

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP EARNS EDGERTON AWARD FOR PREMIERE OF RUHL'S PLAY
Prestigious grant supports Waters' production of *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*

JULY 28, 2008 – Today Berkeley Repertory Theatre, which in the last 40 years has earned a reputation for developing provocative new plays, received a prestigious grant to fund its **50th world premiere**: the Edgerton Foundation presented this Tony Award-winning theatre with its coveted New American Play Award to support the latest work from the team that made *Eurydice* a national hit. The \$54,000 grant will provide extra rehearsal time for *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, an elegant comedy that Berkeley Rep has commissioned from MacArthur fellow **Sarah Ruhl**. The show – whose working title had simply been *The Vibrator Play* – will be staged in 2009 by Berkeley Rep's associate artistic director, Obie Award-winner **Les Waters**.

"I am thrilled to continue collaborating with Sarah," **Waters remarked**, "and enormously grateful to the Edgerton Foundation. This award provides us with the rare luxury of an extended rehearsal period for a new play. Sarah has become one of the country's most important writers, and I'm honored that Berkeley Rep has played a vital role in her career. I trust that our work on *Eurydice* and this new commission are only two steps in a long and fertile relationship."

The **Edgerton Foundation New Play Award** is given to select theatres that have demonstrated a strong and consistent track record of producing new work. In the last three years, the Foundation has disbursed more than \$1.4 million to noted theatres across the nation. By guaranteeing extra rehearsal time for a promising new play, the program aims to deliver a stronger first production and thereby increase the chances that a script will enjoy continued life and become a mainstay of the American repertoire. For Waters, who is renowned for collaborating with emerging and established authors on new plays, this is the second production honored in this way: earlier this year, his world premiere of Stephen Greenblatt and Charles Mee's *Cardenio* also earned an Edgerton grant. In addition to the New Play Award, the Edgerton Foundation supports the environment, global security, and important institutions in Los Angeles.

"We want to encourage and thank the theatres that are taking on the risk of producing new plays," said **Dr. Brad Edgerton**, co-director of the foundation along with his wife, Louise. "We hope that this extra rehearsal time with the whole creative team in place, including the playwright, will help these excellent plays become great plays destined for future productions."

The buzz is building for *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, written by Sarah Ruhl and directed by Les Waters. The last time these extraordinary talents teamed up in Berkeley, they gave birth to *Eurydice*, the beguiling show which went on to New Haven and New York – hitting the year's Top 10 list in the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine*. Now the prominent pair reunites to consummate another play of love and longing. *In the Next Room* illuminates the lives of six lonely people seeking relief from a local doctor – but, despite his expertise with a strange new technology, all they really need is intimacy. It's a tender tale that takes place in the twilight of the Victorian age, a comedy lit by unexpected sparks from the approaching era of electricity, equality, science, and sexuality. The show begins previews in the Roda Theatre on January 30, opens on February 4, and runs through March 15.

(MORE)

BERKELEY REP EARNS EDGERTON AWARD FOR RUHL PLAY / 2 OF 3

Sarah Ruhl has written numerous award-winning plays, including *The Clean House*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Demeter in the City*, *Eurydice*, *Late: a cowboy song*, *Melancholy Play*, *Orlando*, and *Passion Play: a cycle*. The *Washington Post* declares that "the Golden Ruhl has the Midas touch," and *Smithsonian* asserts, "Ruhl, like Dickinson, is a wild original... Even when she tackles darker topics – heartbreak, loss, disease, and death – her touch is light." The young writer has already earned the Helen Merrill Award, a MacArthur Fellowship, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, a Whiting Writers' Award, and a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize. Her scripts have been performed at theatres across the country including A Contemporary Theatre, the Alley Theatre, the Alliance Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Clubbed Thumb, Cornerstone Theater Company, the Goodman Theatre, Lincoln Center Theater, Madison Repertory Theatre, the Piven Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Trinity Repertory Company, the Williamstown Theatre Festival, the Wilma Theater, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Her plays have been translated into German, Polish, Korean, Russian, and Spanish, and have been produced internationally in Canada, Germany, Latvia, Poland, and the United Kingdom. A member of New Dramatists and 13P, Ruhl received her MFA from Brown University, where she studied with respected playwright Paula Vogel.

Les Waters is entering his sixth year as associate artistic director of Berkeley Rep. He has a long history of collaborating with prominent playwrights like Caryl Churchill and Charles Mee, and champions important new voices, such as Will Eno, Jordan Harrison, Sarah Ruhl, and Anne Washburn. At Berkeley Rep, he staged the world premieres of *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *Finn in the Underworld*, and *To the Lighthouse*; the American premiere of *TRAGEDY: a tragedy*; the West Coast premiere of *Eurydice*; and extended runs of *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Pillowman*, and *Yellowman*. Waters won an Obie Award for *Big Love*, directing its premiere at the Humana Festival and subsequent runs at Berkeley Rep, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Goodman, and Long Wharf Theatre. His other New York credits include the Connelly Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, Second Stage, and Signature Theatre Company. Elsewhere in America, he has directed for American Conservatory Theater, American Repertory Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Steppenwolf, and Yale Rep. In his native England, Waters has worked with the Bristol Old Vic, Hampstead Theatre Club, Joint Stock Theatre Group, National Theatre, Royal Court Theatre, and Traverse Theatre Club. Waters led the MFA directing program at UC San Diego and is an associate artist of The Civilians, a New York-based theatre group. His many honors include a Drama-Logue Award, an Edinburgh Fringe First Award, a KPBS Patte, and several awards from critics' circles in the Bay Area, Connecticut, and Tokyo.

See tomorrow's plays today at Berkeley Rep. Subscribe now for the 2008/09 Season, which also includes two other world premieres: *Yellowjackets* by Itamar Moses and *You, Nero* by Amy Freed. Inviting new prices ensure that everyone can join the fun. For details, 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

(MORE)

BERKELEY REP EARNS EDGERTON AWARD FOR RUHL PLAY / 3 OF 3

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 shows to New York: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, *Passing Strange*, and *Taking Over*.

###

IN THE NEXT ROOM (or the vibrator play)
FACT SHEET

- WHO: Written by Sarah Ruhl / Directed by Les Waters
- WHAT: *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*
The world premiere of an elegant new comedy of electricity, equality, and sexuality
- WHERE: Berkeley Rep's Roda Theatre / 2015 Addison Street @ Shattuck / Downtown Berkeley
- WHEN: January 30 – March 15, 2009
(opening night: February 4, 2009)
- HOW MUCH: \$13.50 - \$71
- TIX & INFO: 510.647.2949 – toll-free 888-4-BRT-Tix – berkeleyrep.org
- PHOTOS: <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/press/photos-09vp.asp>

###