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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP'S NEW SEASON FEATURES STUNNING PLAYS & STELLAR PERFORMERS

**Tony Award-winning theatre's 2010-11 season features
new scripts by Lemony Snicket, Rinne Groff, Tony Taccone, and Sarah Ruhl,
thrilling performances from Rita Moreno, Geoff Hoyle, and Mike Daisey,
the local debut of Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Ruined*,
and – direct from London – *The Great Game: Afghanistan***

MARCH 3, 2010 – Even as it debuts another world premiere tonight and eagerly awaits previews for its latest Broadway outing, Berkeley Repertory Theatre proudly announces a slate of eight new shows. The Tony Award-winning nonprofit – known for developing exhilarating new plays – introduces a series of stunning scripts and stellar performers for the coming year.

Starting in September, the season features three world premieres: **Rinne Groff's** compelling *Compulsion*, a delightful new look at **Lemony Snicket's *The Composer is Dead***, and a tantalizing show written by Artistic Director **Tony Taccone** that stars legendary actress **Rita Moreno**. Two West Coast premieres take the stage as well: celebrated collaborators **Sarah Ruhl** and **Les Waters** reunite for a refreshing new translation of **Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*** while Berkeley Rep welcomes *The Great Game: Afghanistan*, an unprecedented cycle of 12 short scripts that caused a sensation in London. The upcoming season also introduces local audiences to **Lynn Nottage's** Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Ruined* and two audacious new monologues from **Mike Daisey: *The Last Cargo Cult*** and *The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*.

This ambitious, adventurous, and entertaining line-up is supported by BART and Wells Fargo, the official sponsors of Berkeley Rep's 2010-11 Season. Best of all, since Berkeley Rep continues to insist that top-notch theatre should be accessible and affordable, **some seats for these shows cost less than they did in 1997!**

"We have worked hard to make Berkeley Rep a home for innovation and visionary new voices," **Taccone comments**. "While I'm proud that several of our recent shows have been so successful,

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RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

our focus is always on looking forward and discovering new risks and challenges. So I'm pleased to announce another season of new work at Berkeley Rep. We're excited to introduce our audience to writers like Rinne Groff and Lynn Nottage. We're unveiling the latest work from some of our favorite artists: Sarah Ruhl (tackling a great classic), Rita Moreno (tackling her life), and Mike Daisey (who has a running discourse with our audience about the state of the nation). We've brokered a uniquely inspiring collaboration between the beloved author Lemony Snicket, the renowned Phantom Limb Puppet Company, and our very own Geoff Hoyle. And, on an international front, *The Great Game* is that rare kind of epic theatrical event that has the potential to change the way we think about the world. All in all, it looks to be a great year."

"Like ballplayers, theaters sometimes get hot, rapping out hits with unlikely regularity, and **the Rep, 41 this year, is on fire,**" raved the *New York Times* in a recent feature. In the last five years, five shows have moved from Berkeley Rep to Broadway: *Bridge & Tunnel* (2006), *Passing Strange* (2008), *Wishful Drinking* (2009), *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)* (2009), and *American Idiot*, which begins its run at the St. James Theatre on March 24. In fact, Berkeley Rep's devotion to developing new scripts has delivered 19 shows to New York in the last 23 years. Its productions have also transferred to London, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Boston, Washington, DC, and dozens of other cities. Recently, material developed at Berkeley Rep has even popped up on the bestseller list (*Wishful Drinking*), the silver screen (*Passing Strange*), Top 40 radio ("21 Guns" from *American Idiot*), and national television (*Passing Strange* on PBS, *American Idiot* on the Grammy Awards, etc.).

Known for its core values of innovation and excellence, as well as its educated and imaginative audience, Berkeley Rep provides a safe haven for emerging and established artists to explore new ideas. In 1968, during its inaugural season, the Theatre staged its first world premiere. With this new season, **the total number of premieres through the years now tops a hundred** – 58 world premieres, 41 West Coast premieres, four American premieres – and nearly half of these have debuted in the last 10 years. That may explain why, in December, the *San Francisco Chronicle* declared that "the rise of Berkeley Rep" was the Top Theatre Story of the Decade: "The Rep opened its new Roda Theatre in '01, allowing it longer runs and greater flexibility with two mainstages, and has quickly risen in local and national prestige. Under the leadership of Tony Taccone and his associate artistic director Les Waters, it's become [a] primary source of new work for Broadway (where Taccone and Waters each opened a show this fall) and the rest of the country." Now another season of inventive and intelligent plays is on the horizon.

