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OSHER FOUNDATION HONORS BERKELEY REP WITH MILLION-DOLLAR GIFT

JANUARY 18, 2008 – Last night, noted philanthropists **Bernard and Barbro Osher** hosted a small gathering at their San Francisco home to toast the 40th birthday of the Tony Award-winning Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Greeted by **Richard A. Rubin**, chairman of Berkeley Rep's board, guests enjoyed an exquisite meal, a musical treat from internationally renowned pianist **Michael Feinstein**, and a surprise announcement: the Osher Foundation is honoring this milestone in Berkeley Rep's history with a gift of \$1 million.

"The Oshers are eminent philanthropists in our community," Mr. Rubin remarked. "This generous gift will allow Berkeley Rep to continue fostering the work of young playwrights and advance the creation of new American classics by supporting the Theatre's new play development program. It also shines a spotlight on the importance of Berkeley Rep as an artistic leader in the Bay Area and the nation. We are tremendously grateful to the Osher Foundation for this bar-setting contribution that will ensure Berkeley Rep remains at the forefront of developing new talent and new audiences."

"I cannot thank the Oshers enough for their generous and enduring support of the arts in our community," added **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "They have been deeply involved with Berkeley Rep for two decades, and have sponsored at least one show every season for the last 15 years. Ever since Sharon Ott's production of *Lulu*, the Oshers have displayed a commitment to our most adventurous, ambitious and challenging work. They have helped us produce, among others, the American premiere of *Fuente Ovejuna*, the world premiere of *Fräulein Else*, Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror*, Tony Kushner and Maurice Sendak's *Brundibar*, and *The Oresteia*, which inaugurated our Roda Theatre. This year, they're supporting the West Coast premiere of *Figaro*. I am truly grateful for this new gift, which will further our efforts to bring important new voices to local audiences."

Mr. Feinstein agreed to perform at this event to commemorate Berkeley Rep's birthday. He dazzled guests with a sparkling set of romantic standards, performed on a piano with a history suitable to the occasion. Purchased in 1920 by Emily Paley, this delicate Steinway medium grand was played nearly every Saturday night for the next 16 years by George Gershwin at the Paley's salon in Greenwich Village. Mr. Feinstein also played this piano on his own frequent visits to Ms. Paley, and so **Mike and Jean Strunsky** loaned the instrument for the evening. Ms. Strunsky is presently a Berkeley Rep trustee, and Mr. Strunsky – the nephew of Ms. Paley – is a former member of the board.

The Oshers, the Strunskys, and Mr. Rubin and his wife, **Marcia Smolens**, shared the evening with 50 of the Bay Area's top philanthropists, many of whom are longtime supporters of Berkeley Rep: **Rena Bransten, Kristina Flanagan, Nick and Mary Graves, Rita Moreno** and **Leonard Gordon, Michael and Sue Steinberg**, and **Laura Wais**.

The **Bernard Osher Foundation**, a 30-year-old philanthropic organization headquartered in San Francisco, supports higher education and the arts. Post-secondary scholarships are provided to selected institutions nationally, with a recent emphasis on meeting the needs of reentry students. The Foundation supports a growing national network of lifelong learning institutes for seasoned adults located at nearly 120 colleges and universities from Maine to Hawaii. The Foundation also

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funds integrative medicine centers at Harvard University; the University of California, San Francisco; and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, as well as a career development awards program at NIH's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Arts grants, generally made to organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area and the State of Maine, seek to bring new and younger audiences to classical music and the performing arts.

Barbro Osher is Consul General of Sweden in San Francisco, having served in the same capacity in Los Angeles from 1995 to 1998. She also is chair of the Bernard Osher Foundation, president of the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, and owner and publisher of *Vestkusten*, one of the few Swedish-American newspapers in the United States. A native of Stockholm and a graduate of Stockholm University with a degree in languages and political science, Ms. Osher pursued a career in publishing and advertising in Sweden before moving to the United States in the early 1980s. She is the founder of the Swedish Women's Educational Association (SWEA) chapter in San Francisco and was president of Positive Sweden/North America, an organization furthering the image of Sweden through educational activities in the United States. She serves on the boards of the University of California (Berkeley) Foundation and the American-Scandinavian Foundation. Among numerous recognitions, including several American honorary degrees, Ms. Osher received the Eliason Award from the Swedish American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Los Angeles in 1999, and she was a recipient of His Majesty the King's Medal in 2002. Ms. Osher is also a very active member of the Consular Corps of San Francisco, an avid reader in six languages, and an enthusiastic skier.

Bernard Osher, a patron of education and the arts, is well known as "the quiet philanthropist." He created the Bernard Osher Foundation in 1977 and, with his wife Barbro, also contributes to the community through the Bernard Osher Jewish Philanthropies Fund and the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, which supports Swedish cultural and educational projects in North America and Sweden. A native of Biddeford, Maine and a graduate of Bowdoin College, Mr. Osher has pursued a successful career in business, beginning with the management of his family's hardware and plumbing supplies store in Maine and continuing with work at Oppenheimer & Company in New York before moving to California. Then he became a founding director of World Savings, the second largest savings institution in the United States, which was recently merged with Wachovia Corporation. A collector of American paintings of the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, Mr. Osher purchased the fine art auction house of Butterfield & Butterfield in 1970 and oversaw its growth to become the fourth largest auction house in the world. In 1999, he sold the company to eBay. Having served on a number of philanthropic and non-profit boards, Mr. Osher is an active community leader in the San Francisco Bay Area, the recipient of several honorary degrees, a serious student of opera, and an ardent fly fisherman.

Michael Feinstein, one of the premiere interpreters of American popular song, has been a household name since the success of his 1988 one-man Broadway show, *Isn't it Romantic?* He enjoys an active performance schedule, including major concert halls, symphony orchestras, intimate jazz clubs, and college campuses. More than a mere performer, Mr. Feinstein is nationally recognized for his commitment to the American popular song, both celebrating its art and preserving its legacy for the next generation. He has been nominated for four Grammy Awards – and his latest CD from Concord Records is *Hopeless Romantics*, a collection of Harry Warren classics recorded with legendary jazz pianist George Shearing. His own record label Feinery, a new Concord subsidiary, records favorite current artists and restores recordings and musical broadcasts from the golden age of song. Mr. Feinstein produced and recorded *The Great American Songbook*, a PBS special and DVD set from Warner Home Video that traces the history of popular music in this country. His Manhattan night club, Feinstein's at the Regency, presents the top talents in pop and jazz – and Mr. Feinstein plays a sold-out holiday engagement there every year to the delight of his fans.

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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*. This season, local audiences can enjoy the world premiere of Danny Hoch's *Taking Over*, Carrie Fisher's hilarious new solo show *Wishful Drinking*, the American premiere of Will Eno's *TRAGEDY: a tragedy*, and the West Coast premiere of Theatre de la Jeune Lune's *Figaro*. For more information, call 510.647.2949 or 888-4-BRT-Tix (toll-free) – or simply click berkeleyrep.org.

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