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BERKELEY REP'S BACKSTAGE BASH ROCKS THE RODA & RAISES \$25,000

The public partied with the artists all night long – right on Berkeley Rep's stage

JANUARY 22, 2005 – Last night, more than 200 local theatre lovers lived it up onstage at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. At Berkeley Rep's Backstage Bash, the audience found itself on the other side of the footlights – dining, drinking, and dancing with the stars. A benefit for the Tony Award-winning Theatre, this new event raised an impressive \$25,000 in its first year. All proceeds from the Backstage Bash support Berkeley Rep's mission to set a national standard for ambitious programming, engagement of its audiences, and leadership within the community.

"I'm so pleased by the success of this new event," said **Susan Medak**, managing director of Berkeley Rep, "and clearly I wasn't the only one having a good time. Our patrons loved being on stage for a change, and our artists really enjoyed meeting familiar faces from the audience in a more intimate setting. Everyone kept saying that it's this sense of family that keeps people coming back to Berkeley Rep year after year.

"I truly appreciate that these 200 people recognize it takes more than the price of a ticket to put shows on our stage," she continued. "As a nonprofit, we rely on income from events like this to continue bringing world-class theatre to the Bay Area."

At the Backstage Bash, more than 20 popular performers, designers, and backstage pros partied with the public. Guests mingled over dinner, mixed at the bar, and moved on the dance floor alongside actors from the Theatre's recent hits, including **Rita Moreno**, **Owen Murphy**, and **Michael Wiles** of *Master Class*; **Julie Eccles**, **Sharon Lockwood**, **Jarion Monroe**, and **Barbara Oliver** of *Our Town*; **Velina Brown**, **James Carpenter**, and **Robert Ernst** of *The People's Temple*; **Aimée Guillot** and **Charles Shaw Robinson** of *Eurydice*; and **Lorri Holt**, **Richard Rossi**, **Danny Scheie**, and **Melissa Smith** of *Continental Divide*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *Finn in the Underworld*, and *Galileo*.

Living up to its name, the Backstage Bash also introduced patrons to several behind-the-scenes experts, such as Associate Artistic Director **Les Waters**, Casting Director **Amy Potozkin**, Stage Manager **Kimberly Mark Webb**, Costume Director **Maggi Oakley**, and two costume designers: **Meg Neville** and **Lydia Tanji**.

Guests at the Backstage Bash enjoyed a marvelous meal from Grace Street Catering, with a Berkeley Rep artist seated at every table. Following dinner, the party continued with wine-tasting, a silent auction, and dancing deep into the night to live music from the Dick Bright Orchestra.

Sponsors of the event included favorite local businesses such as Café Clem, Elke Vineyards, Gelateria Naia, Grove Street Winery, Jazzcafé, Jutta's Flowers, La Note, Liaison Bistro, Lulu Rae Confections, Raymond Vineyard & Cellar, Ristorante Raphael, and Semifreddi's.

The **auction** featured items donated by elite retailers from the East Bay and beyond. Lots included fine jewelry from Christensen Heller Gallery, designer clothes from Lilith Boutique and **Margaret O'Leary**, rare artwork from artists such as **David Goines**, spa treatments at resorts like

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Bellissima Day Spa, exclusive accommodations at the Claremont Hotel and local B&Bs, fine dining at Shen Hua and other area restaurants, culinary treats from Acme Bread Company and Wine Thieves, and personal visits to the on-air studios of KCSM-FM and KTVU-TV.

Some lucky bidders even won special treats such as lunch with Mayor **Tom Bates**, a private tour of the State Capitol with Assemblywoman **Loni Hancock**, dinner at the firehouse courtesy of the Berkeley Fire Fighters Association, and the opportunity to be stage-manager-for-a-day at Berkeley Rep.

"I am so grateful to all of the sponsors and donors who helped us create such a remarkable evening," Medak concluded. "If you missed it this year, mark your calendars now for next January. We want to see you in the spotlight at Berkeley Rep's Backstage Bash!"

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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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