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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **BERKELEY REP WELCOMES THE RETURN OF JEUNE LUNE WITH *FIGARO***

**West Coast premiere brings back Tony Award-winning team from *The Miser***

MARCH 18, 2008 – This spring, Berkeley Repertory Theatre's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party comes to a gorgeous crescendo with the West Coast premiere of *Figaro*. After bringing us a delicious date with *The Miser* in 2006, the Tony Award-winning **Theatre de la Jeune Lune** returns for another eccentric take on a timeless text. Inspired by Mozart and Beaumarchais, *Figaro* is adapted by **Steven Epp** and **Dominique Serrand**, who also perform the lead roles alongside exceptional actors, superb singers, and a live string quartet. Presented in Berkeley Rep's state-of-the-art Roda Theatre, this magical production begins previews on **April 25**, opens **April 29**, and closes **June 8**.

"As Berkeley Rep celebrates our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, we also celebrate our fourth collaboration with Theatre de la Jeune Lune," remarks **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "I can't imagine a better way to conclude our season than with this extraordinary production. These artists can always be relied upon to discover new ways of interpreting and enjoying familiar stories, and *Figaro* is no exception."

*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 – amidst the bloodshed of the French Revolution. Steven Epp – the Miser himself – tackles the title role, while director 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. It's a revolutionary experience that's the perfect birthday gift for Berkeley Rep.

The show's executive producers are the Strauch Kulhanjian Family and Jean and Michael Strunsky; production sponsors include American Express, Downtown Restaurant, the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Philanthropic Fund, and the Bernard Osher Foundation; and a co-sponsor is the Mechanics Bank. BART and Wells Fargo toast Berkeley Rep as the official sponsors of the Theatre's 40<sup>th</sup> season.

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An inventor, musician and playwright – and at times a spy, revolutionary, and gunrunner – **Pierre Beaumarchais** ranks among the most influential French writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. His life was full of sex and scandal, and his plays overflowed with wicked wit and cutting social commentary. Beaumarchais wrote *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 and co-founder of Theatre de la Jeune Lune. A native of Paris, he studied at the National Circus School and the École Jacques Lecoq in France. For more than 27 years, Serrand has acted, conceived, directed, and designed for most Jeune Lune productions. His directing credits with the company include *1789*, *The 3 Musketeers*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *Children of Paradise: Shooting a Dream*, *Gulliver*, *The Kitchen*, *The Little Prince*, *Lulu*, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Red Noses*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Seagull*, and *Tartuffe*. He has staged several operas including *Carmen*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Juan Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, and *Mefistofele*. Berkeley Rep audiences will recall his work on *Don Juan Giovanni*, *The Green Bird*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, and *The Miser*. He has also directed at Actors Theatre of Louisville, the American Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.), The Children's Theatre Company (CTC), the Guthrie Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Serrand is a USA Ford Fellow and was knighted by the French government in the order of Arts and Letters.

At Berkeley Rep, **Steven Epp** portrayed Harpagon in *The Miser* and Sganarelle in *Don Juan Giovanni*, as well as adapting the script for *The Green Bird*. He began working with Jeune Lune in 1983, and has performed with the company at numerous theatres including Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Alley Theatre, A.R.T., La Jolla Playhouse, The New Victory Theater, the Spoleto Festival, Trinity Repertory Company, and Yale Rep. He played the titles roles in *Crusoe*, *Gulliver*, *Hamlet*, *The Miser*, and *Tartuffe* and major roles in *The Little Prince*, *The Magic Flute*, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, *The Seagull*, and *Twelfth Night*. Epp adapted and directed *Medea*, adapted *The Deception*, and collaborated on scripts for *The 3 Musketeers*; *Amerika, or The Disappearance*; *Children of Paradise: Shooting a Dream*; *Don Juan Giovanni*; *The Green Bird*; *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; *The Magic Flute*; and *Mefistofele*. He is the recipient of a 1999 Fox Fellowship.

