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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES ITS COURAGEOUS & MELODIC 2006/07 SEASON

Tony Award-winning theatre presents another fearless season including the world premieres of *Passing Strange* and *To the Lighthouse*, the West Coast premiere of Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, a timely *Mother Courage* directed by Lisa Peterson with a new score from Gina Leishman, the hilarious *All Wear Bowlers*, and Tanya Barfield's *The Blue Door* directed by Delroy Lindo

APRIL 5, 2006 – Today **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, announced six of the seven shows slated for the Tony Award-winning theatre's 39th season. In a fearless selection of plays characteristic of Berkeley Rep, the season takes flight with a fresh look at a timely masterpiece and then soars into an audacious display of new work, including two world premieres, one West Coast premiere, and two regional premieres. This year, Berkeley Rep isn't just presenting new work – it's also introducing a new way for theatre-lovers to ensure they get seats to the shows they want to see. In addition to the usual five- and seven-play packages, Berkeley Rep's patrons may now design their own subscriptions by choosing the dates and times of any three or more shows they wish to attend. This entire theatrical adventure is proudly supported by **Wells Fargo**, the official sponsor of Berkeley Rep's 2006/07 Season.

Taccone's tenth season as artistic director begins with **David Hare's** brilliant adaptation of **Bertolt Brecht's** pacifist masterpiece, ***Mother Courage***. Staged by Obie Award-winning director **Lisa Peterson**, this vivid production features an invigorating new score from inspired composer **Gina Leishman**. And, just as Berkeley Rep's *Courage* blends brains with burlesque, both of the season's world premieres mix text with music in exhilarating ways: ***Passing Strange*** is an exuberant stage show about an African American's search for authenticity by **Stew**, the provocative musician who made his name with a band called The Negro Problem; ***To the Lighthouse*** is an ambitious adaptation of **Virginia Woolf's** visionary novel, a captivating collaboration from Obie-winning director **Les Waters**, acclaimed composer **Paul Dresher**, and accomplished playwright **Adele Edling Shank**. Waters, Berkeley Rep's associate artistic director, also stages the West Coast premiere of ***The Pillowman***, the latest shocking script from Oscar- and Tony Award-winner **Martin McDonagh** that mesmerized audiences during its recent Broadway run. To round out the season, popular actor **Delroy Lindo** directs **Tanya Barfield's**

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breathtaking new play *The Blue Door*, which wrests an African-American academic out of his ivory tower, while the holidays bring a special treat: *All Wear Bowlers*, a hilarious vaudeville dream that's left a trail of laughter across four continents. The final show of the season – which will complement and complete this daring collection of work – will be announced at a later date.

"I feel that no other theatre in America could present this combination of work," **Taccone remarks**. "We're Berkeley Repertory Theatre, which means we have an opportunity – and therefore an obligation – to present a selection of work that speaks to our community and represents that community to the world at large. We open our doors to as many artists and audiences as possible, and we're committed to making Berkeley Rep a comfort zone for as many different people as we can. I'm proud to continue our tradition of presenting an array of the best new voices in American theatre as well as investigating great plays from the past."

"Berkeley Rep has organized a fantastic line-up of entertaining and thought-provoking performances that promises to please audiences," says Wells Fargo's Greater Bay Area Regional President **Mike Billeci**. "Wells Fargo is proud once again to serve as the official sponsor of Berkeley Rep's theatre season."

The Main Season opens in September in the Roda Theatre with a timeless play, *Mother Courage*. A religious war ravages the civilized world, killing soldiers and civilians with no end in sight. Plodding along in its wake is an itinerant peddler, shadowing the destruction and selling supplies to whichever side will grease her palm. **Bertolt Brecht** penned his anti-war epic as the Nazi war-machine rolled through Poland, yet its prescient lessons and surprising humor are equally relevant today. There are no easy answers in this riveting tale of struggle and survival, but *Mother Courage* engages both our emotions and our minds in a production that resonates for our times. Co-produced with La Jolla Playhouse, *Mother Courage* is directed by Obie-winner **Lisa Peterson**. The show's stirring songs are set to a spectacular new score from **Gina Leishman**, who taps into her extensive experience creating music for theatre, opera, film, and the Mr. Wau-Wa band, a quintet dedicated to Brecht's songs. This production relies on the unadulterated translation by **David Hare**, one of the world's most prolific and respected playwrights, whose work ranges all the way from *Slag* in 1970 to his current international hit, *Stuff Happens*. Don't miss this incredible barrage of talent.

