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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP'S 2008 NARSAI TOAST HONORS MICHAEL STEINBERG
40th Anniversary Gala celebrates Steinberg's years of service to the Theatre and the community

FEBRUARY 22, 2008 – Today, in keeping with the theme of celebration that has infused its 40th season, Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced that the **Narsai Toast 40th Anniversary Gala** will honor **Michael Steinberg**, the former chief executive officer of Macy's West. The annual gourmet gala and wine auction is the Tony Award-winning theatre's largest fundraiser – and this year it takes place on Friday, April 4 at the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco.

"This year, we celebrate Berkeley Rep's 40th birthday – and Michael's 80th," remarks **Susan Medak**, Berkeley Rep's managing director. "It seems fitting to mark these milestones at the Narsai Toast by honoring this unsung hero. Behind the scenes, Michael has been such a friend to the Theatre – and to our community. Not only has he bolstered the success of our annual gala, he has been tireless in his work on behalf of the ballet, the visual arts, and the fight against AIDS. We are so grateful for his support of our artistic initiatives, our education programs, and our community outreach efforts."

"Michael has been a personal friend for years," adds **Narsai M. David**, for whom the event is named. "We share a passion for fine food and wine – and great art. I introduced him to Berkeley Rep more than 10 years ago based on our shared love of theatre, and it's been wonderful to work alongside him to combine all three passions in this spectacular event. With his guidance, the Narsai Toast has grown to be one of the Bay Area's premiere events – and I'm thrilled we're recognizing his ongoing support this year."

Over the past 16 years, the **Narsai Toast** has become the epitome of gastronomic excellence, showcasing the culinary talents of the country's leading chefs. Every year, the gala is one of the Bay Area's most magical evenings, dazzling 500 guests from the arts, business, and culinary communities. The celebrity chefs who will mastermind this year's gala are **Jean-Pierre Dubray** of The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco; **Adrian Hoffman** of the Lark Creek Restaurant Group; **Joseph Manzare** of Globe, San Francisco; **Piero Selvaggio** of the Valentino Restaurant Group; and **Staffan Terje** of Perbacco, San Francisco. The gourmet sponsor for the 2008 Narsai Toast is Fossil, and the connoisseur sponsors are DFS Galleria, Nicholas and Mary Graves, the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Trust, Macy's West, Meyer Sound, and Richard A. Rubin and H. Marcia Smolens. Every year, the event is hosted by Narsai David, an expert on food and wine for KCBS, who was a founding member of Berkeley Rep's board of trustees and a former board chair. Past events have featured culinary wizards such as **Traci Des Jardins**, **Thomas Keller**, **Paul Prudhomme**, **Wolfgang Puck**, **Jeremiah Tower**, and **Charlie Trotter**.

Michael Steinberg joined Berkeley Rep's board of trustees in 1999, overseeing the Theatre's campaign to build a second stage – the Roda Theatre – and bringing his passion for food and wine into play as the longtime chair of the Narsai Toast. Under his leadership, the event's annual revenue has nearly doubled. Steinberg is also an avid supporter of the New York City Ballet and the visual arts, as well as a dedicated contributor to important causes abroad. In 2007, he and his wife, Sue, were the lead donors for the creation of the University of California, San Francisco's care center in Kenya. After a long career in the retail industry, Steinberg retired as CEO & Chairman of Macy's West in 2000. He remains active on a number of corporate retail boards, including Fossil.

(MORE)

The Narsai Toast begins with a reception and silent auction at 5:30 PM. The celebration continues with a gourmet dinner at 7:30 PM, where jazz chanteuse **Paula West** serenades the guests. A live auction follows dinner, with Narsai David reprising his role as auctioneer. Guests enjoy the opportunity to bid on an array of wines from Northern California's finest vineyards and from private collections, as well as several exceptional adventures: a five-night luxury stay for four at Calistoga Ranch, a Fender Electric guitar signed to the winning bidder by **Bonnie Raitt**, and a private movie screening party for 60 people with **Rita Moreno** at Meyer Sound.

Tickets for the Narsai Toast begin at \$1,000. Tables are priced between \$10,000 and \$25,000. All proceeds from the event support the nonprofit Berkeley Repertory Theatre – and this year, a portion of the income is specifically dedicated to the Theatre's 40th Anniversary Campaign. The Campaign funds a 10-year long range plan aimed at fortifying and enhancing the Theatre's core values of artistic excellence, community outreach, and artistic education initiatives. The Campaign will also fund a permanent endowment to lay a strong foundation for Berkeley Rep's financial future.

The 2008 Narsai Toast is chaired by **Becky Bleich, Rick Hoskins, and Laura Onopchenko. Barbara and Gerson Bakar, Ed Brennan, Mary and Nicholas Graves, Carole Shorenstein Hays and Jeffrey Hays, Robert Mettler, Louis Meunier, Helen and John Meyer, Rita Moreno and Leonard Gordon, and Jean and Michael Strunsky** serve on the honorary committee.

For more information, contact Terin Christensen, Berkeley Rep's special events manager, at 510.647.2906 or tchristensen@berkeleyrep.org.

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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 the Theatre's 40th birthday.

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ATTENTION, CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHO: The Tony-Award winning Berkeley Repertory Theatre honors Michael Steinberg
WHAT: The Narsai Toast 40th Anniversary Gala, a benefit for Berkeley Rep
WHERE: The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, 600 Stockton St, San Francisco
WHEN: Friday, April 4, 5:30 PM (reception / silent auction) & 7:30 PM (four-course dinner)
HOW MUCH: \$1,000 tickets; tables from \$10,000 to \$25,000
INFO & TIX: 510.647.2906, berkeleyrep.org or tchristensen@berkeleyrep.org

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