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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**BERKELEY REP'S GROUND FLOOR AWARDS RESIDENCIES
TO SOME OF NATION'S TOP THEATRE ARTISTS**

R&D facility for theatre picks 14 groundbreaking projects for fourth Summer Residency Lab

March 25, 2015 – Today, **The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work** announces that it has selected 14 projects for its fourth Summer Residency Lab featuring works from more than 20 talented artists. This June, as part of an extraordinary laboratory for collaboration, some of the nation's most prominent and promising writers, directors, designers, and composers will unite at the Theatre's campus in West Berkeley over an intense four-week period to share ideas, break bread, and create new plays. Dozens more local and out-of-town actors and directors will join the Summer Residency Lab, bringing the number of participating artists close to 100.

From over 400 applications, residencies have been awarded to **César Alvarez** (*Futurity: The Musical*) and **Lucas Hnath** (*The Christians*); **Christopher Chen** (*The Hundred Flowers Project*) and **Mei Ann Teo** (*19*); **Julia Cho** (*The Language Archive*); **Jackie Sibblies Drury** (*We Are Proud to Present a Presentation...*); **Anne Galjour** (*Alligator Tales*); **Rinne Groff** (*Compulsion*); **Eric Hoff** (director of *Hit The Wall*), **Will Davis** (director of *Sorry Robot*), and **SK Kerastas** (*What's the T*); **Jamie Hook** (*Beyond Belief*); **Naomi Iizuka** (*Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*) and **Ripe Time**; **Hansol Jung** (*No More Sad Things*); **Sean Christopher Lewis** (*Killadelphia*) and **Jennifer Fawcett** (director of *Out of Bounds*); musician/songwriter **Anaïs Mitchell** (*Hadestown*); **Peter Sinn Nachtrieb** (*BOB*) and performer **Danny Scheie** (last seen at Berkeley Rep in *Troublemaker*); and **Annie Smart** (set designer of *In the Next Room*).

"We are incredibly excited about this year's Summer Residency Lab artists," says **Madeleine Oldham**, director of **The Ground Floor** and resident dramaturg at Berkeley Rep. "From commissioned artists and returning friends to brand new faces, we feel as though we're living up to our promise to ourselves to build as diverse and rigorous a creative atmosphere as possible. Playwrights, designers, musicians, directors, actors, and solo performers will come together in a rare opportunity to imagine alongside each other. In the world of our incubator, a salsa nightclub act about an assassination attempt on Fidel Castro can grow alongside a multidisciplinary adaptation of a Murakami story, or a play that explores international adoption with puppets. Now in the fourth year of the Summer Residency Lab, we feel as though we're hitting our stride."

The Ground Floor is a bold initiative designed to raise the bar on the Tony Award-winning nonprofit's already successful record of artistic innovation. As the umbrella for all new play activity at Berkeley Rep, The Ground Floor seeks to enhance and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre. This includes supporting commissioned artists and developing shows for the season, as well as The Ground Floor's flagship program, the Summer Residency Lab. By inviting diversely talented artists to work on daring new projects at any stage in the creative process, the Summer Residency Lab promotes vital crosspollination among artists and champions the spirit of innovation inherent to Berkeley and the Bay Area. Since the Lab's inaugural year in 2012, more than 300 artists working on 45 projects have participated.

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RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

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Three shows that have been developed through the program have already appeared on Berkeley Rep's main stage: KJ Sanchez and Jenny Mercein's *X's and O's (A Football Love Story)* (2015), Marcus Gardley's *The House that will not Stand* (2014), and Dan LeFranc's *Troublemaker, or The Freakin' Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatright* (2013).

Known as an incubator for theatrical start-ups or a top-notch R&D facility for artists, The Ground Floor became possible when Berkeley Rep united all its preproduction activities at its Harrison Street campus in West Berkeley. And now as part of Berkeley Rep's three-year [Create Campaign](#) — a \$50 million comprehensive fundraising effort to support the development of new work — the Theatre is transforming a vacant warehouse on that site into a vibrant new creative center to house The Ground Floor. The expansion will build out the Harrison Street campus to create an artists-in-residence community that will include rehearsal halls and housing for visiting artists. The result will be a dynamic home for play creation — an organic and energetic environment for artists to develop work in a flexible setting, challenge each other to expand the boundaries of theatre, and intersect with the public to create community.

