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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY, BERKELEY REP UNCORKS A SPARKLING SEASON OF SHOWS

**Tony Award-winning theatre's yearlong party features
world premiere of a new play from Danny Hoch,
American premiere of Will Eno's *Tragedy: a tragedy*,
West Coast premiere of Mary Zimmerman's *Argonautika*,
after the quake directed by Frank Galati,
Heartbreak House staged by Les Waters,
and Rita Moreno in the West Coast premiere of *Glorious!***

APRIL 4, 2007 – Today **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, announced six of the seven shows selected for the Tony Award-winning theatre's 2007/08 Season – a bold mix of work that's the perfect party to celebrate Berkeley Rep's 40th birthday. Like the Theatre's history, the season begins with a fresh look at a classic text when Associate Artistic Director **Les Waters** stages **George Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House***. Then, mirroring Berkeley Rep's evolution into a world-class home for daring new work, the Theatre presents the world premiere of a spellbinding show from **Danny Hoch**, staged by Taccone; the American premiere of **Will Eno's** satirical ***Tragedy: a tragedy***, directed by Waters; the West Coast premiere of **Mary Zimmerman's** latest exhilarating adventure, ***Argonautika***; and **Frank Galati's** inventive adaptation of **Haruki Murakami's *after the quake***. The icing on this birthday cake is a delicious performance from legendary actress **Rita Moreno** in the West Coast premiere of an uproarious comedy called ***Glorious!*** This yearlong party is proudly supported by **BART** and **Wells Fargo**, the official sponsors of Berkeley Rep's 40th birthday.

"Every birthday is a cause for celebration and reflection," **Taccone comments**. "It's natural to take stock of where we've been, where we are, and where we're going. Eclectic by intention, Berkeley Rep celebrates humanity at its most complex and dynamic. We celebrate theatre that's imaginative, intelligent, and relevant. We celebrate plays that inspire transformation. These have been our core values since 1968, and they'll continue to guide us through the next 40 years and beyond. I love the array of plays we've selected for the 2007/08 Season – the range of styles embraced by these writers and the extraordinary mix of talents from these incredible directors and performers. It's an exceptional pool of projects that will truly entertain and excite."

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

BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES 40TH BIRTHDAY SEASON / 2 OF 6

“From the outset, Berkeley Rep has cared deeply about our community,” says **Susie Medak**, the Theatre’s managing director. “This birthday is as much a celebration of our audience as it is of the theatre. Many of our subscribers have been loyally attending since the very beginning – and they’ve encouraged us to engage a new generation of theatregoers. So I’m proud to say that, for our 40th birthday, we’re introducing **new ticket prices** that make Berkeley Rep more affordable for everyone.”

“Berkeley Rep has organized a fantastic line-up of entertaining and thought-provoking performances that promises to please audiences,” adds Wells Fargo’s East Bay Area Market President **Tracy Curtis**. “Wells Fargo is proud once again to serve as the official sponsor of Berkeley Rep’s theatre season.”

Born in a storefront on College Avenue, **Berkeley Rep** has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. Founded in 1968 by Michael Leibert, the Theatre quickly earned respect for presenting the finest plays with top-flight actors. In 1980, with the support of the local community, Berkeley Rep built the 400-seat Thrust Stage where its reputation steadily grew over the next two decades. It gained renown for an adventurous combination of work, presenting important new dramatic voices alongside refreshing adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. The company celebrated by unveiling a new 600-seat proscenium stage in 2001, the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre. It also opened the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the permanent home for a 22-year tradition of outreach and education programs. The addition of these two buildings transformed a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex, the linchpin of a bustling Downtown Arts District which has helped revitalize Berkeley. In four decades, nearly four million people have enjoyed 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including more than 40 world premieres. The Theatre now welcomes an annual audience of 180,000, serves 20,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 400 artists, artisans, and administrators. In the last year, four shows seen at Berkeley Rep have gone on to New York: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, and *Passing Strange*. Now a series of gifted guests arrives with amazing stage presents for Berkeley Rep’s 40th birthday.

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In honor of the zesty classical tradition on which Berkeley Rep was founded, the season kicks off in the Roda Theatre with ***Heartbreak House***. This September, Obie Award-winner **Les Waters** stages the comedic masterpiece from Nobel Prize-winning author **George Bernard Shaw**. Artist, socialist, feminist, anti-war activist... Vegetarian, freethinker, street-corner orator, and all-around raconteur... If there's one playwright who belongs in Berkeley, it's Shaw. Maybe that's why his words have graced our stage more than any author except Shakespeare. *Heartbreak House* has been produced in every decade of our history, more than any play in our repertoire. Its timeless themes resonated during Vietnam, the collapse of the Cold War, the ethnic conflict in the Balkans – and they remain all too relevant today. “The time seems unusually ripe for *Heartbreak House*, perhaps Shaw's richest and saddest play about the follies of humanity,” the ***New York Times*** remarked recently. “Shaw's extravagantly comic but still human characters are men and women with eloquent tongues and ever-ready opinions who also have hearts capable of breaking and souls worth saving... Almost a century after it was written, *Heartbreak House* proves a keen comic rebuke to cynicism, self-indulgence, and detachment, those all too easy responses to the bitterness of the world, which is still cruel after all, and surely as damnable as ever.” In the passages of this *House*, ridiculous aristocrats, eccentric suitors, and iconoclastic women grapple with unlikely romance in a world on the brink of war. Shaw's incisive wit and intellectual pyrotechnics light up the stage as his irascible characters challenge social conventions, sexual mores, moral hypocrisy, and political folly. As with last year's production of *The Glass Menagerie*, Waters' sure touch on a classic text makes the script seem newly inked.

