



AURORA THEATRE COMPANY OFFICIALLY OPENS EXPANSION SPACE “THE NELL AND JULES DASHOW WING”

BERKELEY, Calif. (August 18, 2009) - Berkeley's acclaimed **Aurora Theatre Company** celebrated the official completion of the company's Addison Street expansion wing, **The Nell and Jules Dashow Wing**, named in honor of lead donor Deborah Ruth's parents, at a special opening event held in the new space on **August 17**. Over 120 VIPS and local luminaries attended the evening soirée, which began with a welcome from incoming Board President **Ellen B. Levine** and a festive ribbon-cutting ceremony at the entrance to the new wing. After **Deborah Ruth**, co-capital campaign committee chairs **Robert B. Hetler** and **Carolyn Weinberger**, and campaign committee member **Alison Teeman** cut the red ribbon leading into the newly-christened space, guests enjoyed cocktails and a sumptuous buffet courtesy of Bistro Liaison.

Following opening remarks from Aurora **Artistic Director Tom Ross**, in which he thanked everyone involved in making the expansion project a reality and shared his vision for the future of the new space, guests listened to a humorous and heart-warming speech from Deborah Ruth, as well as rousing remarks from Robert B. Hetler and Carolyn Weinberger. Veteran stage actor **Ray Reinhardt**, who is featured in the cast of Aurora Theatre Company's 18th season opener, Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing!*, the first production that has had the privilege to rehearse in the new space, spoke about what makes the Aurora such a special place to perform during a magnificent champagne toast.

Also on hand to lend their support were Berkeley City Councilmember **Kriss Worthington**, Aurora founding Artistic Director **Barbara Oliver** and co-founder **Marge Glicksman**, along with **Pat Angell** (widow of the late acclaimed theater architect Gene Angell), Angell's partner, theater architect **Brian Rawlinson**, and veteran Bay Area actress and director **Joy Carlin**, who helms the

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company’s production of *Awake and Sing!* Also attending were members of the construction team and Board members **Joel Altman, Elizabeth Burwell, Jim Fowler, Deborah Goodman, Tony Hawthorne, Darrell Louie, Leigh Robinson, Diane Verducci, and Steve Wolan.**

The Nell and Jules Dashow Wing adds 2,600 square feet to the 7,200 square feet the company currently occupies and houses a new rehearsal space for main stage productions, readings, and workshops of new productions, as well as artistic offices and a conference room. The space also increases the capability for in-house set-building and allows the Aurora to increase the number of performances per show and extend current productions on the main stage while preparing for the next production. The expansion now also allows for a larger lobby and other patron amenities; it was built considering all green construction techniques and is handicapped accessible. Since the completion of construction, the new space has also hosted auditions for the company’s upcoming production of *John Gabriel Borkman*, a week-long workshop for the upcoming world premiere of *The First Grade*, and a CPR training seminar; the space has also played host to auditions for Z Space, and will be used by local auteur Mark Jackson to workshop a newly-commissioned Aurora play.

More than halfway through an ongoing \$2.1 million capital campaign, Aurora officially broke through the wall connecting its current space to an adjacent space and began the expansion project in January 2009. The new expansion wing is the final project of theater architect Gene Angell (with his partner Brian Rawlinson); Oliver & Company, Inc. was the general contractor, with Edward Van of E.J. Van Company, Inc. overseeing the project as Construction Manager.

Veteran Bay Area actor and director Barbara Oliver, along with Dorothy Bryant, Marge Glicksman, Richard Rossi, and Ken Grantham formed Aurora Theatre Company in 1992. For its first decade, the company occupied an elegant, intimate 67-seat drawing room in the Julia Morgan-designed Berkeley City Club, quickly attracting a core of loyal patrons for its high-quality chamber productions. Seven years ago, the Aurora moved to its current space in the downtown Berkeley Arts District, a new theater that expanded seating capacity to 150. Today, with attendance at near capacity, the expansion seeks to support the needs, both artistically and operationally, of this growing professional theater company while retaining the actor-audience intimacy that has become Aurora’s defining characteristic.

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Operating under a Tier 3.5 Actors’ Equity Association Bay Area Theatres contract on an annual budget of \$1.4 million, Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theatre. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, Aurora Theatre Company has been called “one of the most important regional theatres in the area” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street Journal* has “nothing but praise for the Aurora.” The *Contra Costa Times* stated, “perfection is probably an unattainable ideal in a medium as fluid as live performance, but the Aurora Theatre comes luminously close,” while the *San Jose Mercury News* affirmed “[Aurora Theatre Company] lives up to its reputation as a theatre that feeds the mind,” and the *Oakland Tribune* declared “it’s all about choices, and if you value good theatre, choose the Aurora.”

Aurora Theatre Company opens its 18th season in August with Clifford Odets’ legendary Depression-era drama **AWAKE AND SING!** directed by Joy Carlin, featuring **Charles Dean, Ellen Ratner, Ray Reinhardt, and Rod Gnapp**, along with **Victor Talmadge, Anthony Nemirovsky, Rebecca White, and Patrick Russell**. Tony-nominated director Barbara Damashek returns to Aurora Theatre Company in October to helm Neil LaBute’s exploration of body image in contemporary America, **FAT PIG**, and the jingle bells will rock again this December with a new edition of **THE COVERLETTES COVER CHRISTMAS**. Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director Tom Ross helms the World Premiere of Joel Drake Johnson’s **THE FIRST GRADE** in January, and Aurora Theatre Company founding Artistic Director Barbara Oliver returns to direct Henrik Ibsen’s masterwork **JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN** in April. Closing the season in June is the Bay Area Premiere of Stephen Karem’s innovative comedy **SPEECH & DEBATE** directed by Robin Stanton. For tickets or more information about Aurora Theatre Company, the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**.

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