The Ground Floor is made possible by a \$1 million grant from the James Irvine Foundation's Artistic Innovation Fund, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts: ArtWorks, Bank of America, and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation.

Get in on The Ground Floor. Here is an alphabetical list of the artists and projects selected for the fourth annual Summer Residency Lab:

César Alvarez and Lucas Hnath: *Castro*

Vocalist, lyricist, and guitarist for the Lisps, 2013 Summer Residency Lab alum César Alvarez (*The Universe is a Small Hat*) is known for his innovative compositions for shows like *Futurity*, *An Octoroon*, and *Good Person of Szechwan*. He returns to Berkeley with MacArthur Award-winning playwright Lucas Hnath, whose plays include *The Christians* (2014 Humana Festival), *Red Speedo* (Studio Theatre, Washington, DC), and *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney* (Soho Rep). Set in the 1960s, *Castro* is a musical extravaganza about the C.I.A.'s last-ditch efforts to take care of the "Castro Problem." It is very loosely based on the allegedly true story of Marita Lorenz, a lover of Fidel Castro's whom the CIA recruited to assassinate Castro when their affair ended. After a series of truly bizarre twists and turns, Lorenz's plan was ultimately unsuccessful, but this musical imagines an alternative reality in which she carries out the assassination and the CIA and Cuban exile community get exactly what they wanted. Say the creators, "It's based on a true story, but we also made a lot of stuff up."

Christopher Chen and Mei Ann Teo: *Passage*

San Francisco playwright Christopher Chen has captured the imagination of audiences in the Bay Area and beyond with plays like *The Late Wedding*, *Mutt*, and 2012 Glickman Award-winning *The Hundred Flowers Project*. International film and theatre director Mei Ann Teo has traveled the globe and worked closer to home at theatres like Berkeley Rep, the Public Theater, Crowded Fire Theater, Cutting Ball Theater, Theatre of Yugen, and the Bay Area Playwrights Foundation. Their collaboration is a fantasia on E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, recasting the novel as a minimalist contemporary fable on the clash of cultures. *Passage* replaces Britain and India with two imagined countries — one colonized, the other the colonizer — to serve as a meditation on perception and power.

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Julia Cho: *Aubergine*

Susan Smith Blackburn Award winner Julia Cho joins the Summer Residency Lab to continue refining her Berkeley Rep–commissioned play *Aubergine*. An estranged son, a father who's ill, a visiting uncle carrying their memories in tow, a woman without an appetite, and a refugee from a forgotten country — they all prove potent ingredients in this bittersweet and moving meditation on family, forgiveness, and the things that nourish us. When language fails, when the past fades, the perfect meal transcends time and culture and says more than words ever can. Cho's plays have garnered critical praise from New York to Los Angeles. Now she pairs with Obie Award–winning director Liesl Tommy (*Ruined* and *Party People*) on the elegant, poignant, and lyrical *Aubergine*. The play will have its world premiere February 2016 at Berkeley Rep.

Jackie Sibblies Drury: *Untitled*

Berkeley Rep–commissioned artist and 2013 Summer Residency Lab alum Jackie Sibblies Drury returns to work on a currently untitled play about surveillance, paranoia, and the individuals who listen. Drury is most known for her incendiary play *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915*, as well as for *Social Creatures* and *Really Really Really Really Really*. Her work has been presented at theatres like Soho Rep, Victory Gardens, Trinity Rep, Woolly Mammoth, Actors Theater of Louisville, Company One, and the Bush Theatre in London.

Anne Galjour: *The Alligator Ball* (working title)

San Francisco playwright and solo artist Anne Galjour originally hails from Southeastern Louisiana, and draws on her Cajun background to craft vivid portraits of the people and places of her youth. Her one-woman-show *Hurricane and Mauvais Temps* premiered at Berkeley Rep in 1996 and went on to Manhattan Theatre Club, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. *The Alligator Ball* (working title) is the third part of Galjour's trilogy. Grady and Rosetta Cheramie make enough money from drilling for oil on their property to buy and operate a fantastically successful alligator farm. Now, in *The Alligator Ball*, beneath the ground is an even richer prospect: natural gas. When the catastrophic BP oil spill unexpectedly interrupts the annual Alligator Festival Ball, the heroes of the Cajun Trilogy once again find themselves caught between the potent forces of oil extraction and the fierce power of nature.

