

For photos, interviews, etc. contact:
Terence Keane, Director of Public Relations
510.647.2917, tkeane@berkeleyrep.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARY ZIMMERMAN RETURNS TO BERKELEY REP WITH *THE ARABIAN NIGHTS*
Tony Award-winning director works her magic for the first time on intimate Thrust Stage

OCTOBER 7, 2008 – Next month, Tony Award-winning director **Mary Zimmerman** returns to Berkeley Repertory Theatre with an alluring adaptation of *The Arabian Nights*. This is Zimmerman's sixth trip to Berkeley Rep, and for the first time she works her magic on the intimate Thrust Stage. *The Arabian Nights* runs from **November 13** through **January 4** with the official press night on November 19. The executive producers of this play are Betty and Jack Schafer and Jean and Michael Strunsky. The production sponsor is the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Philanthropic Fund, with co-sponsorship from Wealth Management at The Mechanics Bank. BART and Wells Fargo are the season sponsors for Berkeley Rep's 41st year of fearless theatre.

"The first time I ever saw the Thrust Stage was in 1996 when I came to Berkeley Rep to do *Journey to the West*," **Zimmerman** remarks. "I remember turning to [Managing Director] Susie Medak and saying, 'This space is perfect for *The Arabian Nights*.' It is set up beautifully for the show, with that steep rake that lets the audience see to the floor – which is such an important part of this show – and the intimacy that makes the stage space and the theatre space feel so integrated. So it is very exciting to have that first impulse realized now, and to work on the Thrust for the first time."

Mary Zimmerman made her career by reanimating ancient myths like *Argonautika* and *Metamorphoses*... now she breathes new life into the legend of the 1,001 nights. To save her life, a beautiful bride must spin hypnotic tales of genies, jesters, thieves, and kings – winning her freedom by eventually winning her husband's heart. He falls under Scheherazade's spell, and Zimmerman enchants the audience as well with her signature style that transforms simplicity into the sublime. Amidst a thousand tales of honor, revenge, and humor, only love emerges victorious. A co-production with Kansas City Repertory Theatre, *The Arabian Nights* will travel to Missouri and to Chicago's Lookingglass Theatre Company in 2009.

"If you want theatre at its most unpretentiously poetic, most fetchingly stylish, as humane as it is elegant, I commend to you *The Arabian Nights*," raves **New York** magazine. "Zimmerman has

(MORE)

the kind of transforming theatrical touch that reconnects audiences to what live theatre is all about,” avers the **San Francisco Chronicle**, and **USA Today** says simply, “She could stage the Chicago phone book and have it be fascinating.”

Mary Zimmerman is the recipient of a 1998 MacArthur Fellowship and the 2002 Tony Award for Best Director. At Berkeley Rep, audiences have embraced her acclaimed productions of *Argonautika*, *Journey to the West*, *Metamorphoses*, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, and *The Secret in the Wings*. These plays – and others that she’s adapted and directed such as *Eleven Rooms of Proust*, *The Odyssey*, *Silk*, and *S/M* – have enjoyed celebrated runs at About Face Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Goodman Theatre, the Huntington Theatre Company, Lookingglass, the Mark Taper Forum, McCarter Theatre Center, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Second Stage Theatre, and The Shakespeare Theatre Company. Based in Chicago, Zimmerman has won ten Joseph Jefferson Awards – the city’s top theatrical honors – including prizes for best production and best direction. She is a member of Lookingglass, an artistic associate at the Goodman, and a professor of performance studies at Northwestern University. She also directed classics such as *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Pericles*, and *The Trojan Women* at the Goodman; *Henry VIII* and *Measure for Measure* at the New York Shakespeare Festival (NYSF); *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Huntington; and *Pericles* at The Shakespeare Theatre. In 2002, Zimmerman created a new opera with Philip Glass called *Galileo Galilei*, which was presented at the Goodman, BAM, and the Barbican in London. Last fall, she debuted at the Metropolitan Opera with *Lucia di Lammermoor* and will stage *La Sonnambula* there in 2009.

As usual, Zimmerman has assembled a **diverse cast** to bring her tale to life:

- **Alana Arenas** (Sympathy the Learned) is an ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where she has performed in *The Crucible*, *The Sparrow Project*, and *The Bluest Eye*, which transferred to an off-Broadway run at the New Victory Theater.
- A familiar face from four seasons with the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival, **Barzin Akhavan** (Harun al Rashid) has also performed with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Idaho Repertory Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre Company, Seattle Rep, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Virginia Stage Company.
- **Ryan Artzberger** (King Shahryar) portrayed Herve in *Silk* and the title role in *Pericles* at the Goodman and The Shakespeare Theatre. He also played the leads in *Macbeth* at Indiana Repertory Theatre and *Hamlet* at Shakespeare Santa Cruz.

