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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**EIGHT CELEBRITY CHEFS SELECTED FOR BERKELEY REP'S NARSAI TOAST**

**Connoisseurs of fine wine and cuisine feast at annual gourmet gala on April 28**

MARCH 13, 2006 – Today, Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced the celebrity chefs selected for the all-star kitchen at its 14<sup>th</sup> annual Narsai Toast, the gourmet gala and wine auction benefiting this Tony Award-winning theatre. On Friday, April 28, eight hot chefs from San Francisco's top restaurants will thrill the palates of culinary connoisseurs during this exclusive event at the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco. Beginning with a champagne reception and wine auction at 6:00 PM, the event features a gourmet dinner and live auction at 7:30 PM with a secret musical treat for dessert.

**Narsai M. David**, the local gourmand who has hosted the event for 14 years, proudly announced this year's honored chefs: **Bridget Batson** and **David Gingrass** of Hawthorne Lane; **Stuart Brioza** and **Nicole Krasinski** of Rubicon; **Jean-Pierre Dubray** of the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco; **Laurent Manrique** and **Peter Armellino** of Aqua; and **Sean O'Brien** of Myth. This stellar team will prepare hors d'oeuvres and a four-course dinner for guests. Each exquisite course will be paired with fine wines selected from **prestigious vineyards** in Napa and Sonoma: Conundrum, Domaine Carneros, J Vineyards and Winery, Merry Edwards Wines, Quady Winery, Raymond Vineyards, Russian Hill Estate Winery, and Simi Winery. The 2006 Narsai Toast is supported by lead sponsor Fossil and four event sponsors: American Airlines; KCBS All News 740; the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco; and Sharper Image.

"Over the past 13 years, the Narsai Toast has become the epitome of gastronomic excellence showcasing the culinary talents of some of the country's leading chefs – and this year will be no exception," says Narsai David, an expert on wine and cuisine for KCBS and a founding member of Berkeley Rep's board of trustees. "Each year, the gala is one of the Bay Area's most magical evenings, dazzling 500 guests from the arts, business, and culinary communities."

"Many people don't realize that our theatre is a nonprofit organization," remarks **Susan Medak**, managing director of Berkeley Rep. "This gala is our major fundraiser, and we rely on the sale of

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**1997 tony award for outstanding regional theatre / a nonprofit corporation since 1968**

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tax-deductible tickets and tables to continue bringing world-class theatre to the Bay Area. In its 13-year history, the event has raised more than \$2.5 million to support our artistic work, educational programs, and community outreach. We truly appreciate the ongoing support of the culinary community.”

In past years, the Narsai Toast has featured the cuisine of celebrated chefs such as **Traci Des Jardins, Thomas Keller, Paul Prudhomme, Wolfgang Puck, Jeremiah Tower,** and **Charlie Trotter**. The chefs selected for 2006 are drawn from San Francisco's finest restaurants:

- **Peter Armellino** serves as Manrique's *chef de cuisine* at Aqua, and held the same post with him at Campton Place. He also served in the kitchens of Jardiniere and Village Pub.
- **Bridget Batson** has been executive chef at Hawthorne Lane for more than five years. After studying at Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, she honed her skills at two of Boston's beloved restaurants: the Blue Room and Hamersley's Bistro.
- **Stuart Briozza** became Rubicon's executive chef in 2004. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, he served as *sous chef* at Chicago's Park Avenue Café before developing his distinct style as executive chef at Michigan's legendary Tapawingo.
- **Jean-Pierre Dubray** is executive chef at the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco. A native of France, he has opened restaurants at 16 Ritz-Carlton hotels worldwide, including in Barcelona, Osaka, Palm Springs, Seoul, Shanghai, and Singapore.
- **David Gingrass**, proprietor of Hawthorne Lane, opened that restaurant in 1995. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, he apprenticed at Spago in West Hollywood before being tapped by Wolfgang Puck as one of the original co-chefs for Postrio.
- **Nicole Krasinski**, pastry chef at Rubicon, previously held the same post at Tapawingo. She began her career with Nancy Carey at Chicago's Red Hen Bakery.
- **Laurent Manrique** is the corporate executive chef for Aqua. He has worked at renowned restaurants such as Taillevent and Toit de Passy in Paris, Gertrude's and Peacock Alley in New York, Fennel and Rex in Los Angeles, and Campton Place in San Francisco.
- **Sean O'Brien** launched Myth in October 2004 and serves as its executive chef. Previously, he was executive *sous chef* at San Francisco's Restaurant Gary Danko, and also worked under Danko at Viognier in San Mateo and the Ritz Carlton, San Francisco.

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For the **auction**, Narsai David will reprise his role as auctioneer. Guests have the opportunity to bid on an array of wines from Northern California vineyards and from private collections, as well as several exceptional culinary adventures: a seven-night trip to Provence for ten guests, including accommodations at L'Ancienne Poste and a private tour of Domaine de Pegau in Chateauneuf du Pape; a seven-night stay in the medieval village of Anghiari, Italy, including accommodations for six in a 500-year-old farmhouse and airfare from American Airlines; a seven-night trip for two to Marrakech, including a stay in a luxury *palazzo*, along with meals and cooking lessons at the renowned Rhode School of Cuisine; a ten-person tour of Staglin Family Vineyard, including a private tasting with Winemaker **Luc Morlet** and an *al fresco* luncheon prepared by Chef **Peter Hall**; and dinner for ten at the home of Narsai and **Venus David**.

The 2006 Narsai Toast is chaired by **Rich Edwards**, **William T. Espey**, and **Wayne Wilson**. The event is made possible, in part, by the generosity of Citigroup Private Bank; DFS Group, Ltd; Rick Hoskins and Lynne Frame; Jefferies and Company; Macy's; Merrill Lynch Private Banking and Investment Group; Meyer Sound; the Roda Group; and Wells Fargo. Sponsors also include Steve Cassidy and Marjorie Randolph, Chevron, Foley & Lardner LLP, the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trusts, Goldman Sachs, Wayne Jordan and Quinn Delaney, Sarah McArthur and Michael LeValley, the Mechanics Bank, Peet's Coffee and Tea, Reed Smith, Sonnenschein Nath and Rosenthal LLP, and Michael and Sue Steinberg.

**Tickets** for the Narsai Toast begin at \$400, and tables are priced between \$4,000 and \$10,000. All proceeds from the event support Berkeley Rep's mission to set a national standard for ambitious programming, engagement of its audiences, and leadership within the community. Formal attire is not required. For more information, contact Kirsten Berzon, Berkeley Rep's special events manager, at 510.647.2906 or [kberzon@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:kberzon@berkeleyrep.org).

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### ATTENTION, CALENDAR EDITORS:

- WHO:** 8 celebrity chefs – Stuart Brioza & Nicole Krasinski of Rubicon; Jean-Pierre Dubray of the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco; David Gingrass & Bridget Batson of Hawthorne Lane; Laurent Manrique & Peter Armellino of Aqua; and Sean O'Brien of Myth
- WHAT:** 14<sup>th</sup> annual Narsai Toast, a gourmet gala and wine auction benefiting Berkeley Rep
- WHERE:** The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, 600 Stockton St, San Francisco
- WHEN:** Friday, April 28, 6:00 PM (reception) & 7:30 PM (four-course dinner)
- HOW MUCH:** \$400 tickets; tables from \$4,000 to \$10,000
- INFO & TIX:** 510.647.2906, [www.berkeleyrep.org](http://www.berkeleyrep.org) or [kberzon@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:kberzon@berkeleyrep.org)

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