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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BERKELEY REP CONCLUDES ITS SEASON WITH AN ASTONISHING NEW *TWIST***  
**A runaway hit in London and NYC, Neil Bartlett's *Oliver Twist* makes West Coast premiere**

APRIL 9, 2007 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre ends its 2006/07 Season with an astonishing twist – a dark and delightful new adaptation of **Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*** staged by one of Britain's most innovative theatre artists. Like the title character, this show has become a runaway success, leaving audiences in London, Boston, and New York clamoring for more. Now **Neil Bartlett** brings his brilliant production to Berkeley Rep for its West Coast premiere. *Oliver Twist* begins previews in the Roda Theatre on **May 11**, opens **May 16**, and closes **June 24**. Enjoy this final *Twist* before Berkeley Rep uncorks seven new shows for its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday this fall.

“Just as our popular presentation of Mabou Mines' *Peter & Wendy* rediscovered the original spirit of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, this production of *Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist* goes back to the source to uncover the gripping truth of the book,” asserts **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. “Dickens has become commodified through *A Christmas Carol*, and so we forget that he was more than just a storyteller – he was one of the great analyzers of class and poverty who wrote with such empathy about ordinary lives. In a bold theatrical way, with energy and panache, Neil Bartlett reclaims Dickens as a modern author.”

Inspired by the vivid world of the Victorian music hall, **Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*** uses original language from the novel to dramatize one of the most deeply felt stories ever written about childhood. A cast of unforgettable characters brings the underworld of London to thrilling life – a 19<sup>th</sup>-century city teeming with danger and fear – all seen through the eyes of a bewildered child. By turns comic and tragic, musical and dramatic, Bartlett's *Twist* has stolen the hearts of critics and theatregoers on two continents.

This version of *Oliver Twist* was originally commissioned and produced for the Lyric Hammer-smith in London, and Berkeley Rep presents its U.S. tour in association with American Repertory Theatre and Theatre for a New Audience. The local run has generous support from numerous **sponsors**: the production sponsor is JetBlue, the co-sponsor is Citi Private Bank, the education sponsor is the Vodafone US Foundation, and the executive producers are the Strauch Kulhanjian Family and Eddie and Amy Orton. The season producers for Berkeley Rep's 39<sup>th</sup> year are Wayne Jordan and Quinn Delaney, and the official season sponsors are BART and Wells Fargo.

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

**“Are you one of those people who can’t bear the fake Cockney jauntiness of *Oliver!*?”** asks the *London Independent*. “If so help is at hand... Neil Bartlett’s *Oliver Twist* is richly satisfying. Unlike its hero, you aren’t left asking for more.” The *Daily Telegraph* exclaims this is **“Dickens in all his dark, gaudy glory... I really can’t recommend this show too highly.** A great novel has been transformed into truly stunning theatre.” And *Variety* proclaims it **“the stage equivalent of a thrilling page turner...** Writer-director Neil Bartlett not only manages to shake Lionel Bart’s melodic songs out of one’s head in his sensational stage adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, he makes the audience rethink Dickens’ tale of the most famous child left behind in the starkest and darkest theatrical terms. Not for the littlest of kiddies, **this riveting production will be a winner for those who like their Dickens served straight up.”**

A master of prose, a comic genius, and a scathing social critic, **Charles Dickens** (1812-1870) is ranked among the greatest novelists of all time. His prodigious output included the books *Bleak House*, *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times*, *Pickwick Papers*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The natural theatricality of his writing has inspired famous stage adaptations of many Dickens novels, including *Great Expectations* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Don’t miss this remarkable new look at *Oliver Twist*.