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Epp and Serrand perform with a **harmonious cast** of actors and singers. **Christina Baldwin** (Cherubino) played the title role in Jeune Lune's *Carmen*, as well as appearing in its productions of *Don Juan Giovanni* and *Maria de Buenos Aires*. She has been a soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra, performed on NPR's *Prairie Home Companion*, and worked with noted companies such as A.R.T., the Guthrie, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, and The Minnesota Opera. **Bryan Boyce** (Young Figaro) portrayed Don Giovanni in Jeune Lune's *Don Juan Giovanni* in Minneapolis and Boston. He also performed as Colline in *La Bohème* and Olin Blicht in *Susannah* with Theater Latté Da, as well as Littore in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and the Denver Politican in *The Ballad of Baby Doe* for Central City Opera. Next season, Boyce will be part of The Minnesota Opera's Resident Artist Program. **Bradley Greenwald** (Count Almaviva) has collaborated with Jeune Lune for the past 14 years as a performer and music adaptor for *Carmen*, *Cosí fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute*, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, and *Mefistofele* – and, in addition to being in the cast, he adapted the music for *Figaro*. He has performed concerts, recitals, musical theatre, opera, and theatre in the Twin Cities with Ballet of the Dolls, CTC, the Guthrie, the Jungle Theater, Lyra Baroque Orchestra, Minnesota Dance Theatre, Nautilus Music-Theater, Ten Thousand Things, and others. **Carrie Hennessey** (Marcellina) has worked almost exclusively with composer Hiram Titus since 2003, developing, performing, and premiering his original art songs and theatrical works in recital. Their latest collaboration is her debut CD, *A Prelude to Summer*. **Bryan Janssen** (Bartolo) has performed with the Bach Society Chorus, Kansas City Rep, the Kansas City Symphony Chorus, Lyra Baroque Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, the Minnesota Chorale, the Minnesota Orchestra, North Star Opera, the Oratorio Society of Minnesota, and The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. For the last 20 years, he has been the bass soloist and section leader at Unity Church-Unitarian in St. Paul. **Justin D. Madel** (Basilio) has performed with Theatre de la Jeune Lune in *The Ballroom*, *Carmen*, and *Carmina Burana*. He has also worked with the Columbia Festival of the Arts, Minnesota Dance Theatre, The Minnesota Opera, the Pine Mountain Music Festival, Skylark Opera, and the Silver Bay Music Festival. **Jennifer Baldwin Peden** (Countess) appeared at Berkeley Rep in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Her credits with Jeune Lune include *The Ballroom*, *Carmen*, *Carmina Burana*, *Cosí fan tutte*, *Don Juan Giovanni*, *Fishtank*, *The Magic Flute*, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, and *Mefistofele*. She has also worked with A.R.T., the Guthrie, The Minnesota Opera, the Minnesota Orchestra, and Skylark Opera, as well as providing her voice for the animated film *Jona/Tomberry*, which won the Grand Prix Canal at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005. **Momoko Tanno** (Susanna) previously performed with Jeune Lune as Donna Anna in *Don Juan Giovanni* and Frasquita in *Carmen*. As a soprano soloist, her recent engagements include Bach's B-minor Mass with the

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Bach Society of Minnesota, as well as two international engagements with the Heinrich Schütz Choir: Bach's Christmas Oratorio in Heilbronn, Germany and Mendelssohn's Elijah and Bach's St. John's Passion in Tokyo. *Figaro* also features **Casey Grieg**, **Anna Hersey**, and **Julie Kurtz**.

This accomplished cast is accompanied by live music from the **Seventh Avenue String Quartet**, the ensemble that performed last year during Berkeley Rep's world premiere of *To the Lighthouse*. The quartet features **Alex Kelly** (cello), **Justin Mackewich** (first violin), **Katrina Weeks** (viola), and **Sarah Jo Zaharako** (second violin).

