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## LES WATERS LEAVES BERKELEY REP TO LEAD ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

### Obie Award-winner becomes new artistic director of nationally renowned theatre

NOVEMBER 29, 2011 – This morning it was announced that, after an extensive national search, Obie Award-winner Les Waters has been chosen to lead the renowned Actors Theatre of Louisville. For the past eight years, Waters has served as associate artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre and helped lead that organization to national prominence. He will now become artistic director of Actors Theatre, beginning the transition in January and assuming full-time duties after directing Berkeley Rep's production of *Red* in March.

"For a director such as myself, whose career has focused on fostering new work, it has been a delight to be part of the team at Berkeley Rep," **Waters remarked**. "It is an extraordinary theatre staffed by extraordinary people dedicated to the highest quality of craftsmanship. After eight years together, it is difficult to leave Berkeley – yet it is an honor and a privilege to take up the reins at Actors Theatre of Louisville, an organization I've long admired. I've had the opportunity to direct twice at Actors Theatre, and I was deeply impressed with the theatre, its staff, and the community at large. I am committed to making theatre there that is passionate and intelligent, funny and heartfelt, and look forward to leading Actors Theatre to new artistic endeavors."

"We've loved working with Les for the past eight years," said **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. "He had a remarkable run at Berkeley Rep, and his signature style as a director and the full force of his humanity will be sorely missed. We wish him nothing but the best as his adventure continues, and we look forward to forging a strong relationship with Actors Theatre of Louisville."

"Les will bring exceptional qualities to this leadership role," said **Jennifer Bielstein**, managing director of Actors Theatre. "He has an impressive list of artistic accomplishments and is a proven mentor and advisor to emerging theatre artists, playwrights, and directors. He also shares Actors Theatre's passion for new work and its commitment to the innovation and imagination of the American playwright. I believe he will bring a new passion and energy to our season programming and is the perfect person to champion Actors Theatre within the region and nationally. I very much look forward to partnering with him as Actors Theatre continues to make a significant impact on American theatre in years to come."

Throughout **Waters' tenure at Berkeley Rep**, his shows garnered great acclaim, routinely ranking among the year's best in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *Time Out New York*, *Time Magazine*, and *USA Today*. He has a history of collaborating with prominent playwrights like Caryl Churchill, Charles Mee, and Wallace Shawn, and champions important new voices such as Will Eno, Jordan Harrison, Sarah Ruhl, and Anne Washburn. In 2009, he made his Broadway debut with Ruhl's *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, which began in Berkeley. His other productions at Berkeley Rep include the world premieres of *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *Finn in the Underworld*, *Girlfriend*, and *To the Lighthouse*; the American premiere of *TRAGEDY: a tragedy*; the West Coast premieres of Ruhl's *Eurydice* and *Three Sisters*; and extended runs of *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Pillowman*, and *Yellowman*. Waters has numerous credits in New York, his native England, and at theatres across America. He led the MFA directing program at UC San Diego, where he continues to teach, and is an associate artist of The Civilians.

(MORE)

RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

Waters joins a prestigious lineage of leaders who have led Actors Theatre from its humble beginnings to a nationally recognized regional theatre and a major force in American playwriting. He replaces Marc Masterson, who stepped down in May after 11 years to become artistic director of South Coast Repertory Theatre.

Now in its 48<sup>th</sup> season, **Actors Theatre of Louisville** has emerged as one of America's most consistently innovative professional theatre companies. The company performs annually to nearly 200,000 people and is the recipient of the most prestigious awards bestowed on a regional theatre: a special Tony Award for Distinguished Achievement, the James N. Vaughan Memorial Award for Exceptional Achievement and Contribution to the Development of Professional Theatre, and the Margo Jones Award for the Encouragement of New Plays. A prolific and vibrant force in the development of new plays, its annual Humana Festival of New American Plays is an internationally acclaimed event that has introduced more than 400 plays into the repertoire of American and international theatre.

#### **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. With two stages, a school, and a Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, Berkeley Rep is proud to premiere exhilarating new plays. In the last six years, the company has helped send six shows to Broadway. Seven more landed off Broadway, one moved to London, two turned into films, and others have toured the nation. Come see tomorrow's plays today at Berkeley Rep.

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