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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP'S 50TH WORLD PREMIERE: *IN THE NEXT ROOM (or the vibrator play)*

Sarah Ruhl and Les Waters – the team behind *Eurydice* – create another elegant comedy

DECEMBER 15, 2008 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre greets the new year by proudly presenting its 50th world premiere, a new comedy about marriage, intimacy, and electricity from the creators of *Eurydice*. Celebrated playwright **Sarah Ruhl** and Obie Award-winning director **Les Waters** come together again for the debut of *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*. Commissioned by Berkeley Rep and staged in the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre, this hotly anticipated play begins previews on **January 30**, opens **February 4**, and closes **March 15**. BART and Wells Fargo serve as season sponsors for Berkeley Rep's 41st year of fearless theatre, and the executive producer for this show is the Strauch Kulhanjian Family.

"Some may find the title titillating," **remarks Waters**, "yet this is a serious work that examines how sexuality and sexual politics affect our lives, how race relations and women's rights influence our society, and how technology is trumpeted as an answer to our ills – even as it repeatedly fails to meet our deepest needs. Sarah achieves all this with the light touch and the elegant comic sense that have brought her national acclaim, and I'm honored to have been a part of her development as an artist. Even as Berkeley Rep celebrates our 50th world premiere, we look to the future: this work helps us meet our commitment to commission another 50 new plays by 2013."

"I can't think of a better town than Berkeley to premiere a play about the history of the vibrator," **Ruhl remarks**. "Although saying that the play is about vibrators is slightly misleading, because the play at bottom is about marriage, and intimacy, and the mind/body split. Still, I'm fascinated by the fact that the vibrator was a very early invention at the dawn of electricity, right next to kettles and light bulbs. No one thought its use was sexual, because women weren't thought to have sexual pleasure. As soon as we discovered that vibrators caused sexual pleasure for women, we made them illegal. So the play is about that tension between the mind and the body at a time when people were, in a sense, enormously innocent about female sexuality. Now we live in a time when pornography is mainstream, but the connective tissue between the emotions and sexual pleasure is a rarity."

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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, they gave birth to *Eurydice*, the beguiling show which went from Berkeley Rep 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. *In the Next Room* received the 2008 Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award and is supported by the Bernard Osher Foundation’s New Play Development Program and the Mosse Artistic Development Fund.

The premiere of this play truly is **a milestone for Berkeley Rep**, which debuted its first new script in 1968 and went on to earn a national reputation for nurturing writers and developing new work. Known for its core values of innovation and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, Berkeley Rep provides a safe haven for emerging and established artists to take creative risks. *In the Next Room* is the company’s 50th world premiere; in fact, since 1990, Berkeley Rep has presented 41 world premieres, 28 West Coast premieres, and three American premieres. In 2003, the Theatre upped the ante by setting itself an ambitious goal: to commission 50 new plays by 2013. In the last five years, Berkeley Rep has invested more than \$1 million in new play development. Twenty-five artists have already been invited to participate, and audiences embraced the results in shows such as Culture Clash’s *Zorro in Hell*, Stew and Heidi Rodewald’s *Passing Strange*, and Itamar Moses’ *Yellowjackets*, as well as Paul Drescher’s score for *To the Lighthouse*. Other writers currently under commission include David Adjmi, Glen Berger, Marcus Gardley, Rinne Groff, Jordan Harrison, Naomi Iizuka, Dan LeFranc, Carlos Murillo, Tarell McCraney, and Dominic Orlando. Through important new voices such as these – and daring initiatives such as this one – Berkeley Rep will continue to introduce inventive, intelligent, and relevant new material into the repertoire of American theatre. [Note: the numbers above for West Coast and American premieres were updated on January 28 after research in Berkeley Rep’s archives indicated several shows had not been counted.]

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

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darker topics – heartbreak, loss, disease, and death – her touch is light.” In addition to the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship, the young writer has already earned the Fourth Forum Freedom Award, a Helen Hayes Award, the Helen Merrill Award, the PEN/Laura Pels Award, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and a Whiting Writers’ Award, as well as nominations for the NAACP Image Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Her scripts have been performed at theatres across the country including A Contemporary Theatre (ACT/Seattle), 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, Korean, Polish, Russian, and Spanish, and 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 renowned playwright Paula Vogel.

Les Waters has been the associate artistic director of Berkeley Rep for the past six years. 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, 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 engagements of *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Pillowman*, and *Yellowman*. He won an Obie Award for *Big Love*, staging 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 Classic Stage Company (CSC), the Connelly Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC), Playwrights Horizons, The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, Second Stage, and Signature Theatre Company. Elsewhere in America, he has directed for ACT/Seattle, American Conservatory Theater, American Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Guthrie Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, the Mark Taper Forum, 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, serves on the board of Theatre Communications Group, and is an associate artist of The Civilians. 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.