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Berkeley Rep's 2010-11 Season begins in September with the world-premiere production of ***Compulsion*** on the intimate Thrust Stage. Sid Silver is obsessed. When he learns about a young girl named Anne Frank and her extraordinary diary, he makes it his mission to ensure her tale is heard. But is the manuscript a work of art? A cultural treasure? Once publishers and producers get involved, it becomes "a very valuable product" – and Silver's good intentions prove to be his undoing. Acclaimed director **Oskar Eustis** returns to the Bay Area with **Rinne Groff's** script, a kaleidoscopic collision of history and culture inspired by the life of Meyer Levin. Groff is the award-winning author of *The Ruby Sunrise* and a former writer for Showtime's *Weeds*. Her plays have been seen off Broadway and at theatres across America. Eustis is artistic director of The Public Theater in New York. In the 1980s, he collaborated with Tony Taccone on landmark works such as *Angels in America* and *Execution of Justice*, and over the years he has staged world premieres for many eminent writers. *Compulsion* was commissioned by Berkeley Rep and The Public, and they are producing it along with Yale Repertory Theatre. It's "a work of brilliant and compelling art," asserts the *Hartford Courant*, "an enthralling drama of immense imagination, of emotional and moral complexity, and – of all things – sparkling humor." A moving story that combines exciting acting with marvelous marionettes, this show takes audiences on a journey from passion to *Compulsion*.

Next, in October, it's time to play ***The Great Game: Afghanistan***. A sweeping cycle of short scripts by 12 top playwrights, this exceptional show explores Afghanistan over the last 150 years. Direct from London, where it debuted to rave reviews, *The Great Game* makes its West Coast premiere in the Roda Theatre. It's a captivating collection of stories performed by Britain's finest actors. Presented in three parts – on different days or in one impassioned marathon – *The Great Game* explores the eternal struggle to control Central Asia. World powers and warlords, diplomats and activists, opium farmers and ordinary people... all of them tangle with the tribes and traditions of Afghanistan. An emotional event that illuminates the complex culture of Afghanistan, the show is staged by **Nicolas Kent** and **Indhu Rubasingham**. Artistic director of the esteemed Tricycle Theatre, Kent has earned highest honors from the British press: the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement and the Evening Standard Award for Pioneering Political Theatre. Rubasingham has directed on Britain's most respected stages, including the Gate Theatre, the National Theatre, the Royal Court, and the Young Vic. A dozen prominent playwrights from Britain and America contributed to this epic: **Richard Bean, Lee Blessing, David Edgar, David Greig, Amit Gupta, Ron Hutchinson, Stephen Jeffreys, Abi Morgan,**

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Ben Ockrent, Simon Stephens, Colin Teevan, Naomi Wallace, and Joy Wilkinson. Each crafted a short play which together create an impressive mosaic of Afghanistan and its history. "Astonishing," exclaims London's *Evening Standard*. "No former undertaking has boasted anything like the scope or ambition of *The Great Game*." "Fascinating," agrees *Time Out London*. It "leaves you hankering for more. After seven and a half hours, that's some accolade." See one part or see them all. Get tickets for *The Game!*

After Thanksgiving, the show must go on – but the actor is mute, the director is crying, the dancer is lazy... and the composer is dead! This holiday season, in the Roda Theatre, Berkeley Rep presents a deliciously silly world premiere from beloved Bay Area artists. ***The Composer is Dead*** features text by bestselling author **Lemony Snicket** and a score by (living) composer **Nathaniel Stookey**. Lemony Snicket (a.k.a. Daniel Handler) penned *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the fantastically successful collection of kids' books, as well as three novels for adults. Stookey is the youngest composer ever commissioned by San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music Series; his works include *Big Bang*, *Junkestra*, *Wide as Skies*, and *Zipperz*. Their collaboration on an orchestral piece, and accompanying children's book, proved wildly popular. "A hugely enjoyable undertaking for young and old alike... the piece seems destined to become a classic," predicted the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Now there's a new theatrical adaptation of *The Composer is Dead*. **Tony Taccone's** raucous production unleashes laughs through classic clowning and plenty of uppity puppets from the pioneering Phantom Limb Company. When **Geoff Hoyle** pops in as an outlandish inspector bent on solving a murderous riddle, the show crescendos into comic absurdity. Hoyle has performed on Broadway, off Broadway, and under the big top; audiences at Berkeley Rep saw him in *The Convict's Return* and *Geni(us)* before those shows toured the world. Hoyle performs alongside Phantom Limb's preposterous puppets, which have been spotted with quirky artists like Danny Elfman and the Kronos Quartet in Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Los Angeles, New York, and Paris. To delight both children and adults, these artists ensure that *The Composer is Dead* comes alive on stage.

