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BERKELEY REP ADDS TWO INCREDIBLE GUESTS TO ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY SEASON

Carrie Fisher dives into *Wishful Drinking* and Theatre de la Jeune Lune returns with *Figaro*

JUNE 27, 2007 – Today **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, invited another two enchanting guests to the Tony Award-winning theatre's 40th birthday party. To complete Berkeley Rep's 2007/08 Season, Hollywood legend **Carrie Fisher** stars in her hilarious solo show *Wishful Drinking* and **Theatre de la Jeune Lune** returns with the West Coast premiere of its magical *Figaro*. *Wishful Drinking* replaces *Glorious!* in the previously announced line-up due to an unfortunate conflict in **Rita Moreno's** schedule. Nonetheless, these new shows are the perfect additions to a yearlong party which already includes a world premiere from **Danny Hoch**, an American premiere from **Will Eno**, a West Coast premiere from **Mary Zimmerman**, a classic comedy directed by **Les Waters**, and a new play combining the talents of **Frank Galati** and **Haruki Murakami**. As official sponsors of Berkeley Rep's 40th birthday, BART and Wells Fargo toast these distinguished artists.

"Choosing a season of seven extraordinary and complementary plays is a labor of love, and sometimes it takes time," **Taccone comments**. "It was certainly time well spent – because we are truly enthusiastic about the plays lined up for our 40th birthday. Bringing back Theatre de la Jeune Lune will literally end our season on a high note. *Figaro* once again demonstrates the company's remarkable ability to transform a classic into something fresh, vivid, and vibrant – as they did with last year's unforgettable production of *The Miser*. And naturally, everyone was disappointed when Rita had to withdraw, but I'm thrilled that we could find another comedy that perfectly matches its performer to its content. I'm looking forward to working with Carrie and directing *Wishful Drinking*."

"I can't wait to come to Berkeley Rep and work on *Wishful Drinking* with Tony," **Fisher remarks**. "It's almost as if I was raised in a nightclub act, so it's very natural for me to get onstage and tell stories from my unlikely life in front of audience. I always say, 'If my life weren't funny, it would just be true – and that's unacceptable.' So come on down and hear some of my ridiculous life stories, and we'll all laugh 'til our sides split open and we think they'll never close again"

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In February, Carrie Fisher crashes Berkeley Rep's Roda Theatre with an uproarious and sobering look at her Hollywood hangover entitled **WISHFUL DRINKING**. Onstage, Fisher recounts a true and intoxicating story with the strong, wry wit that she poured into bestsellers like *Postcards from the Edge*. Born to celebrity parents, this Tinseltown toddler lands among the stars when she's cast as a princess in a little movie called *Star Wars*. But it isn't all sweetness and light sabers. As a single mom, she also battles addiction, depression, mental institutions, and that awful hyperspace hairdo. Fisher's incredulous tale is a tabloid vivant – from enduring Elizabeth Taylor as a stepmother, to marrying (and divorcing) Paul Simon, to waking up one morning to find a dear friend dead beside her in bed. *Entertainment Weekly* declares *Drinking* “drolly hysterical,” and the *Los Angeles Times* dubs it a “**Beverly Hills yard sale of juicy anecdotes.**” Following on his success with a completely different one-woman show – Sarah Jones' *Bridge & Tunnel* – and only months after staging Danny Hoch's new solo show, acclaimed director **Tony Taccone** takes us on another wild ride. Berkeley Rep presents *Wishful Drinking* in association with Jonathan Reinis Productions. Don't miss this outrageous chance to see the galaxy get Carried away.

The daughter of Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, **Carrie Fisher** became a cultural icon when she starred as Princess Leia in the first *Star Wars* trilogy. Her star-studded career includes roles in countless films such as *Austin Powers*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Hannah and her Sisters*, *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*, *Shampoo*, *When Harry Met Sally*, and *Wonderland*. Her next film is *Fanboys*, which will be released early in 2008. Fisher's first novel, *Postcards from the Edge*, leapt onto the *New York Times*' bestseller list – and she turned it into a screenplay for a hit film starring Shirley MacLaine and Meryl Streep. Fisher followed this with three more bestsellers: *Delusions of Grandma*, *Surrender the Pink*, and *The Best Awful*. Her television credits range all the way from *Laverne and Shirley* to *Jack and Bobby*. Fisher hosted her own show on the Oxygen network, *Conversations from the Edge*, and is currently a celebrity judge for Steven Spielberg's *On the Lot*. Her experiences with addiction and bipolar disorder – and her willingness to speak honestly about them – have made her a sought after speaker and respected advocate for these communities.

After bringing us last season's delicious date with *The Miser*, the Tony Award-winning Theatre de la Jeune Lune returns in April with another eccentric take on a timeless text. **FIGARO** marries music from Mozart's magnificent opera with famous characters from the plays of Beaumarchais to create an accessible and exceptional new show. In this West Coast premiere, Figaro and the Count recall their rivalries years later – amid the bloodshed of the French Revolution. **Stephen Epp** – the Miser himself – tackles the title role, while director

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Dominique Serrand portrays his fallen master. Lush video sets the scene as a cast of accomplished singers surrender to intrigue and seduction. In *Figaro*, juicy love triangles bed down with ruthless satire of a class-conscious culture. Also performed in the Roda Theatre, it's a revolutionary experience that's the perfect birthday gift for Berkeley Rep.