In October, the Theatre's epicenter shifts to the intimate Thrust Stage for ***after the quake***, a bittersweet tale that measures love on the Richter scale. Director **Frank Galati** earned rave reviews for Broadway's *Ragtime* and two Tony Awards for *The Grapes of Wrath*. Writer **Haruki Murakami** won Japan's equivalent of the Pulitzer for novels such as *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Now the two talents collide in *after the quake*, which the ***New York Times*** called “an elegant, economic, gently hypnotic piece of theatre.” A timid man woos an old flame, enchanting her anxious daughter with whimsical stories of a six-foot frog's fight to save Tokyo. “Murakami's small gems caught the imagination of adapter-director Frank Galati, who has gracefully intertwined them into a mesmerizing 100-minute theatre piece filled with plenty of humor and whimsy,” declares the ***Chicago Tribune***. “A treatise on how we can travel with our imaginations to new, vibrant territory.” In this poignant new play, we see that a storyteller can't dispel the world's woes, but he can teach a child – and himself – how to face fear. Berkeley Rep and La Jolla Playhouse look forward to shaking up California with Steppenwolf Theatre's production of *after the quake*.

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Next, in November, Tony Award-winning director **Mary Zimmerman** makes another mythic trek to the Roda Theatre for the West Coast premiere of **Argonautika**. Each time the MacArthur genius brings a show to Berkeley Rep, audiences embrace it: *Journey to the West*, *Metamorphoses*, and *The Secret in the Wings* all made their West Coast debuts here, and *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* also opened to acclaim. This time, Zimmerman joins Jason on his ancient quest for the Golden Fleece – an epic journey of love and loss, hubris and honor, danger and adventure. Jason confronts giants, kings, sirens, nymphs, centaurs, sea monsters, and one treacherously heartsick sorceress. In her latest perilous voyage, Zimmerman shows us that love is the bane of all mankind – and yet it’s all that we know of heaven on this earth. Visually spectacular and theatrically dazzling, *Argonautika* led the **Chicago Tribune**’s list of the Top 10 Plays of the Year, and the **Chicago Sun-Times** called it “a production of great beauty, wild imagination, goofy humor, and emotional heat. The show is classic Zimmerman – a seamless meeting of actors, designers, and episodic text... the crowning installment in a long series of her works.” A co-production with the McCarter Theatre Center and the Shakespeare Theatre Company, *Argonautika* will transfer to Princeton and Washington, DC in 2008. See it in Berkeley before it sails for the East Coast!

In January, Berkeley Rep observes the New Year by upholding a thrilling tradition. Over the last 15 years, the Thrust Stage has hosted a series of stunning solo performers – from Sarah Jones to Anna Deavere Smith. Now this intimate space welcomes back **Danny Hoch**, who took Berkeley Rep by storm with the world premiere of *Jails, Hospitals & Hip Hop*. Hoch went on to win an Obie Award for that show and to start the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, which wows audiences every year in the Bay Area, Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC. Now he unveils his latest work – a one-man *tour de force* that captures the indelible characters of his neighborhood in Brooklyn, where the melting pot is boiling over with ethnic and economic tensions. Hoch effortlessly transforms across the boundaries of race, age, and gender, masterfully depicting a city in transition with comical and compassionate results. “In a sea of self-obsessed solo performers, Hoch floats to the top,” declares **Time Out New York**. “He goes far beyond what normally passes for impersonation. Instead, he digs deep into his characters’ psyches, creating a fierce and specific inner logic for them. Then, like an expert tailor, he sews each tic and vocal inflection into a slightly flashy, perfectly fitting suit.” This highly anticipated world premiere – which has yet to be christened with a name – will be expertly staged by **Tony Taccone**.