Then Berkeley Rep begins the new year by dishing up a pair of daring shows in repertory. The *New York Times* heralded **Mike Daisey** as "the master storyteller" and "one of the finest solo performers of his generation." His monologues, 15 and counting, have been seen across the country and around the globe. In Berkeley, audiences loved *Great Men of Genius*, *The Ugly American*, and *21 Dog Years: Doing Time @ Amazon.com*. Now Daisey returns to the Bay Area

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for an incredible doubleheader: two provocative new monologues that examine America's obsession with commerce. In ***The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs***, Daisey dives into the epic story of a real-life Willy Wonka whose personal obsessions profoundly affect our everyday lives – and follows the trail to China where millions toil in factories to create iPhones and iPods. With ***The Last Cargo Cult***, Daisey travels to a remote island in the South Pacific whose inhabitants actually worship America and its goods. He observes their rituals as the world's financial system collapses, spurring a soul-searching assessment of what money means and who is paying the price. *Cargo Cult* enjoyed an extended off-Broadway run, and the *Washington Post* called it “divine... The finest hour – actually, make that two hours – ever devised by Daisey, a tale-spinner of amusingly footnoted outrage. His brand of bombast is perfectly calibrated for examinations of the colossal follies of our time. In this instance, he gets the meaty topic between his teeth and, like some carnivorous poet, gnaws it down to eloquent bone.” *Jobs* is the latest monologue developed by Daisey with his director and long-time collaborator, **Jean-Michele Gregory**. With his wry eye and eccentric intellect, Daisey delivers two adventure stories – presented on different days – that cut deep with hilarious social critique.

In March, Berkeley Rep proudly presents ***Ruined***, winner of the Pulitzer Prize. This powerful new play provides a bleak yet beautiful look at the lives of women in a land ruled by whiskey and bayonets. As civil war ravages the Congo, the lucky ones find a home – and a regular meal – in a ramshackle building that serves as both brothel and refuge. Whether merchant, miner, or soldier, the man you meet in the morning may be your enemy by sundown. Yet all of them come through Mama's door for booze and a bit of comfort. Mama Nadi protects her girls with rough compassion, even as she profits from their bodies. This timely script from **Lynn Nottage** tells an intense and important tale filled with humanity, hope, and unexpected humor. “Sincere, passionate, courageous, and acutely argued, *Ruined* is a remarkable theatrical accomplishment [with] a strongly affirmative sense,” the *Chicago Tribune* reports. “This is both a celebration of the endurance and vitality of African women and an unstinting call for us to keep them safer.” A co-production with the Huntington Theatre Company and La Jolla Playhouse, *Ruined* is presented in the Roda Theatre and directed by **Liesl Tommy**. A South African native who grew up under apartheid, Tommy is known for working with young African-American writers like Eisa Davis, Danai Gurira, and Tracey Scott Wilson. In addition to the Pulitzer, Nottage won Obie, Drama Desk, and Lucille Lortel Awards for *Ruined*. A recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship, she also penned *Intimate Apparel*, the nation's most produced play in 2005-06.

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As the *Wall Street Journal* says, “*Ruined*, in which she shows us what things have come to in the bloody, brutal land that dares to call itself the Democratic Republic of Congo, leaves no doubt that the author of *Intimate Apparel* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* is one of the best playwrights that we have.”

When April arrives, make time for ***The Three Sisters***. Audiences and critics on both coasts embraced *Eurydice* and *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, two shows steeped in longing from playwright **Sarah Ruhl** and director **Les Waters**. Now this talented team turns its attention to a fresh translation of a masterpiece. *The Three Sisters* by **Anton Chekhov** depicts an entire village of unlucky lovers struggling with the bittersweet distance between reality and dreams. Ruhl enlivens this classic with the same elegant understanding of intimacy that infused those earlier collaborations, while Waters and a cast of 14 deliver another sumptuous production. The West Coast premiere of this new adaptation explores the intertwined mysteries of denial and hope. Chekhov remains the most important dramatist in Russian history and one of the greatest playwrights of all times. His four final plays – *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters*, and *Uncle Vanya* – are considered masterpieces of modern drama. Ruhl is the award-winning author of *The Clean House*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, and numerous other works. “She’s one of the hottest playwrights around, a Pulitzer nominee and MacArthur ‘genius’ letting her imagination run wild,” proclaims the *San Jose Mercury News*. “In Les Waters, who directed her exciting *Eurydice* a few seasons back, she has found an expert collaborator,” adds *The New Yorker*. In the last five years, Waters’ shows have ranked among the year’s best in *The New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Time Out New York*, *Time Magazine*, and *USA Today*. Next spring, he directs *The Three Sisters* on the Thrust Stage. Discover the humor and heartbreak of one of the world’s great plays, told anew through the lyricism of two leading voices in contemporary theatre.