"Figaro is a considerable accomplishment," asserts the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*. "Dominique Serrand, who also staged the show, and Stephen Epp are wonderful as the elder Count and Figaro. Serrand's Count is an aged, disheveled rake – he looks like an unmade bed – while Epp's Figaro is already disillusioned with the revolution that had promised so much. What's funny is that they hate each other, but they can't let go... It is intriguing... though the dominant tone of this engaging, multimedia production is a kind of wistful sadness."

An inventor, musician, and playwright – and at times a spy, revolutionary, and gunrunner – **Pierre Beaumarchais** ranks among the most influential French writers of the 18th century. His life was full of sex and scandal, and his plays overflowed with wicked wit and cutting social commentary. Beaumarchais penned *The Marriage of Figaro* using characters from his previous success, *The Barber of Seville*, but the play was banned for years because of its vigorous critique of the aristocracy. **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** is without question one of the greatest composers of all time. A child prodigy who wrote his first symphony when only eight years old, he composed an incredible 626 works that also include operas, concertos, and sonatas. His eternal music is beautiful and balanced, voluptuous and harmonious. In addition to *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart's revered operas include *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, and *The Magic Flute*. **Dominique Serrand** is the artistic director of Theatre de la Jeune Lune, which won the 2006 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. His previous hits at Berkeley Rep include *The Green Bird* and *The Miser*.

Tony Taccone is looking forward to his 11th year as artistic director of Berkeley Rep, where he has staged more than 35 shows, including the world premieres of *Continental Divide*, *The Convict's Return*, *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa*, *The First 100 Years*, *Geni(us)*, *Ravenshead*, *Virgin Molly*, and *Zorro in Hell*. Last year, he took two shows from Berkeley Rep to New York City: *Bridge & Tunnel* extended its Broadway stay for five months and won a Tony Award, while *Brundibar* sold out its run and was nominated for two Drama Desk Awards. *Brundibar* was his sixth collaboration with Tony Kushner; he also commissioned Kushner's *Angels in America* and co-directed its world premiere at the Mark Taper Forum. In 2004, Taccone's production of David

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Edgar's *Continental Divide* transferred to the Barbican in London after playing the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Rep, and Britain's Birmingham Rep. Taccone frequently works in Ashland, where he has also directed *Coriolanus*, *Othello*, *Pentecost*, and the American premiere of Seamus Heaney's *The Cure at Troy*. His other regional credits include noted theatres such as Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arizona Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, and San Francisco's Eureka Theatre, where he served six years as artistic director before coming to Berkeley Rep.

Figaro and Fisher complete a daring season that – like Berkeley Rep's history – begins with a fresh look at a classic play. Then, mirroring Berkeley Rep's evolution into a world-class home for innovative work, the 40th birthday party launches several spellbinding new shows.

Here are the other plays in the 2007/08 Season:

- In honor of the zesty classical tradition on which Berkeley Rep was founded, the season kicks off in August with ***Heartbreak House***. This comedic masterpiece from Nobel Prize-winning author **George Bernard Shaw** is staged in the Roda Theatre by Associate Artistic Director **Les Waters**. As with last year's production of *The Glass Menagerie*, Waters' sure touch makes the incisive 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. Tony Award-winning director **Frank Galati** presents this poignant new play, an inventive adaptation based on the celebrated work of Japanese author **Haruki Murakami**.
- Next, in November, Tony Award-winning director **Mary Zimmerman** makes another mythic trek to the Roda Theatre for the West Coast premiere of ***Argonautika***. In her latest perilous voyage, a visually spectacular journey with Jason and the Argonauts, she shows us that love is the bane of all mankind – and yet it's all that we know of heaven on this earth.
- Then, in January, Obie Award-winner **Danny Hoch** 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. This highly anticipated world premiere – which has yet to be christened with a name – will be staged by **Tony Taccone**.

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- And then Berkeley Rep's intimate Thrust Stage houses the American premiere of **Will Eno's** satirical ***TRAGEDY: a tragedy***. "Eno is a Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation," proclaims the *New York Times*, "simultaneously delicate and audacious in his measurements of poetry, philosophy, and Monty Pythonesque silliness." As with his sold-out productions of *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Pillowman*, Obie Award-winner Les Waters wryly mines the humor and heartache of *Tragedy*. (Please note that **the dates of this show have changed** to accommodate the two new plays added to the schedule. *TRAGEDY: a tragedy* now begins previews on March 14, opens on March 19, and closes on April 13, 2008.)

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!

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*, *Figaro*, *Heartbreak House*, and *Wishful Drinking*). 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.

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

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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.

For more information, contact Berkeley Rep at 510.647.2949, 888-4-BRT-Tix (toll-free), or berkeleyrep.org. The Roda Theatre, the Thrust Stage, and Berkeley Rep's box office are all located on Addison Street in downtown Berkeley – only half a block from BART and close to AC Transit bus lines. 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

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

Wishful Drinking

Written and performed by Carrie Fisher

Directed by Tony Taccone

February 8 – March 30, 2008 (Press Night: Wednesday, February 13)

Limited Season Play #2 – Thrust Stage

TRAGEDY: a tragedy – American Premiere

Written by Will Eno

Directed by Les Waters

New dates: March 14 – April 13, 2008 (Press Night: Wednesday, March 19)

Main Season Play #5 – Roda Theatre

Figaro – West Coast Premiere

Inspired by Mozart and Beaumarchais

Adapted by Steven Epp and Dominique Serrand

Directed by Dominique Serrand

April 25 – June 8, 2008 (Press Night: Tuesday, April 29)

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