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BERKELEY REP CELEBRATES DEBUT OF NEW FILM, NEW BOOKS, CD & COMEDIES

2009 sees *Strange* on screen, Fisher and Zorro in print, Ruhl on stage, and more

DECEMBER 29, 2008 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre celebrates the New Year with a new film, new books, a popular CD, more venues for its touring shows, and two world premieres here at home. In 2008, the Theatre moved a musical to Broadway with its original cast intact and repeatedly broke box-office records in Berkeley with a series of spectacular solo shows. That sounds like a tough act to follow, but the future looks bright for this Tony Award-winning company:

- **New film at Sundance:** Last summer, legendary director **Spike Lee** taped two Broadway performances of Berkeley Rep's groundbreaking musical, *Passing Strange* – and soon he makes his Sundance debut with the resulting film. On January 16, this provocative rock opera conquers the big screen with its cinematic premiere at the famous festival in Park City, Utah. "It's very true to what people saw in Berkeley and The Public and on Broadway," Lee told the *Los Angeles Times*. "But I still made it a Spike Lee Joint at the same time."
- **Three new books:** Last winter, **Carrie Fisher** broke sales records at Berkeley Rep with her outrageous solo show, *Wishful Drinking*, before launching it on a sold-out tour of six American cities. Now, to the delight of her fans, she's released the hilarious, tell-all script in book form, and the critics are crowing. "With acerbic precision and brash humor, she writes of struggling with and enjoying aspects of her alcoholism, drug addiction, and mental breakdowns," *Publishers Weekly* reports. "Her razor-sharp observations about celebrity, addiction, and sexuality demand to be read aloud to friends." Now available from Simon and Schuster, this 176-page hardcover is listed at \$21. In 2009, Theatre Communications Group will also publish scripts for two other shows that saw significant success after being developed at Berkeley Rep: **Tony Kushner's** *Brundibar* and **Culture Clash's** *Zorro in Hell*.
- **New CD in stores:** According to Playbill, the live cast album of *Passing Strange* – featuring the ensemble first heard on Berkeley Rep's stage – was a popular gift this holiday season. As *Rolling Stone* attests, the CD from Ghostlight Records "preserves the songs' acerbic sting and dynamic whirl of New Wave snarl ('Sole Brother'), skewered vaudeville ('The Black One'), and shape-shifting soul ('Keys')." So take that trip to Amsterdam, Berlin, and beyond with **Stew** and **Heidi Rodewald** by buying a copy or downloading the tracks from iTunes.
- **New shows in Berkeley:** Berkeley Rep begins the year with its 50th world premiere: *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*. This hotly anticipated play about marriage, intimacy, and electricity comes January 30 courtesy of **Sarah Ruhl** and **Les Waters**, the creators of *Eurydice*. Then the Bay Area gets its first look at *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* – a hilariously bloody comedy by Oscar-winner **Martin McDonagh** – and *Crime and Punishment*, a gripping adaptation of the classic novel staged by **Sharon Ott**. Finally, in May, the crowning touch on this incendiary season is another world premiere: *You, Nero*, a preposterous comedy from local writer **Amy Freed**. "Gloriously funny," declares Charles Isherwood in the *Times*. "I await a New York production with unusual relish."
- **New venues for tours:** To top it off, two shows from 2008 that hit it big in Berkeley continue their national tours. *Wishful Drinking* is slated to play Seattle Repertory Theatre in April, and

(MORE)

Danny Hoch's *Taking Over* – which just ended an extended off-Broadway engagement – descends on the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Los Angeles for a four-week run beginning January 21. Whispers abound of additional dates for both these shows, which were staged by Artistic Director **Tony Taccone**.

“Artistically, 2008 was a year of great abundance for all of us at Berkeley Rep,” Taccone remarks. “We are grateful for that success, and for the ongoing support of the intelligent, adventurous audience that makes it possible. These are tough times, but exciting times – and we will continue to take theatrical risks in 2009, because that’s the only way forward.”

See tomorrow’s plays today at Berkeley Rep – and pick up a copy of Carrie Fisher’s book or the cast album from *Passing Strange* in the gift shop. Inviting new prices ensure that everyone can enjoy the best theatre in the Bay Area. To purchase seats, or for more information, dial (510) 647-2949 or toll-free at (888) 4-BRT-Tix – or simply click berkeleyrep.org.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Born in a storefront, 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, a permanent home for its long 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, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 50 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 seven years, Berkeley Rep has helped send seven hit shows to New York: *36 Views*, *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, *Metamorphoses*, *Passing Strange*, and *Taking Over*.

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BERKELEY REP FACT SHEET – 2009

SHOWS IN BERKELEY

In the Next Room (or the vibrator play) – World Premiere

Written by Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Les Waters

January 30 – March 15, 2009 (Opening night: February 4, 2009)

Roda Theatre / 2015 Addison St, Berkeley, CA 94704

510.647.2949 / berkeleyrep.org

Crime & Punishment

Written by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Adapted by Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus

Directed by Sharon Ott

February 27 – March 29, 2009 (Opening night: March 4, 2009)

Thrust Stage / 2025 Addison St, Berkeley, CA 94704

510.647.2949 / berkeleyrep.org

The Lieutenant of Inishmore

Written by Martin McDonagh

Directed by Les Waters

April 17 – May 17, 2009 (Opening night: April 22, 2009)

Roda Theatre / 2015 Addison St, Berkeley, CA 94704

510.647.2949 / berkeleyrep.org

You, Nero – World-Premiere Production

Written by Amy Freed

Directed by Sharon Ott

May 15 – June 28, 2009 (Opening night: May 20, 2009)

Thrust Stage / 2025 Addison St, Berkeley, CA 94704

510.647.2949 / berkeleyrep.org

TOURING SHOWS

Taking Over

Written and performed by Danny Hoch

Directed by Tony Taccone

January 21 – February 22, 2009

Kirk Douglas Theatre

9820 Washington Blvd, Culver City, CA 90232

213.628.2772 / centertheatregroup.org

Wishful Drinking

Created and performed by Carrie Fisher

Directed by Tony Taccone

April 2 – May 3, 2009

Seattle Repertory Theatre

155 Mercer Street, Seattle, WA 98109

206.443.2222 / seattlerep.org

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