An acclaimed director, performer, playwright, and novelist, **Neil Bartlett** came to prominence in the 1980s as a founding member of Gloria Theatre, which co-produced spectacular shows such as *Berenice* and *Sarrasine* with renowned institutions like the National Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, Royal Court Theatre, and Théâtre de Complicité. From 1994 to 2004, he served as artistic director of the Lyric Hammersmith and established its reputation as one of Britain’s most adventurous and beloved theatres. While there, Bartlett repeatedly shone new light on rare theatrical gems, such as Kleist’s *Prince of Homburg* and Marivaux’s *La Dispute*, both award-winning co-productions with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The Lyric also produced his English-language premiere of Genet’s *Splendid’s*. Bartlett’s translations and adaptations – encompassing works by Dumas, Molière, Racine, and Wilde – have been performed and applauded around the world, including in the U.S. at Chicago’s Goodman Theater and at Arena Stage in Washington, DC. His original plays include *Night After Night* and *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep*. He also penned three novels: *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall*, *Who Was that Man?*, and *Mr. Clive and Mr. Page*, which was published in the U.S. as *The House on Brooke Street* and short-listed for the prestigious Whitbread Prize.

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According to the *London Guardian*, the show is “enhanced by **Gerard McBurney’s music**, which oscillates between a *capella* choruses and sinister accompaniments on violin, hurdygurdy, and serpent.” McBurney’s songs not only use strange period instruments, they lift their lyrics straight from Dickens’ text. His previous compositions for the stage include *Four Walls* for the National Youth Music Theatre, *Pinocchio* for the Lyric Hammersmith, and *White Nights* for the English National Ballet. He studied composition and orchestration at the Moscow Conservatory, and many of his concert works are inspired by Russian themes, including *A Winter’s Walk Round the Park at Troitse-Lykovo* for Spitalfields Festival and *Letter to Paradise* for the 1998 Proms. McBurney has also worked with Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, the Hallé Orchestra, the Kronos Quartet, and Sage Centre in Newcastle-on-Tyne. He also wrote and researched several documentaries for television, among them portraits of composers. McBurney teaches musical history and analysis at the Royal Academy of Music in London, serves as the distinguished visiting fellow in Russian and Soviet music at the University of Manchester, and was recently appointed artistic programming advisor and creative director of *Beyond the Score* at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He lives in London and is a frequent radio broadcaster, especially for BBC Radio 3.

In its review of *Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist*, the *Christian Science Monitor* revels in the way “a company of **13 excellent actors** takes on more than 50 roles.” **Remo Airdi** (Mr. Bumble) has appeared in more than 50 shows at A.R.T. He has also worked at Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Conservatory Theater, the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, the Geffen Playhouse, Hartford Stage, and La Jolla Playhouse. **Steven Boyer** (Noah Claypole / Tom Chitling) performed in *I’m Not Rappaport* on Broadway and won a Drama League Award for *Audio/Video* off Broadway. His other New York credits include the Abingdon Theatre Company, the Committee Theatre Company, Partial Comfort Productions, and Prospect Theater Company. He also has extensive credits in regional theatre, stand-up comedy, television, and voiceover. **Gregory Derelian** (Bill Sykes / Mrs. Sowerberry) was seen in Broadway’s *Metamorphoses*. Off Broadway, his credits include *The Hairy Ape* at the Irish Repertory Theatre and *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, and *Othello* at the New York Shakespeare Festival. For several years, he was a resident actor at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. A company member of A.R.T., **Thomas Derrah** (Mr. Sowerberry / Mr. Grimwig / Mr. Fang) appeared on Broadway in *Jackie: An American Life* and off Broadway in *Big Time* and *Johan Padan and the Discovery of the Americas*. He has worked at theatres around the world, and in film and television projects such as