In October, the season continues on the Thrust Stage with a world premiere by **Stew**, the singer/songwriter from **The Negro Problem** who now garners rave reviews for his solo recordings. His

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songs have won numerous accolades for their hook-filled melodies, taut poetic narratives, incisive portraits, and sardonic sense of humor. The *New York Times* called one of his recent releases "perhaps the finest collection of songs an American songwriter has come up with this year," while the *Los Angeles Times* exclaimed that his music is "gorgeous, deeply felt, wildly sophisticated, and at times hilarious." Stew's unique sound has been dubbed Afro-Baroque cabaret, and *Entertainment Weekly* has twice named his CDs Album of the Year. Now he brings his songs to the stage in ***Passing Strange***, a new play commissioned by Berkeley Rep and The Public Theatre. Developed at the Sundance Theatre Lab and making its world premiere in Berkeley, the show takes us from black, middle-class America to Amsterdam, Berlin, and beyond. It's loaded with soulful lyrics, packed with political irony, and overflowing with passion. Stew wrote the book and lyrics for *Passing Strange*, composing the music with his longtime creative partner, **Heidi Rodewald**. The pair conceived the show along with its director, **Annie Dorsen**. A co-production between Berkeley Rep and The Public, *Passing Strange* will transfer to New York in the spring of 2007.

For the holidays, Berkeley Rep presents a limited engagement of ***All Wear Bowlers***, created and performed by **Geoff Sobelle** and **Trey Lyford**. These clowns may come from the era of silent films, but they've left audiences laughing out loud in Asia, Australia, Europe, and the United States. See what happens when they tumble out of their movie and into a wacky world without gravity. It's an uproarious, family-friendly romp, which the *New York Times* dubbed "the most funny and original show this year." **David Shiner** and **Geoff Hoyle**, two renowned new vaudevillians, mentored the pair during development of this piece. "A singularly inventive and surreal vaudeville act," raves the *Times*. "Imagine Laurel and Hardy stuck in a Magritte painting... The show features a constant parade of classic slapstick, elegant pratfalls, and rigorous sleight of hand." Staged by **Aleksandra Wolska**, who earned her doctorate in drama at nearby Stanford University, *All Wear Bowlers* opens in Berkeley Rep's Roda Theatre on the day after Thanksgiving and runs until Christmas Eve.

January brings an Oscar- and Tony-winning writer, an Obie-winning director, and a play the *New York Times* called "a spellbinding stunner"... Get ready for an edgy and enthralling evening when **Les Waters** tackles the latest play from **Martin McDonagh**, author of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and *Six Shooter*. ***The Pillowman*** is a darkly funny thriller where "the laughs trail into gulps and gasps," a mystery where "whodunit" is the least of your concerns. "The audience, too, wants to know where the stories lead," the *New Yorker* asserts, "even as it suspects that with

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every twist the plot will become more gruesome.” McDonagh won England’s prestigious Olivier Award for this script, and the *New Yorker* also notes the astonishing fact that he is the “first dramatist since Shakespeare to have four works professionally produced on the London stage in a single season.” With *The Pillowman*, Waters continues his chilling journey through the genre of ghost stories: *Time Out New York* named his off-Broadway presentation of Anne Washburn’s *Apparition* one of the Best 5 Plays of 2005, and local audiences won’t soon forget his productions of Sarah Ruhl’s beautiful *Eurydice* or Jordan Harrison’s eerie *Finn in the Underworld*, both of which also played on Berkeley Rep’s intimate Thrust Stage.

Waters directs the season’s next offering as well, a limited engagement of ***To the Lighthouse***, receiving its world premiere this February in the Roda Theatre. **Virginia Woolf’s** virtuosity poured forth in revolutionary novels which burst the boundaries of prose in her quest to reveal the inner lives of women. Now playwright **Adele Edling Shank** follows in her footsteps with her enchanting adaptation of Woolf’s masterwork. Waters combines Shank’s script with soaring, original music from celebrated composer, **Paul Dresher**, to create a profound reflection on love, family, and the inexorable tide of time. Dresher has applied his signature style to collaborations with diverse artists such as choreographer Margaret Jenkins, playwright Charles Mee, director Robert Woodruff, and poet June Jordan. Berkeley Rep commissioned the score for this show, building on Dresher’s previous achievements at the Theatre such as *Dream of a Common Language* and *Ravenshead*. *To the Lighthouse* illuminates the life of a house – where a couple live, argue, love, and endure; where children play, cry, and grow up; where a woman paints. She paints the sea. She paints the lighthouse. And, finally, she paints the stage. Waters initiated this project at Berkeley Rep, and in Woolf’s words from Chapter VI, “Who will blame him if he does homage to the beauty of the world?”

