

For Immediate Release

Ensemble Theatre Company Kicks Off New Season with  
*The Clean House*

A Modern Comedy by One of America's Top New Playwrights

(Santa Barbara CA)— **Ensemble Theater Company (ETC) of Santa Barbara** leads off its 2007-08 season on Thursday, September 27, with Pulitzer Prize finalist, *The Clean House*, by Sarah Ruhl. A recent MacArthur Fellowship “genius grant” recipient, Ms. Ruhl is one of America’s hottest new playwrights. This quirky and poignant comedy about clean houses and messy lives, about love, loss and dust balls, will play through Sunday, October 21, 2007. Opening night is Saturday, September 29.

Lane, a successful doctor, is having a difficult time: her depressed maid, Mathilde, doesn’t want to clean the house; she just wants to tell jokes — in Portuguese. Conveniently, Lane’s sister Virginia loves to clean and secretly helps Mathilde. But when Lane’s husband Charles leaves her for another woman, Lane’s life becomes a mess that both Mathilde and Virginia have trouble cleaning up. This humorous play, which skillfully portrays modern domesticity with a touch of Latin American magic realism, has taken American by storm with numerous awards and sold out houses. *The New York Times* called it “One of the finest and funniest new plays you’re likely to see ... this season,” and *Variety* announced that Sarah Ruhl, is a “playwright with an original and audacious voice.”

ETC’s Executive Artistic Director Jonathan Fox is pleased to welcome back director **Jenny Sullivan**, who helmed last season’s hit, *The Memory of Water*. Ms. Sullivan is an award-winning regional director who has worked at Rubicon Theatre, Pasadena Playhouse, San Jose Rep, Odyssey Theatre and Access Theatre. She is also one of the founding members of Santa Barbara’s *Summer Solstice Celebration*. “*The Clean House* cleanses the heart and soul as it embraces the cosmic joke that life is messy,” says Ms. Sullivan. “This is a compelling play full of heart, humor and romance.”

Reprising the role of Ana, Charles’s new lover, is New York based actor **Franca Barchiesi**, who originated the role in the play’s world premiere at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 2004. Ms. Barchiesi has worked in New York, Los Angeles and London in theatre, television, commercials and independent films. Her most recent acting roles include Georgia O’Keeffe in *Blue Plains*, Eleanor in *Big Love*, Anna Magnani in *Roman Nights*, Ramona in Nilo Cruz’s *Dancing on her Knees* and Ofelina in Cruz’s *A Park in our House*.

(more)

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The excellent cast also includes **Colette Kilroy** as Lane, who recently appeared in the world premiere of *Nighthawks* (based on the Edward Hopper iconic painting) at The Kirk Douglas Theatre. In addition to numerous, television series most recently as a recurring character in NBC's *The Profiler*, Ms. Kilroy has performed at such prestigious venues as The Pasadena Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse, Jolla Playhouse and South Coast Repertory. She holds an MFA from The Yale School of Drama.

**Paula Christensen** as Mathilde, the Brazilian maid, was born in Argentina and at the age of five located with her parents to New York, where she trained extensively in theater before moving to Los Angeles to work as a professional actor. Her grandfather was one of South America's most prolific filmmakers and was exiled to Brazil for refusing to censor his films and make them political propaganda. **Laurie O'Brien**, as Virginia, has worked frequently at the Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles, in addition to portraying numerous characters on episodic television shows including: *Shark*, *CSI*, *CSI: Miami* and *ER*. Rounding out this exemplary cast is the male lead, Charles, played by Santa Barbara favorite **Rudolph Willrich**. He has performed in over 14 shows in the last 11 years at Ensemble Theatre, most recently *The Humble Boy*, *Ride Down Mt. Morgan* and *Communicating Doors*.

The creative team includes costume designs by Santa Barbara resident Barbara Lackner, scenic design by Tom Buderwitz, and lighting design by Kent Inasy.

The Ensemble Theatre Company of Santa Barbara was founded in 1979 and is housed at the intimate Alhecama Theatre located in the historic Presidio District in downtown Santa Barbara at **914 Santa Barbara Street**. ETC is Santa Barbara's longest running, most award winning professional resident theatre company, now in its 28th anniversary season under the stewardship of Executive Artistic Director, Jonathan Fox. The 2007-08 season will continue with *The Uneasy Chair* by Evan Smith, *Thérèse Raquin* by Emile Zola, *The Syringa Tree* by Pamela Gien and, finishing out the season, a co-production with the Vienna English Theatre of *Old Wicked Songs* by Jon Marans.

Performances run Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8:00 pm and Sundays at 2:00 and 7:00 pm. Ticket prices for *The Clean House* range from \$25.00 to \$40.00. ETC offers discounts to students, seniors and groups of 10 or more. Low cost previews are Thursday and Friday, September 27 and 28. Four and five play subscriptions are now available for the 2007-08 season and range from \$100.00 to \$170.00. This season ETC is introducing a special 5 Play Youth Subscription series for patrons 26 and under. Subscriptions, single tickets and group tickets are available through the **Ensemble Theatre Box Office at (805) 962-8606** or online at [www.ensembletheatre.com](http://www.ensembletheatre.com).

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The Ensemble Theatre is a professional theater employing members of Actor's Equity Association and maintains a policy to hire, without discrimination regarding race, color, national origin, gender, handicap, or political or sexual persuasion.