Serrand designed the sets and projections for this production, and collaborated with a talented team to bring *Figaro* to life. **Sonya Berlovitz** (costume design) has designed more than 45 productions for Jeune Lune, including Berkeley Rep's presentations of *The Green Bird*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, and *The Miser*. Her work has also been seen at CTC, the Guthrie, La Jolla Playhouse, and the Prague Quadrennial. **Marcus Dilliard** (lighting designer) previously worked at Berkeley Rep on Jeune Lune's productions of *Don Juan Giovanni*, *The Green Bird*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, and *The Miser*. He has also designed for countless theatre and opera companies throughout North America and Europe. **Zach Humes** (sound designer) has created sound for Jeune Lune's productions of *The Ballroom*, *The Deception*, *Don Juan Giovanni*, *Fishtank*, and *The Golem*. He has also worked with the Brave New Workshop, Cleveland Public Theatre, Dobama Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, and the Mixed Blood Theatre Company. **Barbara Brooks** (music director/conductor) has worked as a vocal coach and music director with Berkshire Opera Company, the Canadian Opera Company, Des Moines Metro Opera, Kentucky Opera, The Minnesota Opera, the New Orleans Opera Association, and Opera Banff, as well as the University of Minnesota Opera and the University of North Texas Opera. The stage manager for this production is **Glenn D. Klapperich**.

This year, Berkeley Rep introduced exciting new prices that make theatre a luxury everyone can afford. **Tickets to *Figaro* start as low as \$27** – the lowest price in 10 years! Additional discounts are available for groups, seniors, students, and anyone under 30 years of age. This change makes Berkeley Rep more accessible to people in the community who are just starting school, starting careers, and starting families – because lower prices are available for every performance.

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To make the evening even more melodious, *Figaro* fans can enjoy **20 special events**:

- Berkeley Rep's newest event, *30 Below* returns on Friday, April 25. It's the coolest night of theatre for the under-30 crowd – featuring a free beer tasting from Pyramid breweries at 7:00 PM, a performance at 8:00 PM, and a wild post-show party with free drinks, live music, munchies, and more. Tickets start at only \$13.50 for anyone under 30 years old.
- *Target ® Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, April 25, and includes dinner, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *Figaro*. Tickets are \$8 for members of Berkeley Rep's Teen Council, \$12 for all other teens. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- *Opening night* for *Figaro* is held on Tuesday, April 29, including a pre-show dinner for donors at Downtown Restaurant and a post-show party for the audience featuring food from Bistro Liaison and wines from Raymond Vineyards.
- Berkeley Rep's *book club*, led by Thalia Dorwick, meets at 6:30 PM on Friday, May 9. Please read *The Days of the French Revolution* by Christopher Hibbert before attending, and RSVP at 510.647.2916 or [bookclub@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:bookclub@berkeleyrep.org).
- *Page to Stage* takes place on Monday, May 19 at 7:00 PM. David Gockley of the San Francisco Opera interviews Epp and Serrand for this free event. Donors at the Supporter level and above also enjoy an exclusive reception with the artists.
- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place before every Tuesday and Thursday performance. Join in at 7:00 PM on April 29, May 1, May 6, May 8, May 13, May 15, May 20, May 22, May 27, May 29, June 3, and June 5.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, May 15; Tuesday, May 27; and Friday, May 30.

Berkeley Rep has also launched a **new series of tastings** that provide a culinary overture for a night of classic theatre. At 7:00 PM on the following dates, audience members can whet their palates for the play with free samples from local artisans:

- Friday, May 2: wines from Raymond Vineyards
- Saturday, May 3: champagne from Domaine Carneros
- Saturday, May 10: confections from Charles Chocolates
- Friday, May 16: Hefeweizen from Pyramid Breweries
- Saturday, May 17: organic produce from the Berkeley Farmers' Market
- Friday, May 23: small-batch spirits from Craft Distillers
- Saturday, May 24: organic produce from the Berkeley Farmers' Market
- Saturday, May 31: organic produce from the Berkeley Farmers' Market

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So join the chorus singing the praises of Berkeley Rep's 40<sup>th</sup> season. The **Roda Theatre** is located at 2015 Addison Street, one block from Berkeley's downtown BART station and close to AC Transit bus lines. 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

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 two years, 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 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### ABOUT THEATRE DE LA JEUNE LUNE