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*Del & Alex*, *Fool's Fire*, *Mystic River*, and *Unsolved Mysteries*. **Ned Eisenberg** (Fagin) performed in *Awake and Sing* and *The Green Bird* on Broadway. His countless stage and screen credits also include off-Broadway performances at City Center Theater, Naked Angels Theater Company, Second Stage Theatre, TFANA, and the Vineyard Theatre. **Carson Elrod** (John Dawkins / The Artful Dodger) had roles in *Noises Off* and *Reckless* on Broadway. He has appeared off Broadway at NYTW and Manhattan Theatre Club, where he received a Drama League nomination for *Based on a Totally True Story*. He also has extensive credits in regional theatre and improv comedy. **Jennifer Ikeda** (Nancy) was seen on Broadway in *Seascape*. Her other New York credits include the Delacorte Theater, Ma-Yi Theatre Company, the National Asian American Theatre Company, NYSF, the Summer Play Festival, and TFANA. Her voice will be familiar to fans of National Public Radio's *Selected Shorts*. **Elizabeth Jasicki** (Rose / Charlotte) toured the U.K. and the U.S. in *As You Like It*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Dracula*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Often heard on the BBC, she made her New York debut last year with Jennifer Jason Leigh in The New Group's production of *Abigail's Party*. **Will LeBow** (Mr. Brownlow) has performed in 46 shows at A.R.T., earning a Drama Desk nomination for his work in *Nocturne* and an Elliot Norton Award for *Full Circle*. He also appeared in the film *Next Stop Wonderland* and provided the voice of Stanley for the animated series *Dr. Katz, Professional Therapist*. **Karen MacDonald** (Mrs. Bumble) has dozens of regional credits and has worked in New York at the Actors Playhouse, Playwrights Horizons, Roundabout Theatre Company, and Second Stage. A founding member of A.R.T., she has performed nearly 60 shows on its stage, winning many awards along the way. In New York, **Craig Pattison** (Charley Bates) has appeared in *The Maids* at the Linhart Theater, *Moonchildren* and *Pains of Youth* at HERE Arts Center, *Three Birds* at GALE GATES et al., and *Twenty Gorilla Killer* at the Red Room. Regionally, he has worked with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, the Denver Center Theatre Company, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. **Lucas Steele** (Toby Crackit) made his Broadway debut last year with Roundabout in *The Threepenny Opera*. His other New York credits include the Actors Studio, Bouwerie Lane Theatre, Vital Theatre Company, and Women's Project. He is the violinist and lead vocalist for the Infinite Orchestra. And last, but certainly not least, **Michael Wartella** (Oliver Twist) recently completed the national tour of *Seussical: The Musical*, in which he played JoJo. His New York credits include *Clown Shorts* and *Macbeth* at Circle in the Square, and he has also been seen at Barrington Stage Company, Monument Mount Theater, and Shakespeare & Company.

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Appropriately enough, the show features a set straight out of a Victorian sideshow. As the *London Telegraph* notes, "**Rae Smith's design** of a filthy room, in which almost all the action takes place, is based on the penny-dreadful machines once found on piers and in amusement arcades, glass-fronted boxes in which you inserted a coin and tableaux of ghastly murders and ghostly hauntings twitched into life." This twisted set is Smith's 11<sup>th</sup> collaboration with Bartlett, and she also created the costumes for this show. A celebrated scenic artist, she has designed classical, modern, and experimental work at theatres throughout Europe, including the Royal Court and Royal Shakespeare Company. In the U.S., her design credits include *The Weir* on Broadway, *The Street of Crocodiles* at Lincoln Center, *Juno and the Paycock* at Roundabout, and two works for the Spoleto Festival: *Dinner with Jacob's Pillow* and *The Visit with Complicité*.

Two more **artful designers** have joined Bartlett's gang to help recreate Dickensian London. Lighting designer **Scott Zielinski** has worked with dance, opera, and theatre companies on Broadway, off Broadway, and around the world. Berkeley Rep audiences will remember his work on *Fall*, *Ghosts*, and *Our Town*. **David Remedios** is the resident sound designer at A.R.T., where his award-winning work has been heard in 36 shows. He also created the sound for last season's production of *The Miser* at Berkeley Rep. The stage manager for this production is **Chris De Camillis**.

Theatre-lovers can enter this den of thieves with **19 special events** during the run:

- *Target @ Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, May 11 and includes dinner catered by Bar Ristorante Raphael, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist*. Tickets are \$5 for members of Berkeley Rep's Teen Council, \$20 for all other teens. For more information, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- *Opening night* festivities are held on Wednesday, May 16, including a pre-show dinner for donors at Downtown Restaurant and a post-show party for the audience catered by Bistro Liaison and Raymond Vineyard & Cellar.
- A *student matinee* occurs at noon on Wednesday, May 23. Tickets are \$10 each, and a chaperone is admitted free for every 10 students. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, May 31; Tuesday, June 12; and Friday, June 15.

