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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPECTACULAR CHEFS HELP BERKELEY REP BID BON VOYAGE TO NARSAI TOAST

Tony Award-winning theatre holds final gourmet gala on April 3

MARCH 17, 2009 – Today, the Tony Award-winning Berkeley Repertory Theatre unveiled plans for its **17th annual Narsai Toast**. In addition to a lineup of chefs that includes seven culinary leaders, the annual gala will harness technology to highlight the intimate connection between fine food, exceptional wine, and great theatre. For the first time, **live chef-cams** will take guests behind the scenes to witness the evening's most dramatic moments, turning the meal itself into the evening's entertainment. Along with spectacular food and unparalleled memories, however, this year's event is tinged with nostalgia. **Narsai M. David** – the founder and host of the Toast – is hanging up his chef's hat after nearly two decades of volunteer service, in which the gala raised more than \$4.3 million. So this year's event is aptly named "Bon Voyage."

"Narsai has been a valued supporter of Berkeley Rep since the days of our founder, Michael Leibert," says **Susie Medak**, the Theatre's managing director. "Long after Narsai stepped down as the president of our board, he continued his unwavering support through our annual fundraiser, the Narsai Toast. We are deeply grateful for his years of service."

"It wasn't that long ago that I started attending productions at an upstart theatre company on College Avenue," **Narsai David comments**. "Or at least, it doesn't feel that way – even though that upstart company has grown into one which is routinely recognized on a national level! I've been privileged and honored to be associated with the Theatre since its start, and even though it's time for me to step back and reclaim my seat in the audience, I hope you'll join me for a final extraordinary meal."

From its earliest days, the Narsai Toast symbolized gastronomic and philanthropic excellence. The food and wine editor for KCBS, and a founding member of Berkeley Rep's board of trustees, Mr. David made it his mission each year to assemble a stellar collection of culinary talent to support Berkeley Rep's arts and outreach programs. The inaugural event in 1993 featured renowned chefs **Joyce Goldstein, Bradley Ogden, Paul Prudhomme, Wolfgang Puck, Jeremiah Tower, and Hans Wiegand**; over the years, thousands of guests from the theatre, business, and culinary communities have gathered to salute the art form and enjoy meals prepared by the nation's top chefs.

The final Narsai Toast dinner will be masterminded by **Kaleo Adams** and **Nathan Beriau** of the Ritz Carlton, San Francisco; **Michael Chiarello** of Bottega; **Jean-Pierre Dubray** of The Resort at Pelican Hill; **Gerald Hirigoyen** of Piperade; and **Hiro Sone** and **Lissa Doumani** of Ame and Terra. The evening kicks off at 5:30 PM when guests explore the wine country glass by glass with pre-dinner tastings hosted by Alexander Valley Vineyards, Cakebread Cellars, Domaine Carneros, Match Vineyards, Raymond Vineyards, Ravenswood Winery, Robert Mondavi, and St. George Spirits. At a silent auction, epicureans will have the opportunity to bid on lots of fine wine and enter a raffle to win one of several extraordinary culinary packages. Then, at 7:30 PM, the main event begins: a spectacular five-course meal served with wines selected from Merry Edwards Wines, Quady Winery, Raymond Vineyards, and the exquisite collection of Narsai & Venus David Winery.

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After dinner, Narsai David will pick up the auctioneer's gavel for the final time, and offer guests the opportunity to bid on an array of wines from Northern California's finest vineyards. The auction also includes several exceptional adventures, such as a weeklong getaway for four in Manhattan, lunch with the editor-in-chief of *Gourmet Magazine*, tickets to Manhattan Theatre Club and the New York City Ballet, and tickets to *Saturday Night Live* with a private backstage tour led by *SNL* staff writer Jorma Taccone.

Tickets for the final Narsai Toast begin at \$600. Tables are priced between \$6,000 and \$25,000. All proceeds from the event support the nonprofit Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the organization's education and outreach programs. The event's lead sponsors are Fossil; The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco; and KCBS. The connoisseur sponsor for the event is The Roda Group. The 2009 Narsai Toast is chaired by **Felicia Woytak**, **Rich Edwards**, **Scott Haber**, **Mitzi Inglis**, **Sara Olsen**, **Arlene Robertson**, and **Jean Z. Strunsky** serve on the planning committee.

For more information, contact Margo Chillless, Berkeley Rep's special events manager, at 510.647.2909 or mchillless@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. 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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ATTENTION CALENDAR EDITORS:

- WHO: Narsai M. David, and seven celebrity chefs...
Kaleo Adams and Nathan Beriau of the Ritz Carlton, San Francisco; Michael Chiarello of Bottega; Jean-Pierre Dubray of The Resort at Pelican Hill; Gerald Hirigoyen of Piperade; and Hiro Sone and Lissa Doumani of Ame and Terra
- WHAT: The 17th annual – and final – Narsai Toast
A gourmet gala and wine auction benefiting Berkeley Repertory Theatre
- WHEN: Friday, April 3 @ 5:30 PM (reception) and 7:30 PM (four-course dinner)
- WHERE: The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco, 600 Stockton St, San Francisco
- HOW MUCH: \$600 for tickets; tables for \$6,000 to \$25,000
- INFO & TIX: 510.647.2909, berkeleyrep.org or mchillless@berkeleyrep.org

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