



San Jose Rep Presents **THE DRESSER**, 1/27-2/20

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The witty, compelling drama *The Dresser* examines the backstage relationship between the tyrannical Shakespearean actor "Sir" who is trying to keep his company together during difficult times and his devoted, fussy budget dresser Norman. The result is one of the most acclaimed dramas of modern theatre. It's what the *New York Times* calls "A stirring evening [that] ... burns with a love of the theatre that conquers all ... Perfectly observed, devilishly entertaining backstage lore." Penned by Robert Harwood and directed by the Rep's Artistic Director [Rick Lombardo](#), *The Dresser* runs from January 27-February 20, 2011 at San Jose Repertory Theatre, 101 Paseo de San Antonio in downtown San Jose. Pay What You Will Night is Thursday, January 27 at 8 p.m. Press Opening Night is Wednesday, February 2 at 8 p.m.

Tickets are available at the San Jose Rep Box Office at 101 Paseo de San Antonio or can be purchased online at www.SJRep.com or by calling 408.367.7255.

It's 1942 in Britain and the smell of death is in the air. The sirens howl, signaling another air raid, but inside the crumbling walls of a struggling theatre in the provinces, Sir prepares to give his 227th performance as King Lear. Norman is barely able to take care of himself but faithfully assists Sir in near feudal servitude, massaging his ego, pampering his intellect and even creating sound effects for the Shakespearean production by Sir's struggling troupe. This poignant tribute to theatre, friendship and the human spirit in the face of great strife—be it war or one's own debilitating mortality—proves that "the show must go on."

"This play, which celebrates the power and love of the theater to sustain us, speaks very deeply to me," states Director [Rick Lombardo](#). "In its celebration of all things theatrical, it also celebrates the power of tradition, work and purpose to give meaning to whatever we do in life."

[Ronald Harwood](#) based the play on his experiences as dresser for distinguished [Ed English](#) Shakespearean actor-manager Sir [Donald Wolfit](#), the prototype for the play's "Sir." *The Dresser* was first presented in Manchester, England, in 1980. It opened on Broadway the next year and was nominated for the 1982 Tony Award for Best Play.

[Rick Lombardo](#) is in his third season as Artistic Director of San Jose Rep. He was previously the Artistic Director for 13 years at the award-winning [New Repertory Theatre](#), the leading mid-size resident theatre in the greater Boston area. In 2009, he was awarded the Norton Prize for Sustained Excellence from the Boston Theatre Critics Association for his work at New Rep. He has also been the recipient of four individual [Elliot Norton](#) Awards and is a nine-time winner of the "IRNE" award for his productions of *The Clean House*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Ragtime*, *Waiting for Godot* and *The Wier*. His world premiere of *According to Tip* has transferred for an extended run to Boston's theatre district. His production of *Bill W and Dr. Bob* enjoyed an extended run off-Broadway in 2006.

"I'm enormously excited to be working on this play with two of the Bay Area's finest and most beloved actors, [Ken Ruta](#) and [James Carpenter](#), in these two iconic roles," adds Lombardo. "I can't think of another stage actor in the country better suited to bringing to life the mercurial, gifted and fading actor 'Sir' as [Ken Ruta](#), whose decades-long career on stage begins with

[Tyrone Guthrie](#), and includes several performances of his own as King Lear. I expect the chemistry between Ken and Jim to be electric."

[Ken Ruta](#) (Sir) appeared in San Jose Rep productions of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Las Meninas, The Underpants, Amy's View and Later Life. An original company member of San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre (some 60 productions as actor/director), Minneapolis' Guthrie Theater (over 40 productions as actor/director/associate artistic director) and Cincinnati's Playhouse in the Park, he is an associate artist of San Diego's [Old Globe Theatre](#) and has enjoyed a quarter century association with the [Arizona Theatre Company](#). As well as extensive credits with the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Minnesota Orchestra, he appeared in the Broadway productions of Inherit the Wind, Separate Tables, Duel of Angels, Ross, The Three Sisters and The Elephant Man.

[James Carpenter](#) (Norman) has appeared at San Jose Rep in As You Like It, A Picasso, Wintertime, By the Bog of Cats, Ctrl-Alt-Delete, Sideman and The Matchmaker. His Bay Area credits include ACT, The Aurora Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, Shakespeare Santa Cruz and TheaterWorks. An associate artist for 14 years with [Berkeley Repertory Theatre](#), and now an associate artist with the California Shakespeare Theater, his out of town credits include: The [Old Globe Theatre](#), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, [Intiman Theatre](#), [Arizona Theatre Company](#), [Dallas Theater Center](#) and the [Huntington Theatre Company](#).

They are joined by [Benjamin Evett](#) (Mr. Oxenby), Blythe Foster (Irene), [Rachel Harker](#) (Her Ladyship), Julian Lopez-Morrillas (Geoffrey) and Lynne Soffer (Madge). Ensemble performers include Drew Benjamin Jones, Jason Kapoor, [Shane Rhoades](#) and Adam Sessa.

The creative team includes [Kent Dorsey](#) (Scenic Designer); [Cathleen Edwards](#) (Costume Designer); [David Lee](#) Cuthbert (Lighting Designer); Steve Schoenbeck (Sound Designer); and Kimberly Mohne Hill (Dialect Coach). The production Stage Manager is Laxmi Kumaran.

The Dresser is presented by Artistic Sponsor P.F. Chang's and Media Sponsor Stark Insider.

The Rep's next performance will be Legacy of Light, a smart and touching comedy by Karen Zacarias and directed by Kirsten Brandt that will run March 24-April 17, 2011. Called "an intellectual joyride" by DC Theatre Scene, this adventurous comedy brings together two brilliantly gifted women living centuries apart. Physicist Émilie du Châtelet, lover of famous French philosopher Voltaire, and a young poet, worries about her fate after she unexpectedly becomes pregnant. Driven by fear and ambition, she races to publish her theories based on Sir Isaac Newton's Laws of Motion. Linked together by scientific legacy and maternal instincts, accomplished astrophysicist Olivia and her husband, Peter, want to conceive but cannot. Olivia's attention turns to her new "child," a planet she's discovered in the midst of hiring a quirky and free-spirited surrogate. This whimsical tale leaves audiences asking: Does the birth of a child ultimately mean as much to the world as the birth of an idea?

About the Rep:

San Jose Rep is the premier non-profit, professional theatre company in the South Bay, presenting six main stage productions each year. Now in its 30th year as a major contributor to the South Bay's cultural community, the Rep's mission is to engage, entertain and inspire people. The Rep produces innovative theatrical performances that offer fresh perspectives into the human condition, educational programs that promote life-long learning, and outreach initiatives that benefit our diverse community. For more information, visit www.SJRep.com.