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- ***Berkeley Rep's new book club*** – led by the Theatre's literary manager, Madeleine Oldham – holds its first meeting at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, June 5. Read John Waller's *The Real Oliver Twist* and come discuss it with us. Please RSVP by calling 510.647.2916 or e-mailing [amansard@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:amansard@berkeleyrep.org).
- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place every Tuesday and Thursday at 7:00 PM: May 15, May 17, May 22, May 24, May 29, May 31, June 5, June 7, June 12, June 14, June 19, and June 21.

**Tickets** to *Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist* are on sale now, priced from \$33 to \$61. Discounts are available for students, seniors, groups, UC Berkeley alumni, employees of K-12 schools, and anyone under 30 years of age. For every weekday performance, half-price HotTix go on sale that day at noon at the box office. All discounts are subject to availability.

**Berkeley Rep's Roda Theatre** is located at 2015 Addison Street, one block from Berkeley's downtown BART station and close to AC Transit bus lines. The theatre is accessible to the handicapped, offering wheelchair seating and special services for those with hearing- or vision-impairment. The box office is next door at 2025 Addison Street. For tickets or information, call **510.647.2949** or toll-free at **888.4.BRT.Tix** – or simply click [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org).

#### **ABOUT BERKELEY REP**

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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berkeley rep

Charles Dickens' OLIVER TWIST

FACT SHEET

WHO: Adapted and directed by Neil Bartlett
Music by Gerard McBurney
Designed by Rae Smith (sets and costumes), Scott Zielinski (lights), and David Remedios (sound)
Featuring Remo Airdi, Steven Boyer, Gregory Derelian, Thomas Derrah, Ned Eisenberg, Carson Elrod, Jennifer Ikeda, Elizabeth Jasicki, Will LeBon, Karen MacDonald, Craig Pattison, Lucas Steele, and Michael Wartella

WHAT: Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist – a dark and delightful new adaptation of the classic novel

WHERE: Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Roda Theatre
2015 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Downtown Berkeley

WHEN: Previews on 5/11 - 5/15/2007 – Performances on 5/16 – 6/24/2007
Tuesdays & Fridays @ 8:00 PM
Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
Thursdays & Saturdays @ 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM
Sundays @ 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
No performance on Friday 6/22
No matinees during previews or on 5/17, 5/26, 5/31, 6/9, and 6/14

Calendar grid showing dates from May 11 to June 24 with performance times (e.g., 7pm, 8pm, 2/7pm) and symbols for events.

- docent talks
previews
opening night
discussion
book club

Special Events –
Target @ Teen Night: Friday 5/11 @ 6:30 PM
Opening night: Wednesday 5/16 @ 8:00 PM
Student matinee: Wednesday 5/23 @ noon
Post-play discussions: Thursday 5/31, Tuesday 6/12 & Friday 6/15 @ 8:00 PM
NEW! - Book club: Tuesday 6/5 @ 6:00 PM
Docent presentations: Tuesdays 5/15, 5/22, 5/29, 6/5, 6/12 & 6/19 @ 7:00 PM
& Thursdays 5/17, 5/24, 5/31, 6/7, 6/14 & 6/21 @ 7:00 PM

HOW MUCH: Previews \$33
Sundays (2 PM & 7 PM) \$49
Tues (8 PM) / Wednesdays (7 PM) \$45
Friday evenings (8 PM) \$55
Thursdays (2 PM & 8 PM) \$47
Wednesday opening (8 PM) \$61
Saturday matinees (2 PM) \$47
Saturday evenings (8 PM) \$61

Discounts:
• 1/2 price tickets available for those under 30 (some restrictions apply)
• 1/2 price rush tickets for students and seniors sold 1/2 hour before curtain
• 20 half-price HotTix go on sale Tuesday through Friday at noon
• Groups of 15+ may contact 510.647.2918 or groups@berkeleyrep.org

TIX & INFO: 510.647.2949 – toll-free 888-4-BRT-Tix – www.berkeleyrep.org