Finally, the season concludes in May with another world premiere in the Roda Theatre. During her spectacular career, **Rita Moreno** has portrayed some tough women, from Anita in *West Side Story* to Maria Callas in *Master Class*. Now this magnificent performer takes on the toughest woman of all – herself. The star of stage and screen returns to Berkeley Rep to tell her tale in an irreverent and entertaining new show that’s full of surprises and songs. “Do not even think about typecasting Rita Moreno,” the *New York Observer* insists. “She’s done everything every other actress ever dreamed of, sometimes twice, and almost always better.” Moreno starred in two

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previous hits at Berkeley Rep: *Master Class* and *The Glass Menagerie*. She is one of a select group of performers who have won all four of the foremost awards in show business – and just last week President Obama presented her with the National Medal of Arts. Expect another breathtaking performance from the lady who won the Oscar, the Tony, the Grammy, and two Emmys. **Tony Taccone** makes his debut as a playwright with this touching script, drawing on decades of experience creating shows with leading solo artists, and he hands the reins to a distinguished director: **David Galligan**. “Taccone may very well be the most prominent artistic director in America right now,” Playbill opines – and, according to *Back Stage West*, “There are few other directors who have the kind of name recognition with producers and track record with audiences that David Galligan has.” So don’t miss the rollercoaster ride when Rita Moreno takes theatre lovers through the highs and lows – and solos – of her improbable life.

Get the best seats at the lowest price by **subscribing to Berkeley Rep**. The Full Season ensures tickets to seven shows, and the five-play package includes all the Main Season productions: *Compulsion*, *The Composer is Dead*, *Ruined*, *The Three Sisters*, and either *The Last Cargo Cult* or *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*. Or simply “choose your own” subscription of three or more plays. Berkeley Rep offers generous discounts for senior citizens, theatregoers under 30, and employees of nursery, elementary, and secondary schools. All subscribers enjoy the right to reschedule for free, discounts when buying tickets for friends, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events like *American Idiot* and *An Evening with David Sedaris*. Best of all, they have guaranteed seats to sold-out shows while others are turned away. **Ticket packages begin as low as \$81** – meaning subscribers save up to 26% on every ticket! Purchase a subscription now, because individual seats don’t go on sale until August.

In addition to offering steep savings on seats for subscribers, Berkeley Rep organizes **free events nearly every night** to help stretch that budget even further. Arrive at the Theatre early to enjoy gourmet tastings with local culinary artisans, pre-show talks with trained docents, and an exquisite menu of local, organic, and sustainable food at the café. Certain evenings also feature post-show chats with the artists or late-night parties that welcome a new generation of theatregoers such as Teen Night, 30 Below, and night/OUT. These free activities transform a play into an entire evening of entertainment.

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Born in a storefront, Berkeley Rep has moved to the forefront of American theatre. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its vital and versatile facility – which includes the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre – is the linchpin of a bustling arts district that has helped revitalize downtown Berkeley. A not-for-profit organization, the theatre 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.

See tomorrow's shows today at Berkeley Rep. The Roda Theatre and the Thrust Stage are both located on Addison Street in downtown Berkeley, near bus lines, bike routes, and parking lots – and only half a block from BART. **For more information**, call (510) 647-2949 or (888) 4-BRT-Tix (toll-free) – or just click berkeleyrep.org.

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Compulsion

Main Season Play #1 – Thrust Stage

World-premiere production

Written by Rinne Groff

Directed by Oskar Eustis

September 10 – October 24, 2010

Opening night: September 15, 2010

The Great Game: Afghanistan

Limited Season Play #1 – Roda Theatre

West Coast premiere

Written by Richard Bean, Lee Blessing,
David Edgar, David Greig, Amit Gupta,
Ron Hutchinson, Stephen Jeffreys,
Abi Morgan, Ben Ockrent, Simon Stephens,
Colin Teevan, Naomi Wallace, and
Joy Wilkinson

Directed by Nicolas Kent and
Indhu Rubasingham

October 22 – November 7, 2010

Opening marathon: October 22, 2010

Lemony Snicket's***The Composer is Dead***

Main Season Play #2 – Roda Theatre

World premiere

Written by Lemony Snicket

Music by Nathaniel Stookey

Directed by Tony Taccone

November 26, 2010 – January 9, 2011

Opening night: December 1, 2010

***The Agony and the
Ecstasy of Steve Jobs***

in repertory with

The Last Cargo Cult

Main Season Play #3 – Thrust Stage

Created and performed by Mike Daisey

Directed by Jean-Michele Gregory

January 14 – February 27, 2011

Opening night: January 19, 2011

Second opening: TBD

Ruined

Main Season Play #4 – Roda Theatre

Written by Lynn Nottage

Directed by Liesl Tommy

February 25 – April 10, 2011

Opening night: March 1, 2011

The Three Sisters

Main Season Play #5 – Thrust Stage

West Coast premiere

Written by Anton Chekhov

English translation by Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Les Waters

April 8 – May 22, 2011

Opening night: April 13, 2011

A new show for Rita Moreno

Limited Season Play #2 – Roda Theatre

World premiere

Written by Tony Taccone

Directed by David Galligan

May 13 – June 12, 2011

Opening night: May 18, 2011