Founded by Barbra Berlovitz, Vincent Gracieux, Bob Rosen, Dominique Serrand, and later joined by Steven Epp, Jeune Lune's ensemble is a continually evolving collaboration of artists, currently led by Mr. Serrand. Awarded the 2005 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, this extraordinary partnership has produced a body of work remarkable for its strong, consistent artistic vision: a shared vision of theatrical creation, in which an ensemble of theatre artists come together not just as performers, but as creators – approaching their work with the mind of a director, the eye of a designer, the vision of a writer, and the heart of an actor. Jeune Lune's work is infused with a sense of play, an emotional directness, and a desire to engage an audience. It ranges from Molière and Shakespeare to the contemporary Czech playwright Pavel Kohout and the operatic fantasy of *The Magic Flute*. This unique way of creating theatre has garnered national and international attention for the company. Jeune Lune has toured in recent years to such venues as Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Alley Theatre, A.R.T., Berkeley Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, Trinity Rep, and Yale Rep. Jeune Lune's name – "Theatre of the New Moon" – reflects the company's commitment to finding theatrical sustenance by looking for the new in the old and is shown in the company's credo: "We are a theatre of directness, a theatre that speaks to its audience, that listens and needs a response. We believe that theatre is an event. We are a theatre of emotions – an immediate theatre – a theatre that excites and uses a direct language – a theatre of the imagination."

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WHO: Inspired by Mozart and Beaumarchais
Adapted by Steven Epp and Dominique Serrand
Directed by Dominique Serrand
Designed by Dominique Serrand (sets/projections), Sonya Berlovitz (costumes), Marcus Dilliard (lights), Zach Humes (sound), and Barbara Brooks (musical director/conductor)
Starring Christina Baldwin (Cherubino), Bryan Boyce (Young Figaro), Steven Epp (Fig), Bradley Greenwald (Count Almaviva), Casey Grieg (ensemble), Carrie Hennessey (Marcellina), Anna Hersey (ensemble), Bryan Janssen (Bartolo), Julie Kurtz (ensemble), Justin D. Madel (Basilio), Jennifer Baldwin Peden (Countess), Dominique Serrand (Mr. Almaviva), and Momoko Tanno (Susanna)
Featuring the Seventh Avenue String Quartet: Alex Kelly (cello), Justin Mackewich (first violin), Katrina Weeks (viola), and Sarah Jo Zaharako (second violin)

WHAT: Figaro, the West Coast premiere of a magical show that marries Mozart and Theatre de la Jeune Lune

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

WHEN: April 25 – June 8, 2008
- 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 matinees during previews or on 4/26, 5/1, 5/10, 5/15, 5/24 & 5/29
- No performance on Friday 6/6

Calendar grid showing dates from April 27 to June 8 with performance times and event icons (e.g., Docent Talks, Preview, Target, Teen Night, Opening Night, Book Club, Discussion, Tasting).

Special Events –
Previews: Friday 4/25 @ 8 PM, Saturday 4/26 @ 8 PM, Sunday 4/27 @ 7 PM, and Wednesday 4/30 @ 8 PM
Target @ Teen Night: Friday 4/25 @ 6:30 PM
30 Below (party for the under-30 crowd): Friday 4/25 @ 7 PM
Opening night: Tuesday 4/29 @ 8 PM
Book club: Friday 5/9 @ 6:30 PM (please read The Days of the French Revolution)
Page to Stage (David Gockley interviews Epp and Serrand): Mon 5/19 @ 7 PM
Free tastings: Friday 5/2 (Raymond Vineyards), Saturday 5/3 (Domaine Carneros), Saturday 5/10 (Charles Chocolates), Friday 5/16 (Pyramid Breweries), Friday 5/23 (Craft Distillers), and Saturdays 5/17, 5/24 & 5/31 (Berkeley Farmers' Market) @ 7 PM
Pre-show talks: Tuesdays & Thursdays 4/29, 5/1, 5/6, 5/8, 5/13, 5/15, 5/20, 5/22, 5/27, 5/29, 6/3 & 6/5 @ 7 PM
Post-play discussions: Thursday 5/15, Tuesday 5/27, and Friday 5/30 @ 8 PM

HOW MUCH: \$13.50 - \$69
Table with columns for Section B, Section A, and Premium, listing prices for Previews, Tue 8 PM / Wed 7 PM / Sat 2 PM, Thu 8 PM / Sun 2 PM / Sun 7 PM, Friday @ 8 PM, and Saturday @ 8 PM.

Discounts:
- Half-price tickets available for anyone under 30 years of age
- \$10 discount for students and seniors one hour before curtain
- Groups of 10 or more, contact 510.647.2918 or groups@berkeleyrep.org

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