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MIKE McSHANE JOINS COMIC CAST OF *YOU, NERO* AT BERKELEY REP

Beloved comic completes triumvirate of talent with Danny Scheie and Jeff McCarthy

MAY 4, 2009 – Today Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced an addition to the royally talented cast of *You, Nero*. **Mike McShane** – the popular comic who became a regular on *Whose Line is it Anyway?* – takes the local stage for the first time in more than 20 years to perform in this smart and sassy show. McShane completes a hilarious triumvirate of talent that includes beloved Bay Area actor **Danny Scheie** and **Jeff McCarthy**, star of Broadway's *Urinetown* and voice of Looney Tunes' Michigan J. Frog. Throw **Susannah Schulman** into the arena as well and you've got enough laughter to topple an empire.

You, Nero, a new comedy written by **Amy Freed** and directed by **Sharon Ott**, rules the Thrust Stage this spring. The emperor's entourage also includes **Richard Doyle**, **Lori Larsen**, **Donnell Hill**, **Kasey Mahaffy**, **Maggie Mason**, and **Sarah Moser**. **Charles Dean**, who was cast in the role of Burrus, withdrew from the production for health reasons. *You, Nero* begins previews on May 15, opens May 20, and closes June 28. The show is produced in association with South Coast Repertory (SCR), where it debuted in January, and the executive producers of the local run are Philip D. and Shirley D. Schild and the Strauch Kuhlanjian Family. This Roman romp wraps up Berkeley Rep's 2008/09 Season, which was sponsored by BART and Wells Fargo.

"I'm thrilled to be back at Berkeley Rep, and eager to put Tony [Taccone], Sharon, and Amy's generosity to the test," **McShane remarks**. "After working on London's West End, in touring theatre, and a stint on Broadway, I think it's safe to say that Bay Area audiences possess the enthusiasm, curiosity, and sophistication to place them among the world's best theatregoers – and that's everything for a stage actor. Also I get to pester Michael Suenkel, my former roommate, who is now the Big Cheese at the Rep. [Suenkel is Berkeley Rep's production stage manager.] That's an amusement that money can't buy."

In this new comedy, not only does Nero fiddle while Rome burns, he fills the Colosseum with an incendiary mix of sex and decadence. The egotistical emperor commands a washed-up scribe to create an extravaganza that flatters his regime. But to stage the script he must survive the real spectacle at the palace, where his mother, his mistress, and an entourage of eunuchs play an elaborate game of deceit and seduction. **You, Nero** is the third collaboration for this talented team: Freed is a Pulitzer Prize-nominee known for clever comedies such as *The Beard of Avon* and *Restoration Comedy*, both of which enjoyed acclaimed productions under Ott's direction. Now she lets loose the tigers on a crumbling empire obsessed with shallow celebrities, violent sports, and sensational entertainment. When Rome unravels like it's reality TV, everyone wants to get in the emperor's new clothes.

Mike McShane performed at Berkeley Rep in *The Stick Wife* in 1988 and *Waiting for Godot* in 1989. He also appeared at American Conservatory Theater, California Shakespeare Theater, and the Eureka Theatre. McShane has been a regular on *Whose Line is it Anyway?* and portrayed Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors* on London's West End. With David Amram, he recited Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* for the British Library's celebration of the book's 50th anniversary, and he costarred with Sir John Gielgud and Rosemary Harris in *A Summer Day's Dream* for the BBC. In

(MORE)

the US, McShane acted in the recent American premiere of *Dumb Show* at SCR, as well as *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Susannah Schulman. He has been a recurring character on *ER* and *Seinfeld*, and is a proud member of The Antaeus Company, LA's classical theatre ensemble.

Nero's advisors include five majestic designers: **Erik Flatmo** (scenic design), **Paloma H. Young** (costume design), **Peter Maradudin** (lighting design), and **Stephen LeGrand** and **Eric Drew Feldman** (original music and sound design). The stage manager for this show is **Julie Haber**.

Be part of the coup! Individual **tickets for You, Nero 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.

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, Berkeley Rep has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 50 world premieres. In the last four years alone, Berkeley Rep has helped send four shows to Broadway: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Passing Strange*, and *Wishful Drinking*. Founded in 1968, 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 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. 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.

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YOU, NERO
FACT SHEET

WHO: Written by Amy Freed
Directed by Sharon Ott
Designed by Erik Flatmo (scenic design), Paloma H. Young (costume design), Peter Maradudin (lighting design), and Stephen LeGrand and Eric Drew Feldman (original music and sound design)
Starring Richard Doyle, Donnell Hill, Lori Larsen, Kasey Mahaffy, Maggie Mason, Jeff McCarthy, Mike McShane, Sarah Moser, Danny Scheie, and Susannah Schulman

WHAT: *You, Nero*, the world-premiere production of a new comedy from three favorite local artists: Amy Freed, Sharon Ott, and Danny Scheie

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

WHEN: **May 15 – June 28, 2009**

- Tuesdays and Fridays @ 8:00 PM
- Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
- Thursdays and Saturdays @ 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM
- Sundays @ 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
- No matinees during previews

SUN	MON	TUE ■	WED	THU ■	FRI	SAT
					15 MAY 8:00 P T	16 8:00 P T
17 7:00 P T	18	19 8:00 P T	20 8:00 P T	21 8	22 8:00 P T	23 2:00 P T
24 2:00 P T	25	26 8	27 7	28 2:00 P T	29 8:00 P T	30 8:00 P T
31 2:00 P T	1 JUN	2 8	3 7	4 8:00 P T	5 8:00 P T	6 2:00 P T
7 2:00 P T	8	9 8	10 7	11 2:00 P T	12 8	13 8:00 P T
14 2:00 P T	15	16 8:00 P T	17 7	18 8	19 8:00 P T	20 2:00 P T
21 2:00 P T	22	23 8	24 7	25 2:00 P T	26	27 2:00 P T
28 2:00 P T						

- PREVIEW
- TN TARGET® TEEN NIGHT
- OPENING NIGHT
- D POST-SHOW DISCUSSION
- T TASTING
- DOCENT PRESENTATIONS EVERY TUE & THU 7PM

Special Events:

Low-cost previews: Friday 5/15, Saturday 5/16, & Tuesday 5/19 @ 8:00 PM & Sunday 5/17 @ 7:00 PM

Target® Teen Night: Friday 5/15 @ 6:30 PM

Opening night: Wednesday 5/20 @ 8:00 PM

Docent talks: Tuesdays 5/19, 5/26, 6/2, 6/9, 6/16 & 6/23 and Thursdays 5/21, 5/28, 6/4, 6/11, 6/18 & 6/25 @ 7:00 PM

Post-play discussions: Thursday 6/4, Tuesday 6/16 & Friday 6/19 @ 8:00 PM

Free tastings: Fridays 5/15 (Bedarra Vineyards), 5/29 (Raymond Vineyards) & 6/5 (Venus Restaurant) @ 7:00 PM; Saturdays 5/16 (Triple Rock Brewery) & 6/6 (Teance) @ 7:00 PM; and Sunday 5/17 (Bedarra Vineyards) @ 6:00 PM

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-09yn.asp>

TIX & INFO: 510.647.2949 – [berkeleyrep.org](http://www.berkeleyrep.org) – 888-4-BRT-Tix (toll-free)