Rinne Groff: *Fire in Dreamland*

Playwright and performer Rinne Groff, whose mesmerizing play *Compulsion* had its world premiere in the 2010–11 season at Berkeley Rep, joins the Summer Residency Lab to continue work on her Berkeley Rep commission *Fire in Dreamland*. In this powerful coming-of-age story, Kate is seduced by the vision of an upstart Dutch filmmaker who has thrown himself into an epic film about the tragic 1911 fire on Coney Island. As past and present converge in this haunted, battered landscape, Kate must find a way to rebuild her own life amidst the ruins. Groff will be joined by director Marissa Wolf, artistic director emerita of Crowded Fire Theater and current director of new play development at Kansas City Repertory Theatre.

Eric Hoff, Will Davis, and SK Kerastas: *Color Guard* (working title)

Eric Hoff, a multidisciplinary theatre artist, has developed new plays with theatres across the country, including Playwrights Horizons, New York Theatre Workshop, Goodman Theatre, and About Face Theatre. Director Will Davis, a theatre-maker focused on physically adventurous new and devised work, has developed and directed work at theatres like New York Theatre Workshop, Clubbed Thumb, the Olney Theatre, and Mixed Blood. SK Kerastas is a hybrid theatre artist and educator who is currently a visiting artistic associate at The Ground Floor with the help of a TCG Leadership U Grant.

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Together, they are creating a movement-driven play that examines how the Color Guard, a ceremonial ritual in military pageantry, became a subconsciously accepted space for men to express their femininity. Both a metaphor for the modern gay bar and the modern queer nonprofit organization, the project will delve into what happens when a once-radical space assimilates, achieves its goals, and turns into something oppressive.

Jamie Hook: *Rules to Follow in Cloud Engineering*

Jamie Hook is a film and theatre director whose diverse body of work includes live stagings of indie and action films, directing the film *The Naked Proof* with August Wilson, and penning plays like *Scott & Zelda* and *Beyond Belief*, a live philosophical proof of Santa Claus based on the testimony of 3–5-year-olds. Hook will team up with composer and 2014 Summer Residency Lab alum Brent Arnold, actor Michael Chick, and dramaturg Sarah Françoise to create *Rules to Follow in Cloud Engineering*. The piece tells the story of Dr. Wilhelm Reich, a celebrated Austrian figure who began his career as Freud's heir-apparent, but ended it as a discredited, paranoid, UFO-chasing, and FDA-targeted crackpot in Rangeley, Maine. *Rules* will interweave elements of dance, film, and music to bring forth a collage of Reich's life, in the process contextualizing themes of the cultural definition of madness, the subjective biases of science, the endurance of family, and the nature of human sexuality.

Naomi Iizuka and Ripe Time: *Sleep*

Naomi Iizuka, playwright of *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West* (Berkeley Rep 2010) and *Polaroid Stories*, teams up with Obie Award-winning director and choreographer Rachel Dickstein, who is the artistic director of Brooklyn-based company Ripe Time. Based on the short story by Haruki Murakami, *Sleep* weaves together dance, language, and visual design to tell the story of a Japanese housewife finding escape from a mundane, prescribed life in a secret nocturnal world. This seeming "escape," however, leads her to a world of lawlessness and danger that she never expected. *Sleep* traces the distance between what we appear to be and what we are and asks: What happens when we awake to the hypocrisies and lies underlying the comforts of our world? From the artists of Ripe Time, *Sleep* spins a cautionary tale of one woman's awakening.

Hansol Jung: *Wolf Play*

Award-winning playwright Hansol Jung's work has been developed all over the world, including at the Royal Court (London), New York Theatre Workshop, Lark Play Development Center, and OD Musical Company (Seoul). She is a member of the Ma-Yi Writers Lab, and has translated over 30 musicals into Korean including *Evita*, *Dracula*, *Spamalot*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Hansol's new piece, *Wolf Play*, will tell the story of a Korean boy whose adoptive father un-adopts him and "rehomes" him to a new family. But when this American ex-father discovers the boy's new parents are a lesbian couple, he spends the rest of the play trying to get the boy back. Onstage, this Korean boy is not a real boy, however, but a puppet, manipulated by a wolf who serves as the emcee of the evening and the spinner of the night's tale.