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As usual, this dexterous director has filled the room with **talented actors**. **Hannah Cabell** (Catherine Givings) performed on Broadway in *A Man for All Seasons* at the Roundabout Theatre Company and off Broadway in *Jane Eyre* at The Acting Company, *Millicent Scowlworthy* at the Summer Play Festival, and *Pumpgirl* at MTC. Her other credits include 13P, Clubbed Thumb, and ten seasons with the Barnstormers Theatre in New Hampshire. **Maria Dizzia** (Sabrina Daldry) returns to Berkeley Rep where she played the title role in *Eurydice*, before traveling with that show to New Haven and New York. She also worked with Waters in Berkeley on *Fêtes de la Nuit* and off Broadway in *Apparition*. Her other recent credits include The Civilians, Clubbed Thumb, Keen Company, MCC Theater, and Playwrights Horizons. **Paul Niebanck** (Dr. Givings) has performed in numerous off-Broadway shows including *Great Expectations* at the Lucille Lortel Theatre, *Leaving Queens* with Women's Project, *The Revenger's Tragedy* for Red Bull Theater, and many productions at The Pearl Theatre Company, Signature, and Theatre for a New Audience. He has also appeared on stages in Boston, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, Syracuse, and Washington, DC. In New York, **Melle Powers** (Elizabeth) has been seen at The Flea Theater, HERE Arts Center, Playwrights Horizons, and Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre. Her solo show – *Whence Came Ye Scarlett O'Hara O'Hanrahan?* – was part of the 2007 New York International Fringe Festival and the 2008 Frigid New York Festival. Her other credits include regular appearances on *Chappelle's Show*. A familiar face on local stages, **Stacy Ross** (Annie) previously performed at Berkeley Rep in *Cloud 9* and *The Green Bird*. She also had recent roles in *Coronado* at SF Playhouse, *Frozen* at Marin Theatre Company, *The Gamester* and *The Rivals* at A.C.T., and *An Ideal Husband* and *The Triumph of Love* at California Shakespeare Theater. **Joaquín Torres** (Leo Irving) appeared in Ruhl's *Passion Play* at the Goodman and Yale Rep. His credits include *Beauty of the Father* at MTC, *Brooklyn @ Eye Level* for The Civilians, *King Lear* at The Public, and *The Winter's Tale* at CSC. Local audiences will recall him from Peter Dubois' production of *Much Ado About Nothing* at Cal Shakes. **John Leonard Thompson** (Mr. Daldry) has countless credits on Broadway, off Broadway, internationally, and regionally – including at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Hartford Stage, and The Old Globe. He also performed in touring productions of *Angels in America* and *The Graduate*, on numerous television shows, and in the films *Empty Chairs*, *Guarding Tess*, *Killer*, and *Soho, They Call It*.

Five **desirable designers** are getting their creative juices flowing for this project. **Annie Smart** (scenic design) has created sets and costumes for numerous theatres throughout the United States and her native England. She has a dozen credits at Berkeley Rep, including six previous world premieres: *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *Finn in the Underworld*, *Passing Strange*, *Taking Over*,

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To the Lighthouse, and *Yellowjackets*. **David Zinn** (costume design) designed the Broadway productions of *Xanadu* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The winner of a 2008 Obie Award for Sustained Achievement, he has worked at opera and theatre companies in New York and nationwide – including Berkeley Rep’s recent staging of *Mother Courage*. **Russell H. Champa** (lighting design) collaborated with Waters on Berkeley Rep’s production of *The Pillowman*, as well as the Berkeley, New Haven, and New York presentations of *Eurydice*. In addition to his extensive experience at off-Broadway and regional theatres, he designed the Broadway production of *God Said, “Ha!”* **Bray Poor** (sound design) worked on all three productions of *Eurydice* with Waters as well. His other credits include shows with Clubbed Thumb, HB Playwrights Theatre, the Humana Festival, LightBox, Long Wharf, New York Theatre Workshop, P.S. 122, The Public, the Trilogy Theatre, Trinity Rep, and Yale Rep. A classical pianist and singer-songwriter, **Jonathan Bell** (composer) composes, arranges, and orchestrates a wide variety of projects. Most recently, he orchestrated Paul Brill’s music for the documentary *Full Battle Rattle*, several tracks for Damian Wagner’s most recent album, and a five-movement symphony that he also co-wrote, which will premiere in Tokyo next year. **Michael Suenkel**, Berkeley Rep’s resident production stage manager, will be in the booth for *the vibrator play*.

In the Next Room begins a year of provocative theatre at Berkeley Rep, which also features Waters’ take on *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* and two shows staged by Sharon Ott: a gripping production of *Crime and Punishment* and the premiere of *You, Nero* by Amy Freed. Plus, there’s still time to see Mary Zimmerman’s alluring adaptation of *The Arabian Nights*. Theatre-lovers can guarantee their seats for these shows by subscribing to Berkeley Rep. Choose three or more plays and get the best seats at the lowest price. **Subscriptions begin as low as \$84** – and subscribers save up to 29% on every ticket! Other benefits include the right to reschedule for free, discounts when purchasing tickets for friends, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events like *Ennio*. Berkeley Rep also offers discounted subscriptions for senior citizens, theatregoers under 30, and employees of preschools, elementary schools, and secondary schools.

