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BERKELEY REP LEADER RECEIVES £10,000 GRANT FROM BRITISH COUNCIL

School of Theatre Director Rachel Fink picked for prestigious international program

MAY 12, 2010 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre’s production of *Tiny Kushner* may be headed to London, but it isn’t the first Berkeley Rep treasure to make it overseas this year. Rachel Fink, director of Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre, was appointed **the sole American delegate** to a prestigious program from the British Council called Cultural Leadership International (CLI). Fink was awarded £10,000 (about \$15,000) to spend an entire month traveling through Europe and researching cultural policy abroad.

"We believe it is crucial to invest in the next generation of cultural leaders and are delighted that Rachel could represent the United States in the British Council's Cultural Leadership International program," said **Sarah Frankland**, deputy director and head of arts for the British Council USA. "The cultural sector has a unique and vital role to play in society; it nurtures creativity and innovation, which contribute to social and economic development. Rachel is a dedicated advocate of the cultural sector in the US, and we are excited to follow her career as she networks with her overseas counterparts in the program."

"It was no surprise to us when Rachel was chosen to be the American delegate for CLI," commented **Susan Medak**, managing director of Berkeley Rep. "Not only has Rachel inspired her colleagues at Berkeley Rep to grow professionally and personally, her pioneering spirit has pushed the Bay Area theatre community as a whole to increase its support of arts education. She is personally responsible for the artistic development of thousands of kids."

Fink began her tenure at Berkeley Rep with a four-month internship during her second year of graduate studies at Yale. She rocketed from intern to director of the School of Theatre in just over three years and has been in her current position since 2001. Fink built the School from the ground up, and in the past nine years has expanded it to serve more than 22,000 students each year (from toddlers to adults) in 13 counties throughout the Bay Area.

Fink was selected for CLI after a rigorous application process spanning months and including a series of essays, interviews, leadership trainings, and a comprehensive development plan detailing the scope of what she would do with the funds. **Only 33 people worldwide** were chosen for CLI, representing 27 different countries in North America, Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

"The guidelines for the grant were relatively broad," **Fink remarks**. "Your proposal had to have an international component to it, it had to stretch you in a way you hadn't been stretched before, and it had to be something that you wouldn't really have access to do on your own. I was interested in learning about cultural policy, which is the set of laws and customs within a country that support arts and culture."

Once chosen, Fink hardly had time to breathe before embarking on the first component of her plan: to work with **National Arts Strategies** (NAS), a Washington DC-based nonprofit that, as she says, "provides high-level executive training for people working in the arts." According to

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Fink, NAS does “really interesting, in-depth training, even beyond the scope of what I did in grad school at Yale.” NAS partnered with arts organizations in six different cities – including Berkeley – to cosponsor a series of free one-day trainings for local arts leaders. Fink was involved every step of the way, from planning to implementation.

For the second component of her plan, Fink put together a **four-week trip to London, Belfast, Amsterdam, the Hague, and Paris**. After a four-day leadership training in London, Fink was ready to embark on a month of traveling through Europe to meet with theatre practitioners and policymakers.

During her travels, Fink became intimately familiar with each government’s cultural policy and the degree to which each country funds the arts. Though inspired by the level of arts funding she encountered in Europe, Fink soon realized the extent to which a country’s cultural policy is inextricable from its own values.

“I went into this experience thinking I was going to learn how to convince politicians to give us money,” she explains, “and it took a while, but I realized that it’s much more complicated than that. The system of how things are funded in those specific countries is so tightly engrained with the cultural values of that individual country that it would be really difficult to say, ‘Oh, that worked over here, so let’s apply that to the US.’ Overall I would say the whole trip made me reflect back on our national identity and how we operate and what our values are.”

Fink leaves her CLI experience with a greater appreciation for international relations and a desire to continue to push the US to expand its cultural boundaries, both internationally and at home. “There’s no question that this experience has changed me forever. I think we have a lot of work to do,” she observes, “The issues facing the field are multi-faceted, and we waste too much time arguing about what ‘the solution’ is instead of attacking the problem from different angles.”

As someone who built a well-oiled machine from nothing in under a decade, Fink is well equipped to confront these issues head-on and challenge, strengthen, and nurture the arts community in America. Whether working with schools to expand arts education programs in an economic downturn or blazing new paths to garner funding and support for arts programs across the country, she will continue to be on the forefront of the theatre community for decades to come.

The **Berkeley Rep School of Theatre** is committed to working with local schools and community members to reinforce arts education as a community value and an integral part of the cultural fabric. By providing access and opportunities for participation in the arts, Berkeley Rep uses theatre as a means to challenge, thrill, and galvanize what is best in the human spirit. For more information on free and low-cost outreach programming, click berkeleyrep.org/outreach.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to a national leader in innovative theatre. Known for its core values of imagination and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. 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. With two stages, a school, and a Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, Berkeley Rep is proud to premiere exhilarating new plays. In the

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last five years alone, the company has helped send five shows to Broadway: *American Idiot*, *Bridge & Tunnel*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Passing Strange*, and *Wishful Drinking*. Come see tomorrow's plays today at Berkeley Rep.

ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international nonprofit organization for cultural relations and education opportunities. It builds engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide. In the US, it increases recognition of the variety of higher education opportunities available in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and facilitates institutional collaborations between the US and UK. Through transatlantic artistic partnerships, it introduces Americans to high-quality, groundbreaking creative work from the UK and its climate change programs support a network of young leaders who are committed to tackling climate change globally and in their own communities. It also develops initiatives that give a voice to the next generation of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, encouraging them to work together to explore solutions to current and future global issues. With offices in Washington, New York and Los Angeles, the British Council USA also builds global partnerships with US-based institutions to support its work around the world. For more information, visit britishcouncil.org/usa.

ABOUT NATIONAL ARTS STRATEGIES

NAS has worked with leaders in arts and culture for over 25 years and has seen that a dynamic, sustainable arts community comes from the vision and effort of skilled professionals. In its organizational leadership programs, arts leaders explore the toughest challenges facing organizations today and learn from some of the leading business school faculty in the United States. The experience is always interactive and engaging, respectful but demanding. And it brings the best thinking from outside the arts sector into the community, challenging arts and cultural leaders to take a fresh look at their organizations. Visit artstrategies.org.

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