Sean Christopher Lewis and Jennifer Fawcett: *Ghost Story*

Sean Christopher Lewis is a commentator on NPR's *This American Life* and a playwright, solo performer, and director whose plays like *Killadelphia* and *Dogs of Rwanda* have appeared across the U.S., Europe, and East Africa. He will collaborate with Jennifer Fawcett, a playwright, actor, and the associate artistic director of Working Group Theatre. This summer, the pair will create a found-footage story onstage that tells the tale of a missing brother.

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With hours of cassettes of interviews and sound design, all meant to create an experience of loss, a narrator will walk us through the Harrison Campus building to see his handmade re-tellings of a ghost story that has haunted him since his youth.

Anaïs Mitchell: *Hadestown*

Anaïs Mitchell is a singer-songwriter and storyteller who has headlined worldwide and supported tours for Bon Iver, Ani DiFranco, the Low Anthem, Richard Thompson, Patty Griffin, and the Punch Brothers. She has recorded under her own label, Wilderland, since 2012. Her project *Hadestown* is a folk rock opera based on the Greek myth of Orpheus & Eurydice and set in a post-apocalyptic Depression-era company town. When Eurydice chooses the wealth and security of Hadestown over a life of poverty with her poet-lover Orpheus, he journeys to Hadestown to win back his bride. Part love story, part political dreamscape, *Hadestown* is a tale of two couples, of faith versus doubt, and of the walls we build. Since the piece came out as a sensationally reviewed album of songs in 2010, Mitchell has continued to refine the piece: at the Summer Residency Lab, she will collaborate with arranger/orchestrator Michael Chorney and Bay Area native producer/musician Todd Sickafoose.

Peter Sinn Nachtrieb and Danny Scheie: *A House Tour of the Infamous Porter Family Mansion with Tour Guide Weston Ludlow Londonderry*

Peter Sinn Nachtrieb, 6'6," is a San Francisco-based playwright whose works include *boom* (TCG's most produced play 2009-10), *BOB* (2011 Humana Festival for New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Barrie and Bernice Stavis Award), and *Hunter Gatherers* (2007 ATCA/Steinberg New Play Award, 2007 Will Glickman Prize). Nachtrieb will be creating a one-man play, *A House Tour of the Infamous Porter Family Mansion with Tour Guide Weston Ludlow Londonderry*, with performer Danny Scheie in the titular role. Scheie, who recently won a TBA Award for leading actor, has appeared in productions at theatres like Berkeley Rep, California Shakespeare Theater, Aurora Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Yale Repertory Theatre. At the Summer Residency Lab, Nachtrieb and Scheie will create a guided tour led by Weston Ludlow Londonderry, a "confirmed bachelor" with a passion for gossip, suggestive storytelling, and keeping his guests in check. He leads us through a wealthy and eccentric couple's expansive mansion, a structure that physically tells the story of the absurdly rich couple's journey toward insanity and sudden, mysterious isolation from the outside world.

Annie Smart: *The Summer Play*

The work of Berkeley-based set and costume designer Annie Smart has appeared at countless theatres across the United States and UK, including the National Theatre in London, the Royal Court Theatre, the Public Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Guthrie Theater, Arena Stage, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and California Shakespeare Theater, and in more than 15 productions at Berkeley Rep. Smart joins the lab as a playwright to adapt beloved Finnish author Tove Jansson's 1972 novel *The Summer Book* into a multimedia theatrical experience. In this deceptively simple story, three generations of one family — a grandmother, a father, and his young daughter Sophia — spend a summer vacation on an isolated island in the Gulf of Finland. This summer, however, is different and difficult, as they quietly attempt to deal with the recent death of Sophia's mother. *The Summer Play* manages to evoke the sublime, the eternal, and the profound in even the most mundane of circumstances.

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INTERACTING WITH THE SUMMER RESIDENCY LAB

The Ground Floor's Summer Residency Lab aims to create a truly safe space for artists that is not influenced by the pressure of imminent public exposure, so — unlike many other development opportunities — it does not require recipients to present a reading or performance at the end of their residencies. Nonetheless, many projects will reach a stage where the creators request an invited audience or even engage community members as collaborators.

For more information on each project, and for future announcements of opportunities to interact, visit: <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor/>.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international 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. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its bustling facilities — the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize a renowned city.

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