-playwright Ian Ruskin has performed *From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks* more than 200 times to approximately 50,000 people in high schools, universities, union conventions, museums, libraries, citizens' groups and theatres. He has performed across America and in Canada, Hawaii, England and Australia. The film version of a live performance, directed by Academy Award winner Haskell Wexler, has aired across America on PBS for the past 3 years, making it available to 150 million Americans.

Ian Ruskin trained as an actor in London at the **Royal Academy of Dramatic Art**, and then worked for the next 15 years in England in repertory companies, London's West End, and in television and film.

Highlights included working in the Laurence Olivier "King Lear" for Granada Television, playing Jack in "Jack the Ripper" at the Players Theatre, London and performing the one-man play "The Man Himself", written by Alan Drury, at the Duke's Playhouse, Lancaster, the Soho Poly in London and at Stages Theater in Hollywood, where it was Critics Choice in the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly and other magazines.



Arriving in Los Angeles in 1985, Ian took on guest star roles, usually playing the intelligent bad guy, in shows such as "Murder She Wrote", "Scarecrow and Mrs. King" and "MacGyver". While this work paid the rent, it did not in any way fulfill his dream as a student at RADA – to be involved in work that would affect an audience. As a young actor he had performed in great classical plays and in the works of the most exciting new playwrights, in plays that could not only move audiences but also give them something to reflect on as they went home. This was not happening on the sound stage of "MacGyver"...then he discovered Harry Bridges.

Bridges as international figure

Australian born Bridges was a labor leader and social campaigner whose impact on the fabric of American life during the 20th century was profound and far-reaching. His passion for Jack London novels brought him to San Francisco as a 19 year old, where he went from public enemy number one to elder statesman. From 1930 until the early 1970s he was a national and international figure. He knew Charlie Chaplin, Paul Robeson, Billie Holiday, Pete Seeger and Orson Welles and when Nelson Mandela visited America, Bridges was the first man he thanked for his stands against Apartheid. The ILWU has a long history of international solidarity and the issues for which he campaigned during those five decades – including the fight against prejudice and discrimination and endless government surveillance, the fight for rank-and-file democracy in unions, social security, a national health system, and an end to unjust wars – are still as relevant, important and challenging today as they were when Bridges began working on the San Francisco waterfront. Bridges personal life was as vivid and compelling as his public life. Two of his marriages ended in bitter divorces but a third, to a Japanese-American, changed the anti- miscegenation laws of western states. He had his "Hollywood era", with star-studded fundraisers for his trials. He was always, in his own words, a "working stiff", but also a man who met with Presidents and toured Europe as a hero. A man with a Marxist philosophy who spent 21 years fighting to become an American citizen, Bridges' commitment to the achievement of workers' rights and social justice, continues to impact our lives in the 21st century.

The Harry Bridges Project

The Harry Bridges Project is dedicated to introducing the public to the life and ideas of Harry Bridges and other social visionaries and their impact on our lives today. Bridges was an extraordinary labor leader whose life and work encompassed all of the important issues and events of his day, including immigration, depression-era policies, red-scares, McCarthyism,



the cold-war and labor issues. His story provides a springboard into understanding these times and realizing their significance today, as we face parallel issues of globalization, the growing gap between rich and poor, increasing governmental surveillance and the war on terror. His life inspires people to come together, discover their own history and take charge of their own lives by engaging in dialogue and debate about these issues in order to move beyond the fears and limitations such issues can create.