Lastly, **Delroy Lindo** came to prominence with Broadway performances in *Master Harold and the Boys* and *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*. He reinforced his reputation with major roles in films such as *The Cider House Rules*, *Get Shorty*, and *Malcolm X*. Now Lindo directs ***The Blue Door***, a powerful new play from promising young writer **Tanya Barfield** on Berkeley Rep’s Thrust Stage. Barfield won the Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights, and *Ms. Magazine* recently named her “One of the 21 Young Women to Watch in the 21st Century.” Filled with dynamic characters and vibrant music, Barfield’s *Blue Door* is a searing and soul-searching examination of family and identity. A mathematics professor, sleepless during a night of personal and professional crisis, is visited by his African-American ancestors. Four generations – from the

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antebellum era to the Black Panthers – challenge him with their compelling stories, until he starts to understand what it means to be black. Two centuries of tales, which this ivory-tower academic could never find in his beloved books, come alive... Exceptional writing, sharp acting, and deft direction all enter through *The Blue Door* in April 2007.

Theatre-lovers can guarantee their seats for these shows by subscribing to Berkeley Rep. **Season subscriptions** are on sale now: the Full Season package includes tickets to all seven shows and the five-play package includes all the Main Season productions (*Mother Courage*, *Passing Strange*, *The Pillowman*, *The Blue Door*, and one play yet to be named). Full- and Main-Season subscribers receive the best seats and the lowest prices. It's also possible to "choose your own" subscription of three or more plays: not only do you get to select the shows you want to see, you can pick which performances to attend. With every package, subscribers receive valuable benefits such as discounts when purchasing additional tickets for guests, the right to reschedule for free over the phone, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events like last year's presentation of Sarah Jones' *Bridge & Tunnel* and the upcoming *Ennio*. Berkeley Rep also offers generous discounts for employees of K-12 schools, theatregoers under 30, and senior citizens. Subscriptions begin as low as \$120 – and subscribers save up to 33% on every ticket! Tickets to individual shows in the 2006/07 Season go on sale in August.

For more information, visit berkeleyrep.org or call the box office at 510.647.2949 or toll-free at 1.888.4.BRT.Tix. Berkeley Rep's box office is open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 7:00 PM. It is located at 2025 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA 94704, only half a block from Berkeley's Downtown BART station and close to AC Transit bus lines. The Thrust Stage is at the same address; the Roda Theatre is immediately next door at 2015 Addison. Both theatres are accessible to the handicapped, offering wheelchair seating and special services for those with hearing- or vision-impairment.

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Founded in 1968, the Tony Award-winning **Berkeley Repertory Theatre** has established a national reputation for its ambitious programming and dynamic productions. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Tony Taccone and Managing Director Susan Medak, Berkeley Rep seeks to engage its audience in an ongoing dialogue of ideas. Through its bold choice of material and vivid style of production, Berkeley Rep reflects a commitment to diversity, excitement, and quality. The company is especially well known for its presentations of important new dramatic voices and its fresh adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In 2001, Berkeley Rep opened the Roda Theatre, a 600-seat proscenium theatre that complements the 400-seat Thrust Stage, and the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, housed in the Nevo Education Center. The addition of these two buildings has transformed what was once a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex.

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BERKELEY REP'S 2006/07 SEASON
FACT SHEET

Main Season Play #1 – The Roda Theatre

Mother Courage

Written by Bertolt Brecht

Translated by David Hare

Original score by Gina Leishman

Directed by Lisa Peterson

September 8 – October 22, 2006 (Press Night: Wednesday, September 13)

Main Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage

Passing Strange – World Premiere

Book and lyrics by Stew

Music by Stew and Heidi Rodewald

Directed by and created in collaboration with Annie Dorsen

October 20 – December 3, 2006 (Press Night: Wednesday, October 25)

Limited Season Play #1 – The Roda Theatre

All Wear Bowlers

Created and performed by Geoff Sobelle and Trey Lyford

Directed by Aleksandra Wolska

November 24 – December 24, 2006 (Press Night: Wednesday, November 29)

Main Season Play #3 – Thrust Stage

The Pillowman – West Coast Premiere

Written by Martin McDonagh

Directed by Les Waters

January 12 – February 25, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, January 17)

Limited Season Play #2 – The Roda Theatre

To the Lighthouse – World Premiere

Written by Adele Edling Shank

Adapted from the novel by Virginia Woolf

Original score by Paul Drescher

Directed by Les Waters

February 23 – March 25, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, February 28)

Main Season Play #4 – Thrust Stage

The Blue Door

Written by Tanya Barfield

Directed by Delroy Lindo

April 6 – May 20, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, April 11)

Main Season Play #5 – The Roda Theatre

TO BE ANNOUNCED

May 11 – June 24, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, May 16)

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