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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP SERVES UP STEW AT THE NARSAI TOAST

Award-winning singer/songwriter from The Negro Problem plays at annual gourmet gala

MARCH 22, 2006 – Today, Berkeley Repertory Theatre revealed the secret dessert it promised to provide guests at the 14th annual Narsai Toast on Friday April 28: this year's gourmet gala will end with a delicious musical treat from **Stew**, the singer/songwriter who made his name with a band called **The Negro Problem** and has received rave reviews for his solo efforts. For this tasty set, Stew will be accompanied by his longtime creative partner, bassist **Heidi Rodewald**.

"The Narsai Toast is an event for people with discerning tastes," remarks **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep, "so I am thrilled to present our guests with the exquisite flavors of Stew. His music is an unusual gumbo that includes blues, funk, jazz, punk, rock, and soul. It's a rich, hearty, and complex dish that you will find savory and satisfying. I view this performance as a sneak preview for our audience, because he and Heidi are presently developing *Passing Strange*, a new show commissioned by Berkeley Rep and the Public Theater."

"Heidi and I are honored to play the Narsai Toast," **Stew comments**. "We see this gig at the gourmet gala as a kind of appetizer to the full meal we're preparing for Bay Area audiences with *Passing Strange*. We hope folks will come sample our songs now, building their appetite for the delicious show we're cooking up for the future – and we're glad we can help raise funds to support the bold work that Berkeley Rep produces."

Stew is a critically acclaimed singer/songwriter who has performed worldwide. His releases – both under the name Stew and with his band, The Negro Problem – 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 style has been dubbed Afro-Baroque cabaret, and *Entertainment Weekly* has twice named his CDs Album of the Year. *The 73rd Summer*, a screenplay he penned with Rodewald, was selected for the 2005 Sundance Screenwriters Lab and led *Filmmaker Magazine* to name him one of the 25 Filmmakers to Watch. Stew has also written music for television, most recently contributing a song to *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

The **Narsai Toast** is an annual gourmet gala and wine auction that benefits the Tony Award-winning Berkeley Repertory 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 sponsored by Fossil. Held at the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, the Narsai Toast begins with a champagne reception and wine auction at 6:00 PM, followed by a gourmet dinner and live auction at 7:30 PM. This year's chefs are **Bridget Batson** and **David Gingrass** of Hawthorne Lane; **Stuart Briozza** 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.

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. For more information, contact Kirsten Berzon at 510.647.2906 or kberzon@berkeleyrep.org.

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ATTENTION, CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHO: **Special musical guest Stew and eight 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: **14th annual Narsai Toast,**
a gourmet gala and wine auction benefiting Berkeley Repertory Theatre

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

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