(MORE)

- Last summer, **Ari Brand** (Boy) performed in Central Park in NYSF's *Romeo and Juliet*. This year, he was named Outstanding Actor in a One Act for his portrayal of Ethan in *The Claw of the Schwa* at the Midtown International Theatre Festival.
- **Noshir Dalal** (Madman) appeared on Broadway in *Cymbeline* and off Broadway in LaMama's *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Sandbox* at Cherry Lane Theatre. His New York credits also include the Classical Theatre of Harlem, The Gallery Players, and Vampire Cowboys Theatre Company.
- Recently, **Allen Gilmore** (Ishak of Mosul) was seen in Berkeley Rep's *Argonautika* and *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Bach at Leipzig* at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. His other regional credits include The Acting Company, Congo Square Theatre Company, Court Theatre, and Intiman Theatre.
- **Sofia Jean Gomez** (Scheherezade) also appeared in *Argonautika*, as well as Zimmerman's production of *Mirror of the Invisible World* at the Goodman. She has worked at Manhattan Theatre Club, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Stages Repertory Theatre, and Yale Repertory Theatre.
- **Melina Kalomas** (Perfect Love) performed in the national tours of *Camelot* and *Les Misérables*. A graduate of the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University, her experience ranges from *As the World Turns* on television to *Zhivago* at La Jolla Playhouse.
- **Ramiz Monsef** (Sage) appeared in *Fêtes de la Nuit* and *Eurydice* at Berkeley Rep, reprising his role in the latter show at Yale Rep and Second Stage. His other New York credits include the Barrow Group, Culture Project, and New York Theatre Workshop (NYTW).
- **Jesse J. Perez** (Robber) worked with Zimmerman on *Argonautika* and *Pericles*. His off-Broadway credits include *In the Penal Colony* at Classic Stage Company, *Recent Tragic Events* at Playwrights Horizons, *The Triple Happiness* at Second Stage, and *Up Against the Wind* at NYTW.
- **Nicole Shalhoub** (ensemble) performed in Zimmerman's *Mirror of the Invisible World* at the Goodman. Off Broadway, she was seen in *The Clean House* at Lincoln Center, *The Fifth Column* at the Mint Theater, and *Hell House* at St. Ann's Warehouse.
- **Louis Tucci** (Wazir) performed on Broadway in *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story*. His off-Broadway work includes *The Cider House Rules* and *The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite* at Atlantic Theatre Company, *The Fourth Sister* at Vineyard Theatre, and *Woyzeck* at The Public Theater.

(MORE)

- **Pranidhi Varshney** (ensemble) previously worked with Zimmerman as Sita in *Sita Ram* at Lookingglass. Her other roles include Eve in *Kama Sutra: The Musical* at Theatre Building Chicago and Pushpa in Silk Road Theatre Project's *Merchant on Venice*.
- **Stacey Yen** (Azizah) performed in *Mirror of the Invisible World* at the Goodman. Her credits also include the title role in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, *Wind-Up* with Pig Iron Theatre Company, and *Yellowface* at The Public.
- **Evan Zes** (Abu al Hasan) worked with Zimmerman on *Pericles* at the Goodman and The Shakespeare Theatre. Off Broadway, his credits include *American Dreams*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, and *Time to Burn* – and he appeared in *King Stag* at the Barbican.

Zimmerman has recruited a team of **talented designers** to create this intricate mosaic. **Daniel Ostling** (scenic design) designed the sets for Berkeley Rep's productions of *Argonautika*, *Closer*, *Metamorphoses*, and *The Secret in the Wings*. An ensemble member of Lookingglass, he often works with Zimmerman and received a Tony nomination when they took *Metamorphoses* to Broadway. **Mara Blumenfeld** (costume design) returns to Berkeley Rep where she worked on *after the quake*, *Metamorphoses*, and *The Secret in the Wings*. Her New York credits include BAM, Circle in the Square, Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Opera, the New Victory Theater, NYSF, and Second Stage. **TJ Gerckens** (lighting design) illuminated Berkeley Rep's presentations of *Journey to the West*, *Metamorphoses*, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, and *The Secret in the Wings*. His extensive experience has earned him a Drama Desk Award, several Jefferson Awards, and an L.A. Ovation Award. **Andre Pluess** and **Ben Sussman** (sound design) collaborated on *after the quake*, *Argonautika*, *Blue Door*, *Honour*, *Metamorphoses*, and *The Secret in the Wings* at Berkeley Rep. On Broadway, they designed *I Am My Own Wife* and *Metamorphoses*. Their honors include a Drama Critics Circle Award, 11 Jeffersons, and an Ovation. The stage manager for this show is **Michael Suenkel**, Berkeley Rep's resident production stage manager.

