

**PRESS CONTACT**

Voleine Amilcar, Director of Public Relations  
(510) 647-2917, [vamilcar@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:vamilcar@berkeleyrep.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****BERKELEY REP'S ANNUAL OVATION GALA RAISES \$675,000*****Une Soirée Magnifique* yields strong support for Theatre's artistic and educational programming**

**APRIL 24, 2015** – Berkeley Rep is proud to announce that its annual OVATION Gala raised \$675,000 for the Theatre's new play development, arts education, and community engagement programs. Held at the glitzy Ritz-Carlton hotel in San Francisco, the event swept guests up in a masquerade fête filled with theatrical spectacle and surprise entertainment. The Gala was one of the **most successful in Berkeley Rep's history**, welcoming 330 attendees.

"Art creates meaning and is critical to any society, and thanks to the community's generous support, Berkeley Rep can continue strengthening the Bay Area and nation's theatre landscape by bringing bold new stories to our stages," said **Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone**.

"This year's Gala was an enormous success and will allow us to continue making theatre financially accessible to a wider audience," remarked **Managing Director Susan Medak**. "The funds raised allow Berkeley Rep to sustain the programs that will serve more than 20,000 students this year."

Bay Area art enthusiasts – including leading artists and community innovators – donned their finest to celebrate the Theatre. Among the attendees were **Mayor Tom Bates** and **State Senator Loni Hancock**; **Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson** and **Maria Carson**; **General Manager of the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco Bruce Gorelick**; **Berkeley City Councilwoman Susan Wengraf**; noted philanthropist **Sharon Simpson**; executive producer of Pixar's upcoming film *Tomorrowland* **John Walker** and **Pamela Walker**; food and wine personality **Narsai David** and **Venus David**; director of Berkeley Rep's upcoming *One Man, Two Guvnors*, **David Ivers**; and Bay Area actors **Danny Scheie** and **Marilee Talkington**.

The evening began with a reception and silent auction featuring prized wines and unique cultural adventures. As guests settled into the lavish ballroom for dinner, they were welcomed by charismatic Broadway actor **Kevin Spirtas**, who served as emcee for the evening. A dozen dancers, led by **Heath Hunter** and **Kerah Cottrell** of Danceation, along with another 12 circus performers and musicians from Sweet Can Productions transported participants to Carnival in Paris with impressive dance numbers and hula hoop, acrobat, and contortionist acts.

Dinner was a sumptuous five-star feast by the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco's Executive Sous Chef **Charles Brunk**, featuring braised short ribs as the entrée paired with a 2007 Match Vineyards Butterdragon Hill Cabernet Sauvignon. Before dessert, expert auctioneer **DawnMarie Kotsonis** led an enthusiastic live auction, raising an impressive \$200,000. Guests bid energetically and generously on exclusive packages of once-in-a-lifetime experiences and one-of-a-kind prizes including collectible wines and gift certificates for elegant hotels, restaurants, and arts and sports events. Other spectacular auction items included a South American adventure on *The World*, the largest privately owned residential yacht on earth; an idyllic seven-night stay at the Maison Dovalle in the heart of the Loire Valley; a seven-night stay at Le Royal Monceau – Raffles Paris,

MORE

**RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE**

## BERKELEY REP'S ANNUAL OVATION GALA RAISES \$675,000 / 2 OF 2

voted “Best Luxury Hotel” in France by TripAdvisor; a private dinner for eight at the home of Chef Narsai David and his wife, Venus, for an exceptional evening of food, wine, and conversation; and a New York getaway for four with tickets to *An American in Paris* on Broadway and a weeklong stay in a spectacular Midtown Manhattan condominium.

One of the many highlights of the evening included remarks given by **Alyssa Gable** (Teen Council member), **Gendell Hing-Hernández** (Teaching Artist), and **Sarah Rose Leonard** (former Teen Council member and now artistic associate at Berkeley Rep), who shared moving testimonials on how their involvement with Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre has positively impacted their lives thanks to the generous donations of Gala guests.

OVATION featured exquisite wines from C.G. Di Arie Vineyard and Winery, Dashe Cellars, Domaine Carneros by Taittinger, Hafner Vineyard, Match Vineyards, Quady Winery, spirits from St. George Spirits, and beer from Drake’s Brewing Company. Guests took home delicious delicacies, thanks to Coco Libre, Miette Pâtisserie and Confiserie, Peet’s Coffee and Tea, and Semifreddi’s. Guests also received special gifts from Autumn Press, Dolphin Graphics, Farm League Design and Management Group, and Fossil, which has a long history of supporting Berkeley Rep.

OVATION was made possible by **Limelight Sponsors**, including: Fossil, Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer, and Stewart and Rachelle Owen; and **Spotlight Sponsors**: Edward D. Baker, Martha Ehmann Conte, Forest Creatures Entertainment, Meyer Sound, Osterweis Capital Management, and the Strauch Kulhanjian Family.

The planning committee for the event included **Daniel David, Thalia Dorwick, Rich Edwards, Robin Edwards, David Fleishhacker, Kerry Francis, Elisheva Gur-Arieh, Brenda Leff, Pamela Nichter, and Deborah Taylor Barrera.**

**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 was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its vital and versatile facilities – which include the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley – are helping to revitalize a renowned city. A not-for-profit organization, the theatre welcomes an annual audience of 200,000, serves 23,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 330 artists, artisans, and administrators. For more information, visit [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org).

###