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Spring brings another beloved performer back to Berkeley Rep. Having appeared on Broadway, television, and in more than 40 feature films, **Rita Moreno** is one of the only artists honored with all of the sweetest awards in show business: the Oscar, the Emmy, the Tony, and the Grammy. After triumphant performances at Berkeley Rep in *Master Class* and *The Glass Menagerie*, Moreno returns to the Roda Theatre for the West Coast premiere of ***Glorious!*** The Bay Area's favorite diva portrays a diva from a different era: it's the hilarious true story of Florence Foster Jenkins, a celebrity soprano who was completely tone deaf. Jenkins shrieked, squeaked, and screeched her way through every aria to the thunderous applause of adoring fans – an unlikely career that culminated with a notorious, sold-out concert at Carnegie Hall. She lacked talent, she lacked training – but she made up for it with persistence and irresistible optimism. Inspired by her riotous recordings from the 1940s, **Peter Quilter's** play was a howling success on London's West End. "Comically sublime," raves the ***London Guardian***, "treats its subject with such affection that you soon begin to melt." "Like the singer, it is supremely good-natured and infectiously joyous," the ***London Independent*** chimes in. "It's at once hysterically funny and strangely moving. As with Don Quixote, there's magnificence in this degree of delusion." You can't help but root for the underdog in this uproarious comedy – and Moreno's glorious performance will leave you amazed that an actress with such gifts could play a singer with so little talent.

Finally, Berkeley Rep invites an intriguing and insightful playwright to the party in April: "**Will Eno** is a Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation," proclaims the ***New York Times***, calling his off-Broadway hit *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, "an acidly funny meditation on the indelible sorrows of life." Now Berkeley Rep's intimate Thrust Stage houses the American premiere of Eno's satirical ***Tragedy: a tragedy***. The sun – despite its shining record – has finally set. Reporters descend in a flurry of absurd questions and incoherent commentary, while the governor hysterically urges calm. "Mr. Eno's voice is so assuredly his own, simultaneously delicate and audacious in its measurements of poetry, philosophy, and Monty Pythonesque silliness," the *Times* continues – and the paper also captures Edward Albee's admiration for Eno: "He strikes me as being the real thing, a real playwright. He takes every chance. And Will keeps the voice his own: he has an awareness of the human condition I wish more people his age had." As with his sold-out productions of *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Pillowman*, director **Les Waters** wryly mines the humor and heartache of *Tragedy*.

A **seventh show** – to complement and complete this compelling collection of work – will be announced at a later date.

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BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES 40TH BIRTHDAY SEASON / 6 OF 6

Write your own invitation to this fabulous party by **subscribing to Berkeley Rep**. 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 (*after the quake*, *Argonautika*, *Glorious!*, *Heartbreak House*, and a final play that has yet to be announced). 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 tickets for guests, the right to reschedule for free, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events like this summer's *Great Men of Genius*. Berkeley Rep also offers generous discounts for senior citizens, theatregoers under 30, and employees of preschools and K-12 schools. Subscriptions begin as low as \$84 – and subscribers save up to 33% on every ticket! Tickets to individual shows in the 2007/08 Season go on sale in August.

Everyone is invited to the birthday bash! This year, Berkeley Rep isn't just presenting new work – it's also introducing **new prices** that let more people experience the best theatre in the Bay Area. Each theatre is now divided into three seating sections with different prices for each section, as is the case at most venues. These new prices make Berkeley Rep more affordable to people in the community who are just starting school, starting careers, and starting families – because lower prices are now available for every performance!

For more information, contact Berkeley Rep at 510.647.2949, 888-4-BRT-Tix (toll-free), or berkeleyrep.org. The box office is open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 7:00 PM and is located at 2025 Addison Street, 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.

With its striking good looks, **Berkeley Rep doesn't look a day over 39**. But it's true – the Theatre is turning 40. Come on over, and don't miss the party!

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BERKELEY REP'S 40th BIRTHDAY – SHOWS FOR 07/08
FACT SHEET

Main Season Play #1 – Roda Theatre

Heartbreak House

Written by George Bernard Shaw

Directed by Les Waters

August 31 – October 14, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, September 5)

Main Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage

after the quake

Written by Haruki Murakami

Translated by Jay Rubin

Adapted for the stage and directed by Frank Galati

October 12 – November 25, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, October 17)

Main Season Play #3 – Roda Theatre

Argonautika – West Coast Premiere

Conceived and directed by Mary Zimmerman

November 2 – December 16, 2007 (Press Night: Wednesday, November 7)

Limited Season Play #1 – Thrust Stage

A New Play from Danny Hoch – World Premiere

Created and performed by Danny Hoch

Directed by Tony Taccone

January 11 – February 10, 2008 (Press Night: Wednesday, January 16)

Main Season Play #4 – Roda Theatre

TO BE ANNOUNCED

February 15 – March 30, 2008 (Press Night: Wednesday, February 20)

Limited Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage

Tragedy: a tragedy – American Premiere

Written by Will Eno

Directed by Les Waters

March 28 – April 27, 2008 (Press Night: Wednesday, April 2)

Main Season Play #5 – Roda Theatre

TO BE ANNOUNCED

May 9 – June 22, 2008 (Press Night: Wednesday, May 14)

NOTE: The following show will fill one of the available slots above.

Glorious! – West Coast Premiere

Written by Peter Quilter

Starring Rita Moreno

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