Individual **tickets for *In the Next Room* 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.

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Enthusiastic theatregoers can plug into **28 special events** during the run of this show:

- *Target @ Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, January 30 – and tickets are only \$10 for teens! This popular event includes dinner donated by Bowzer's Pizza, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *In the Next Room*. Due to mature content, parental permission will be required to attend this production. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail school@berkeleyrep.org.
- *30 Below* – the coolest night of theatre for the under-30 crowd – also returns on Friday, January 30. Enjoy a performance at 8:00 PM and a wild post-show party sponsored by the *SF Bay Guardian*. Tickets start at only \$13.50 for anyone under 30 years old!
- *Opening night* festivities are held on Wednesday, February 4, including a pre-show dinner for donors at Downtown Restaurant and a post-show party for the audience catered by Bistro Liaison and Raymond Vineyards.
- *night/OUT*, a fabulous party for the LGBT community with Energy 92.7, takes flight on Thursday, February 5. The event features music, dancing, bouquets from Darling Flower Shop, hors d'oeuvres from Bistro Liaison, and complimentary drinks from Raymond Vineyards and Triple Rock Brewery.
- At select performances, patrons can whet their palates for the play with *free tastings* from local culinary artisans one hour before curtain: Forth Vineyards on Friday, February 6 and Sunday February 15; Tomatina on Saturday, February 7; Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi on Sunday, February 8 and Friday, March 6; Peterson Winery on Friday, February 13; the Spanish Table on Sunday, February 15; Amanda's on Saturday, February 21; Teance on Friday, February 27; Peet's Coffee & Tea on Saturday, February 28; Charles Chocolates on Sunday, March 1; and Domaine Carneros on Saturday, March 7.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, February 12; Friday, February 20; and Tuesday, February 24.
- Or enjoy some foreplay with free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show that start at 7:00 PM before every Tuesday and Thursday performance: February 3, February 5, February 10, February 12, February 17, February 19, February 24, February 26, March 3, March 5, March 10, and March 12.

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Don't sit home alone: buy tickets now for this stimulating show. The **Roda Theatre** is located at 2015 Addison Street, near bus lines, bike routes, and parking lots – and only half a block from BART. To purchase seats, or for more 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. 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. 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 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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berkeley rep

In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)

FACT SHEET

WHO: Written by Sarah Ruhl
 Directed by Les Waters
 Designed by Annie Smart (sets), David Zinn (costumes), Russell H. Champa (lights), Bray Poor (sound), and Jonathan Bell (music)
 Starring Hannah Cabell, Maria Dizzia, Paul Niebanck, Melle Power, Stacy Ross, Joaquín Torres, and John Leonard Thompson

WHAT: *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, the world premiere of a comedy about marriage, intimacy, and electricity from the creators of *Eurydice*

WHERE: Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Roda Theatre, 2015 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Berkeley, CA 94704

WHEN: **January 30 – March 15, 2009**

- Tuesdays & Fridays @ 8:00 PM
- Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
- Thursdays & Saturdays @ 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM
- Sundays @ 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
- No performance on Friday 3/13
- No matinees during previews or on 2/5, 2/14, 2/19, 2/28 & 3/5

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

- PREVIEW
- TARGET® TEEN NIGHT
- OPENING NIGHT
- LGBT NIGHT/OUT
- 30 BELOW
- POST-SHOW DISCUSSION
- TASTING
- DOCENT PRESENTATIONS EVERY TUE & THU 7PM

Special Events –

Low-cost previews: Friday 1/30, Saturday 1/31 & Tuesday 2/3 @ 8:00 PM & Sunday 2/1 @ 7:00 PM

Target® Teen Night: Friday 1/30 @ 6:30 PM

30 Below (party for the under-30 crowd): Friday 1/30 @ 8:00 PM

Opening night: Wednesday 2/4 @ 8:00 PM

night/OUT (LGBT event): Thursday 2/5 @ 8:00 PM

Docent talks: Tuesdays 2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24, 3/3 & 3/10 @ 7:00 PM
and Thursdays 2/5, 2/12, 2/19, 2/26, 3/5 & 3/12 @ 7:00 PM

Post-play discussions: Thursday 2/12, Friday 2/20 & Tuesday 2/24 @ 8:00 PM

Free tastings: Fridays 2/6 (Forth Vineyards), 2/13 (Peterson Winery), 2/27 (Teance) & 3/6 (Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi) @ 7:00 PM; Saturdays 2/7 (Tomatina), 2/21 (Amanda's), 2/28 (Peet's Coffee & Tea) & 3/7 (Domaine Carneros); and Sundays 2/8 (Fra' Mani Handcrafted Salumi), 2/15 (Forth Vineyards and the Spanish Table) & 3/1 (Charles Chocolate) @ 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-09vp.asp>

TIX & INFO: (510) 647-2949 – berkeleyrep.org – (888) 4-BRT-Tix (toll-free)