For more information about the play, go to:

www.ianruskin.org

www.theharrybridgesproject.org

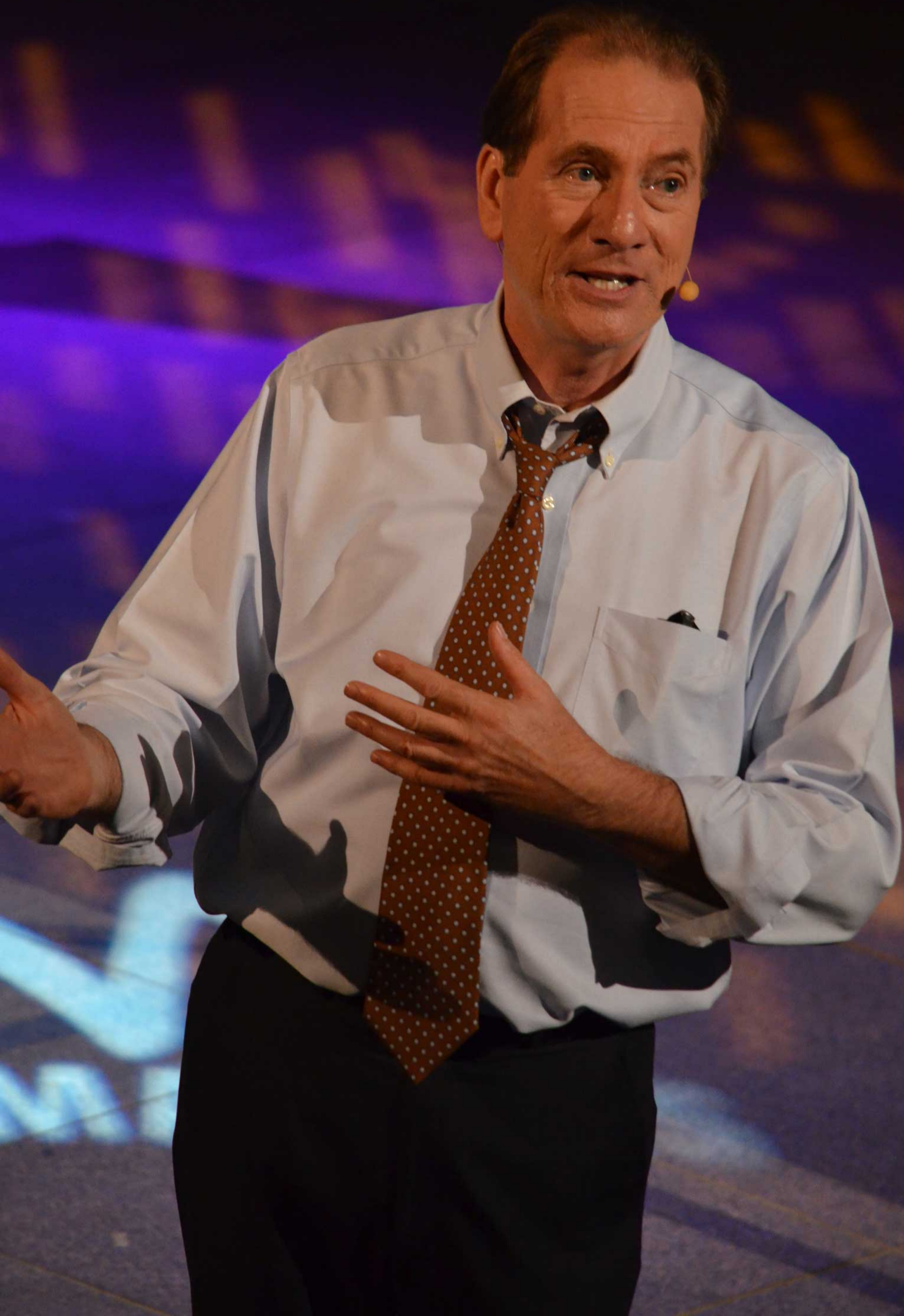
www.youtube.com/harrybridgesproject



Created with the generous support of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission












A black and white photograph of a group of men standing in a line, holding a long banner. The banner contains the text "AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL". The men are dressed in suits and coats, and some are wearing hats. They are standing in front of a building with large windows. The banner is held by several men, and the text is printed in large, bold, capital letters. The men are looking towards the camera, and the overall scene suggests a public demonstration or protest.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL