

For photos, interviews, etc. contact:
Terence Keane, Director of Public Relations
(510) 647-2917, tkeane@berkeleyrep.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WATERS DIRECTS WORLD PREMIERE OF IIZUKA'S NEW PLAY AT BERKELEY REP
***Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* debuts in March**

JANUARY 18, 2010 – At Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the month of March is devoted to a sexy and intriguing new script. Playwright **Naomi Iizuka** and director **Les Waters** explore the intersection of art and authenticity in a haunting play commissioned by Berkeley Rep: *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*. This show begins previews in Berkeley Rep's state-of-the-art Roda Theatre on **February 26**, opens **March 3**, and closes **April 11**, 2010.

"I started writing this play because I was fascinated by a 19th-century photograph of a rickshaw driver. As I continued to look at old photos of Japan, I found myself asking more questions. Who was behind the camera, and why were so many people in the West drawn to these pictures? I wanted to understand the relationship between what we see, what we think we see, and the truth," **Iizuka remarks**. "It's an honor and a delight to work with Les again on this project. He has this uncanny gift to see what a play is at its core, to reveal the hidden or invisible truths of the text. It's also a joy to return to Berkeley Rep. I feel a strong connection to both this theatre and this community."

"Several years ago, at the Humana Festival, Naomi and I collaborated on another play about photography, *At the Vanishing Point*," **Waters comments**. "It is a pleasure to work with her again and to further explore this territory. She writes beautifully – and incredibly visually – about the limits of perception. We like to think that photographs are real; yet each one is artifice, a work of art that persuades us it represents reality. Similarly, in this mystery play, nothing and no one is quite what it seems. I enjoy how the plot challenges us to fit the disparate pieces of the puzzle together, and I trust the audience will as well."

Well before the digital age, the camera selected, filtered, and obscured the truth – even as it promised to provide an authentic look at distant lands. Taking its title from a treatise on photography translated into Japanese, ***Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*** shifts between the present and the 1880s when a weird new technology first seized the world in freeze frame. Cameras captured images of geishas, monks, and shrines and sent them to the future in a flash – where we continue to seek meaning through lenses of exoticism and

(MORE)

RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

xenophobia. The intricate parts of this world premiere nestle together like a delicate puzzle... or erotic glimpses of an enigmatic tattoo. Expose yourself to the mystery of *Strange Devices*.

The commissioning and development of *Strange Devices* has been supported in part by the Bernard Osher Foundation, the Edgerton Foundation, the Mosse Artistic Development Fund, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The executive producers are Jack and Betty Schafer, Shirley D. and Philip D. Schild, and the Strauch Kulhanjian Family. The season sponsors for Berkeley Rep's 41st year of fearless theatre are BART and Wells Fargo.

Naomi Iizuka penned *36 Views*, which received its world premiere at Berkeley Rep before playing off Broadway. Her latest scripts, *Strike-Slip* and *Ghostwritten*, premiered at the Humana Festival of New Plays and the Goodman Theatre respectively. Her other plays include *17 Reasons Why*, *After a Hundred Years*, *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls*, *Anon(ymous)*, *At the Vanishing Point*, *Citizen 13559*, *Hamlet: Blood in the Brain* (a collaboration with California Shakespeare Theater and Campo Santo + Intersection for the Arts); *Language of Angels*; *Polaroid Stories*; *Skin*; *Tattoo Girl*; and *War of the Worlds* (a collaboration with Anne Bogart and SITI Company). Iizuka's work has been produced by Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, the Children's Theater Company, Dallas Theatre Center, the Edinburgh Festival, Edison Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, the Guthrie Theatre, the Huntington Theatre Company, the Kennedy Center, the Laguna Playhouse, Portland Center Stage, The Public Theatre, and Soho Rep. She is currently working on commissions from Cornerstone Theater Company, the Huntington, Intiman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, and Yale Repertory Theatre. An alumna of New Dramatists, Iizuka is the recipient of an Alpert Award, a Jerome Fellowship, a Joyce Foundation Award, a McKnight Fellowship, an NEA/TCG Artist-in-Residence grant, a PEN Center USA West Award, a PEN/Laura Pels Award, Princeton University's Hodder Fellowship, a Rockefeller Foundation Multi-Arts Production grant, a Stavis Award from the National Theatre Conference, and a Whiting Writers' Award. She leads the graduate MFA playwriting program at the University of California, San Diego.

Les Waters has served as associate artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre since 2003. In the last five years, his shows have ranked among the year's best in *The New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Time Out New York*, *Time Magazine*, and *USA Today*. Waters has a history of collaborating with prominent playwrights like Caryl Churchill, Charles Mee, and

(MORE)

WATERS DIRECTS IIZUKA'S NEW PLAY AT BERKELEY REP / 3 OF 6

Wallace Shawn, and champions important new voices such as Will Eno, Jordan Harrison, Sarah Ruhl, and Anne Washburn. Last year, Waters and Ruhl made their Broadway debuts with *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, which began in Berkeley. Waters' other credits at Berkeley Rep include 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 runs of *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Pillowman*, and *Yellowman*. He won an Obie Award for *Big Love*, staging its premiere at the Humana Festival and subsequent runs at BAM, Berkeley Rep, the Goodman, and Long Wharf Theatre. His New York credits also include Classic Stage Company, the Connelly Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, The Public, Second Stage Theatre, and Signature Theatre Company. Elsewhere in America, he has directed for ACT/Seattle, American Conservatory Theater, American Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, the Guthrie, La Jolla Playhouse, the Mark Taper Forum, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and Yale Rep. In his native England, Waters 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 UCSD and is an associate artist of The Civilians, a theatre group based in New York. 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.

Waters has focused his production on an **alluring cast** of outstanding actors. **Teresa Avia Lim** (Kiku) performed with the Shakespeare Theatre Company in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Lorenzaccio*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, and *The Tempest*. Her New York credits include *Sleep Awake* at the Subjective Theatre Company and *Even Maybe Tammy (Or, A Cockamamie Bucket of Ruckus)* at The Flea Theatre. A recent graduate of Yale School of Drama, she was an inaugural recipient of the Jerome L. Greene Foundation Fellowship. **Bruce McKenzie** (Farsari) has been seen at Berkeley Rep in *Big Love*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, and *Homebody/Kabul*. His New York credits include *Marlowe's Eye* with Tectonic Theatre Project and *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *True Love* at New York Theatre Workshop. His regional credits include *Hamlet*, *Noises Off*, and several shows in the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Skin* at Dallas Theater Center; *Measure for Measure* and *Othello* at Cal Shakes; and *Paris Commune*, *The Tempest*, and *Wintertime* at La Jolla Playhouse. **Kate Norris** (Isabel) has appeared in numerous productions with the Shakespeare Theatre Company, where she received a Helen Hayes Award for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Woolly Mammoth Theatre, where she is a

(MORE)

company member and received a Helen Hayes Award for *She Stoops to Comedy*. Her other credits include Arden Theatre Company, PCS, Round House Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Source Theatre, and the Wilma Theatre. **Danny Wolohan** (Edmund) previously worked with Waters on Berkeley Rep's productions of *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* and *TRAGEDY: a tragedy*. He has appeared in 10 world premieres at Intersection for the Arts, where he belongs to both resident companies: Campo Santo and the ESP Project. *American Theatre* named him one of seven actors in the nation you should travel to see. **Johnny Wu** (Hiro) portrayed Mullins in *Peter and the Starcatchers* at La Jolla Playhouse. He recently received his MFA from UCSD, where his credits included *Good Breeding*, *Medea*, *A Number*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. He appeared on TV in *24* and *Cold Case*, and on film in *Tie a Yellow Ribbon*.

A team of **five talented designers** have also helped develop this show. **Mimi Lien** (scenic design) creates sets and environments for theatre, dance, and opera. Her stage credits include shows with A.R.T., the Alliance Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Pig Iron Theatre Company, PlayMakers Repertory Company, The Public, Signature, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Wilma. The recipient of a Barrymore Award, she is resident designer for Ballet Tech at the Joyce Theater. **Annie Smart** (costume design) has designed sets and costumes for numerous theatres throughout the United States and her native England. Her credits include 14 previous shows at Berkeley Rep: *Big Love*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *Finn in the Underworld*, *Heartbreak House*, *Honour*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Irma Vep*, *Passing Strange*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Taking Over*, *Tiny Kushner*, *To The Lighthouse*, *Yellowjackets*, and *Yellowman*. **Alexander V. Nichols** (lighting design) has designed, scenery, lights, and projections for dance and theatre companies across America, including 17 previous shows at Berkeley Rep: *Civil Sex*, *Continental Divide*, *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *The Guys*, *Honour*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Life of Galileo*, *Menocchio*, *Mother Courage*, *Ravenshead*, *Rhinoceros*, *Surface Transit*, *Taking Over*, *Tiny Kushner*, *Yellowjackets*, and *Zorro in Hell*. **Bray Poor** (sound design) worked with Waters on the Berkeley and Broadway productions of *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)* and the Berkeley, New Haven, and off-Broadway productions of *Eurydice*. His other New York credits include projects with Clubbed Thumb, HB Playwrights Theatre, LightBox, Long Wharf, MTC, Mediarights.org, NYTW, P.S. 122, The Public, the Sonic Memorial, and Trilogy Theatre. In New York, **Leah Gelpe** (projection design) worked on *Circle Mirror Transformation* at Playwrights Horizons, *God's Ear* at Vineyard Theatre, *Indian Blood* at Primary Stages, *Ohio State Murders* and *Saved* with Theatre for a New Audience, *Spalding Grey: Stories Left to Tell* with Naked

(MORE)

WATERS DIRECTS IIZUKA'S NEW PLAY AT BERKELEY REP / 5 OF 6

Angels, *Walmartopia* at Minetta Lane Theatre, and *What Once We Felt* at LCT3. She has also collaborated with companies in Berlin, Boston, Budapest, Los Angeles, Salzburg, and Seattle. The stage manager for this production is **Karen Szpaller**.

To ensure that theatregoers aren't left to their own devices, Berkeley Rep offers 25 **special events** during the run of *Strange Devices*:

- *Low-cost previews* take place on Friday, February 26; Saturday, February 27; Sunday, February 28; and Tuesday, March 2.
- *Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, February 26 and includes dinner, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *Strange Devices*. Tickets are only \$10 for high-school students. For details, call (510) 647-2972 or e-mail school@berkeleyrep.org.
- *30 Below* – the coolest night of theatre for the under-30 crowd – also returns on Friday, February 26. Enjoy a performance at 8:00 PM and a wild post-show party featuring free beverages provided by Pyramid Brewery and Raymond Vineyards. Tickets start at only \$13.50 for anyone under 30 years old!
- *Opening-night* festivities are held on Wednesday, March 3, including a pre-show dinner for donors at the Hotel Shattuck Plaza and a post-show party for the audience catered by Bistro Liaison and Raymond Vineyards.
- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place at 7:00 PM on the following Tuesday and Thursday evenings: March 2, March 4, March 9, March 11, March 16, March 18, March 23, March 25, March 30, April 1, April 6, and April 8.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, March 18; Tuesday, March 23; and Friday, April 2.
- And, on select evenings, patrons can whet their palates for the play with *free tastings* from these culinary artisans one hour before curtain: Ale Industries (Friday, March 19), Almare Gelato (Friday, March 26), Angeline's Louisiana Kitchen (Friday, March 5), and Artesa Vineyards and Winery (Friday, March 12).

(MORE)

Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West is part of a **daring season** with three other new shows still on the way: the world premiere of *Girlfriend* from Todd Almond and Matthew Sweet, the world premiere of *The Wake* from Lisa Kron and Leigh Silverman, and the local debut of *Coming Home* from Athol Fugard and Gordon Edelstein. 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. In addition to significant savings, subscribers receive valuable benefits such as 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*. Subscriptions begin as low as \$84 – and subscribers save up to 29% on every ticket.

Individual **tickets for *Strange Devices* start at only \$27** to ensure that everyone can 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.

So get into the picture. 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. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 53 world premieres. 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 explore new ideas. 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. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. In the 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*. A not-for-profit organization, 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.

###



FACT SHEET

- WHO:** Written by Naomi Iizuka
 Directed by Les Waters
 Designed by Mimi Lien (sets), Annie Smart (costumes), Alexander V. Nichols (lights), Bray Poor (sound), and Leah Gelpe (projections)
 Starring Teresa Avia Lim, Bruce McKenzie, Kate Norris, Danny Wolohan, and Johnny Wu
- WHAT:** *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*, the world premiere of a sexy new show from the author of *36 Views* and the director of *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*
- WHERE:** Berkeley Repertory Theatre
 Roda Theatre, 2015 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Berkeley, CA 94704
- WHEN:** February 26 – April 11, 2010
- 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 matinees during previews or on 3/4, 3/13, 3/18, 3/27 & 4/1
 - No performance on Friday 4/9

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					26 FEB 8 P 8 P	27 8 P
28 7 P	1 MAR	2 8 P	3 8 P	4 8	5 8 P	6 2/8 P
7 2/7 P	8	9 8	10 7	11 2/8	12 8 P	13 8 P
14 2/7 P	15	16 8	17 7	18 8 P	19 8 P	20 2/8 P
21 2/7 P	22	23 8 P	24 7	25 2/8	26 8 P	27 8 P
28 2/7 P	29	30 8	31 7	1 APR 8	2 8 P	3 2/8 P
4 2/7 P	5	6 8	7 7	8 2/8	9	10 2/8
11 2/7						

- P PREVIEW
- TN TEEN NIGHT
- OP OPENING NIGHT
- 30 30 BELOW
- DIS POST-SHOW DISCUSSION
- T TASTING
- DOC DOCENT PRESENTATIONS EVERY TUE & THU 7PM

Special Events:

- Low-cost previews: Friday 2/26, Saturday 2/27 & Tuesday 3/2 @ 8:00 PM and Sunday 2/28 @ 7:00 PM
- Teen night: Friday 2/26 @ 6:30 PM
- 30 Below (party for those under 30): Friday 2/26 @ 8:00 PM
- Opening night: Wednesday 3/3 @ 8:00 PM
- Pre-show docent talks: Tuesdays 3/2, 3/4, 3/9, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30 & 4/6 and Thursdays 3/4, 3/11, 3/18, 3/25, 4/1 & 4/8 @ 7:00 PM
- Post-play discussions: Thursday 3/18, Tuesday 3/23, and Friday 4/2 @ 8:00 PM
- Free tastings: Fridays 3/5 (Angeline's Kitchen), 3/12 (Artesa Vineyards), 3/19 (Ale Industries) & 3/26 (Almare Gelato) @ 7:00 PM

HOW MUCH: \$13.50 - \$71

	Section B	Section A	Premium
Previews.....	\$27	\$34	\$39
Tue 8 PM / Wed 7 PM / Thu, Fri, 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-10sd.asp>

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