To keep the audience enthralled, Berkeley Rep unveils 1,001 **special events** during the run of *The Arabian Nights*:

- *Low-cost previews* take place on Thursday, November 13; Friday, November 14; Saturday, November 15; and Sunday, November 16.
- *Target @ Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, November 14, and includes dinner donated by Bowzer's Pizza, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *The Arabian Nights*. Tickets are only \$10 for teens. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail school@berkeleyrep.org.

(MORE)

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS AT BERKELEY REP / 5 OF 6

- *VIP night* on Tuesday, November 18 includes a pre-show dinner for donors at Downtown Restaurant and a special performance of *The Arabian Nights*.
- *Press night* starts at 8:00 PM on Wednesday, November 19 and culminates with a post-show party catered by Bistro Liaison and Raymond Vineyards.
- *night/OUT*, an event for the lesbian / gay / bisexual / transgender community sponsored by Energy 92.7, takes place on Thursday, November 20. The post-play party features music, dancing, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, bouquets from Darling Flower Shop, and complimentary drinks from Raymond Vineyards and Triple Rock Brewery.
- Berkeley Rep's newest event, *30 Below*, returns on Friday, November 21. It's the coolest night of theatre for the under-30 crowd with a performance starting at 8:00 PM and a wild post-show party sponsored by the *SF Bay Guardian*. Tickets start at only \$22.50 for anyone under 30 years old.
- *Student matinees* occur at noon on Wednesday, December 3 and Wednesday, December 17. 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.
- And, on the following evenings, patrons can whet their palates for the play with *free tastings* from these culinary artisans one hour before curtain: the Berkeley Farmers' Market on Friday, November 14; Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi on Saturday, November 15; Raymond Vineyards on Sunday, November 16; Triple Rock Brewery and Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi on Friday, November 21; Domaine Carneros and Teance on Saturday, November 22; Bravante Vineyards and Raymond Vineyards on Sunday, November 23; Domaine Carneros on Saturday, November 29; Kokomo Wines on Friday, December 5; Kokomo Wines and Peterson Winery on Saturday, December 6; Kokomo Wines and Peet's Coffee and Tea on Sunday, December 7; Triple Rock Brewery on Friday, December 12; Craft Distillers and St. Helena Road Winery on Saturday, December 13; Bravante Vineyards and Domaine Carneros on Sunday, December 14; and Teance on Saturday, December 20.

Berkeley Rep also offers these opportunities to **learn more about the artists and the show**:

- Robert Hurwitt, theatre critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, interviews Zimmerman at *Page to Stage* on Monday, November 3. This free event starts at 7:00 PM and, in addition to the public discussion, includes an exclusive reception for donors at the Supporter level and above catered by Bistro Liaison.

(MORE)

- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place at 7:00 PM on the following Tuesday and Thursday evenings: November 20, November 25, December 2, December 4, December 9, December 11, December 16, December 18, December 23, December 30, and January 1.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, December 11; Tuesday, December 16; and Friday, December 19.

Individual **tickets for *The Arabian Nights* start at only \$27**, thanks to exciting new prices that let more people experience the best theatre in the Bay Area. Additional savings are available for groups, seniors, students, and anyone under 30 years of age – meaning discounted seats can be obtained for as little as \$13.50. This change makes Berkeley Rep more affordable to people in the community who are just starting school, starting careers, and starting families – because lower prices are now available for every performance. True theatre lovers can save even more with ticket packages that include three or more shows in Berkeley Rep’s bold new season.

Don’t miss *The Arabian Nights*. Berkeley Rep’s Thrust Stage is located at 2025 Addison Street, near bus lines, bike routes, and parking lots – and only half a block from BART. For tickets or information, call 510.647.2949 or toll-free at 888-4-BRT-Tix – or simply click 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, 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 three years, Berkeley Rep has helped send five hit shows to New York: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, *Passing Strange*, and *Taking Over*.

