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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES *OLIVER TWIST* AS SEVENTH SHOW FOR 06/07

An astonishing new *Twist* from London's Neil Bartlett is latest premiere in powerful season

MAY 29, 2006 – Today **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of the Tony Award-winning Berkeley Repertory Theatre, revealed the show he's selected to close the company's 39th season: the West Coast premiere of **Neil Bartlett's** *Oliver Twist* will be presented in the Roda Theatre from May 11 to June 24, 2007. A new adaptation of the **Charles Dickens** novel from one of Britain's most innovative theatre artists, the play was a runaway hit in London. This is an astonishing new *Twist* in a season already full of surprises – from a fresh look at a timely masterpiece to an audacious display of new work that now includes two world premieres, two West Coast premieres, and two regional premieres. *Oliver Twist* will be produced in association with Theatre for a New Audience and American Repertory Theatre, where it makes its U.S. premiere in February. Wells Fargo is the official sponsor of Berkeley Rep's 2006/07 Season.

"We feel it is part of our mission to bring Bay Area audiences the finest theatre from around the world, and this continues that tradition," **Taccone remarks**. "Just as we're concluding our current season with an exceptional production of *The Miser*, we'll proudly end next season with the exquisite *Oliver Twist*. I'm thrilled to bring our audience a show of such rare achievement."

Inspired by the vivid world of the Victorian music-hall, Neil Bartlett's staging of **OLIVER TWIST** uses the original language of Dickens' novel to dramatize one of the most deeply felt stories ever written about childhood. A cast of unforgettable characters brings the underworld of 19th-century London to thrilling life – a city teeming with danger and fear – all seen through the eyes of a bewildered child. By turns comic and tragic, musical and dramatic, Bartlett's *Twist* took London by storm. "**Are you one of those people who can't bear the fake Cockney jauntiness of *Oliver!*?**" asks the *London Independent*. "If so help is at hand... Neil Bartlett's *Oliver Twist* is richly satisfying. Unlike its hero, you aren't left asking for more." And the *Daily Telegraph* exclaims this is "Dickens in all his dark, gaudy glory... **I really can't recommend this show too highly**. A great novel has been transformed into truly stunning theatre." Berkeley Rep is proud to present the West Coast debut of this sensational play.

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An acclaimed director, performer, playwright, and novelist, **Neil Bartlett** came to prominence in the 1980s as a founding member of Gloria Theatre, which co-produced spectacular shows such as *Berenice* and *Sarrasine* with renowned institutions like the National Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Royal Court Theatre, and Théâtre de Complicité. From 1994 to 2004, he served as artistic director of the Lyric Hammersmith and established its reputation as one of London's most adventurous and beloved theatres. While there, Bartlett repeatedly shone new light on rare theatrical gems, such as Kleist's *Prince of Homburg* and Marivaux's *La Dispute*, both award-winning co-productions with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The Lyric also produced his English-language premiere of Genet's *Splendid's*. Bartlett's translations and adaptations – encompassing works by Dumas, Molière, Racine, and Wilde – have been performed and applauded around the world, including in the U.S. at Chicago's Goodman Theater and at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. His original plays include *Night After Night* and *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep*. He also penned three novels: *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall*, *Who Was that Man?*, and *Mr. Clive and Mr. Page*, which was published in the U.S. as *The House on Brooke Street* and short-listed for the prestigious Whitbread Prize.

A master of prose, a comic genius, and a scathing social critic, **Charles Dickens** (1812-1870) is ranked among the greatest novelists of all time. His prodigious output included the books *Bleak House*, *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times*, *Pickwick Papers*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The natural theatricality of his writing has inspired famous stage adaptations of many Dickens novels, including *Great Expectations* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Don't miss this remarkable new look at *Oliver Twist*.

Appropriately enough, the show features a set straight out of Dickensian London. As the *Telegraph* notes, "**Rae Smith's design** of a filthy room, in which almost all the action takes place, is based on the penny-dreadful machines once found on piers and in amusement arcades, glass-fronted boxes in which you inserted a coin and tableaux of ghastly murders and ghostly hauntings twitched into life." This *Twisted* set is Smith's ninth collaboration with Bartlett. A celebrated scenic artist, she has designed classical, modern, and experimental work at theatres throughout Europe, including the Royal Court and Royal Shakespeare Company. In the U.S., her design credits include *The Weir* on Broadway, *The Street of Crocodiles* at Lincoln Center, *Juno and the Paycock* at Roundabout Theatre, and two works for the Spoleto Festival: *Dinner with Jacob's Pillow* and *The Visit* with Théâtre de Complicité.

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Oliver Twist is the topper on a fearless selection of plays characteristic of Berkeley Rep. Taccone's tenth season as artistic director also includes the following six shows:

- **David Hare's** brilliant adaptation of **Bertolt Brecht's** pacifist masterpiece, ***MOTHER COURAGE***, staged by Obie Award-winning director **Lisa Peterson** and featuring an invigorating new score from inspired composer **Gina Leishman** (09/08 – 10/22/06)
- The world premiere of ***PASSING STRANGE***, an exuberant stage show about an African American's search for authenticity from **Stew**, the provocative musician who made his name with a band called The Negro Problem (10/20 – 12/03/06)
- ***ALL WEAR BOWLERS***, a hilarious vaudeville show that's been a hit on four continents, created and performed by **Geoff Sobelle** and **Trey Lyford** (11/24 – 12/24/06)
- The West Coast premiere of ***THE PILLOWMAN***, the latest shocking script from Oscar- and Tony Award-winner **Martin McDonagh**, which mesmerized audiences during its recent London and Broadway runs (01/12 – 02/25/07)
- The world premiere of ***TO THE LIGHTHOUSE***, a captivating collaboration by Obie-winning director **Les Waters**, acclaimed composer **Paul Dresher**, and accomplished playwright **Adele Edling Shank** in an ambitious adaptation of **Virginia Woolf's** visionary novel (02/23 – 03/25/07)
- **Tanya Barfield's** breathtaking new play ***THE BLUE DOOR***, which wrests an African-American academic out of his ivory tower, directed by popular actor **Delroy Lindo** (04/06 – 05/20/07)

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 *Oliver Twist*). 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 this summer's *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.

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For more information, visit berkeleyrep.org or just 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 Dresher

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

Oliver Twist – West Coast Premiere

Based on the novel by Charles Dickens

Adapted and directed by Neil Bartlett

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

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