###



THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

FACT SHEET

WHO: Written and directed by Mary Zimmerman
 Adapted from *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*
 Designed by Daniel Ostling (sets), Mara Blumenfeld (costumes), TJ Gerckens (lights), and Andre Pluess and Ben Sussman (sound)
 Starring Alana Arenas, Barzin Akhavan, Ryan Artzberger, Ari Brand, Noshir Dalal, Allen Gilmore, Sofia Jean Gomez, Melina Kalomas, Ramiz Monsef, Jesse J. Perez, Nicole Shalhoub, Louis Tucci, Pranidhi Varshney, Stacey Yen, and Evan Zes

WHAT: *The Arabian Nights* – an alluring adaptation of the classic tale from the director of *Argonautika*

WHERE: Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Thrust Stage, 2025 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Downtown Berkeley

WHEN: **November 13, 2008 – January 4, 2009**

- 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 performances on 11/27 (Thanksgiving) or 12/25 (Christmas Day)
- No matinees on 11/13, 11/15, 11/16, 11/20, 12/4, 12/13, 12/20 or 1/1
- Special 2:00 PM matinee on 12/24 (Christmas Eve) – no performance that night

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				13 NOV 8P	14 8P	15 8P
16 2P	17	18 8P	19 8P	20 8P	21 8P	22 2P
23 2P	24	25 8	26 7	27 8	28 8	29 2P
30 2P	1 DEC 8	2 8	3 7	4 8P	5 8P	6 2P
7 2P	8	9 8	10 7	11 2P	12 8P	13 8P
14 2P	15	16 8P	17 7	18 2P	19 8P	20 8P
21 2P	22	23 8	24 2	25 8	26 8	27 2P
28 2P	29	30 8	31 7	1 JAN 8	2 8	3 2P
4 2P						

Special Events:

Page to Stage (free talk w/ Zimmerman): Monday 11/3 @ 7:00 PM
Low-cost previews: Thursday 11/13, Friday 11/14 & Saturday 11/15 @ 8:00 PM & Sunday 11/16 @ 7:00 PM
Target @ Teen Night: Friday 11/14 @ 6:30 PM
VIP night: Tuesday 11/18 @ 8:00 PM
Press night: Wednesday 11/19 @ 8:00 PM
night/OUT (LGBT event): Thursday 11/20 @ 8:00 PM
30 Below (party for the under-30 crowd): Friday 11/21 @ 8:00 PM
Docent talks: Tuesdays 11/25, 12/2, 12/9, 12/16, 12/23 & 12/30 and Thursdays 11/20, 12/4, 12/11, 12/18 & 1/1 @ 7:00 PM
Student matinees: Wednesdays 12/3 & 12/17 @ noon
Post-play discussions: Thursday 12/11, Tuesday 12/16 & Friday 12/19 @ 8:00 PM
Free tastings: Fridays 11/14 (Berkeley Farmers' Market), 11/21 (Triple Rock Brewery and Fra' Mani Salumi), 12/5 (Kokomo Wines) & 12/12 (Triple Rock Brewery) @ 7:00 PM; Saturdays 11/15 (Fra' Mani Salumi), 11/22 (Domaine Carneros and Teance), 11/29 (Domaine Carneros), 12/6 (Kokomo Wines and Peterson Winery), 12/13 (Craft Distillers and St. Helena Road Winery) & 12/20 (Teance) @ 7:00 PM; and Sundays 11/16 (Raymond Vineyards), 11/23 (Bravante and Raymond Vineyards), 12/7 (Kokomo Wines and Peet's Coffee & Tea) & 12/14 (Bravante Vineyards and Domaine Carneros) @ 6:00 PM

- P PREVIEW
- TN TARGET® TEEN NIGHT
- O OPENING NIGHT
- V VIP NIGHT
- L LGBT NIGHT/OUT
- 30 30 BELOW
- D POST-SHOW DISCUSSION
- T TASTING
- DOCENT PRESENTATIONS EVERY TUE & THU 7PM

HOW MUCH: \$13.50 - \$71

	Section B	Section A	Premium
Previews	\$27	\$34	\$39
Tue 8 PM / Wed 7 PM / Thu 2 PM / Sat 2 PM	\$33	\$45	\$52
Thu 8 PM / Sun 2 PM / Sun 7 PM	\$37	\$51	\$57
Friday @ 8 PM	\$45	\$57	\$63
Saturday @ 8 PM	\$51	\$63	\$71

- 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

PHOTOS: <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/press/photos-08an.asp>

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