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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Berkeley Rep to Open Renovated Theatre in January 2016****Newly Named Peet's Theatre Honors Major Partnership with Peet's Coffee**

Renovations feature first North American installation of Meyer Sound's Constellation Acoustic System for live, unamplified theatre usage

Free grand opening celebration on Saturday, January 9, 2016

BERKELEY, CA (December 8, 2015) - Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced the reopening in January 2016 of its signature theatre space in downtown Berkeley, following nine months of renovation. The Thrust Stage, which opened in 1980 as Berkeley Rep's first permanent home, will be renamed the Peet's Theatre in recognition of a new major partnership with Peet's Coffee.

The Peet's Theatre will have a **grand opening celebration** on Saturday, January 9, 2016, which will be free and open to the public. Details are available at berkeleyrep.org/peetstheatre.

Originally designed by renowned Bay Area architect Gene Angell, the renovated 400-seat Peet's Theatre retains the intimate layout (11 rows of seats that surround the stage on three sides) that was considered so revolutionary 35 years ago and remains cherished by artists and theatregoers alike. As **Tony Taccone**, Berkeley Rep's Michael Leibert Artistic Director, explains, "The intimate relationship between actor and audience is almost perfectly realized in our Thrust Stage. But after 35 years the space was in need of a major makeover. We took the need to fix our operational systems as an opportunity to upgrade the entire environment, as we expand our aesthetic possibilities and move into the 21st century."

The reopening follows nine months of extensive renovation that left no space untouched and will enhance the experience for all theatregoers. The centerpiece of the renovation is the installation of the **Constellation Acoustic System from Meyer Sound** in Berkeley. Constellation offers complete acoustical flexibility in transforming a space to support the particular needs of the work being presented, while providing superior sound clarity for both actors and audience. The award-winning system has been installed in concert halls, commercial theatres, cinemas, and restaurants worldwide, but this will be its first application in North America for live, unamplified theatre presentations. Founded by John and Helen Meyer in 1979 as a manufacturer of premium quality loudspeaker systems, Meyer Sound is now recognized globally as an entrepreneur in world class, technologically sophisticated sound solutions across a huge range of applications.

Other features of the new Peet's Theatre include a new, centrally located box office and reconfigured entry point for patrons; new energy-efficient architectural lighting and plumbing; heating and ventilation improvements; refurbished seats, concessions and lobby areas; and other aesthetic upgrades. The Theatre also boasts a full electrical upgrade and control booth, new lighting dimmer racks, as well as enhanced accessibility, including wheelchair seating, and new ADA-accessible and gender neutral restroom facilities.

The opening of the Peet's Theatre marks the successful close of phase one of Berkeley Rep's Create Campaign, a \$50 million comprehensive campaign launched in 2013 to invest in theatre

RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

for the next generation. To date, the campaign has raised \$33.6 million from over 1,000 donors throughout the Bay Area. Phase one targeted the renovation of the 1980 Thrust Stage and established The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work. Phase two will focus on continued funding of The Ground Floor and developing Berkeley Rep's Harrison Street campus as a home for the development of new work.

Berkeley Rep and Peet's Coffee

Berkeley Rep and Peet's Coffee, both founded in Berkeley, have their origins in the Bay Area's great social and creative movements of the 1960s. Berkeley Rep produced its first show in 1968, and Peet's will mark its 50th anniversary in April 2016. Both organizations share core values: a deep engagement with their communities, an unrelenting commitment to quality, and a forward-thinking sensibility that has established them as innovators and leaders in their respective fields. Their partnership harkens to their earliest days – Peet's advertised in Berkeley Rep's programs starting in 1969, and its coffee has been a staple at the concessions counter for Berkeley Rep audiences since then. The naming of the Peet's Theatre is a natural expansion of that long-term relationship.

"We are so thrilled to work with Peet's in this exciting new phase of our creative life," says Berkeley Rep's Managing Director, **Susan Medak**. "With their support, we're breathing new life into our signature theatre. The intimacy between performer and audience member will remain, but it's the enhancement that will make seeing a show in the Peet's Theatre so special."

"We're very honored to be connected to Berkeley Repertory Theatre and to support the new Peet's Theatre," says **Dave Burwick**, CEO of Peet's Coffee. "When Alfred Peet opened his first store on Vine Street in 1966, he firmly established our roots in Berkeley. Over the ensuing 50 years, many things that started in Berkeley have radiated out to influence the rest of the nation – craft coffee, the organic food movement, activism, and art. We're proud to have been alongside Berkeley Rep during such a poignant time in the Bay Area's history. And we look forward to our new, expanded partnership going forward."

World premiere performances

The new Peet's Theatre will house the world premiere of ***Aubergine***, a Berkeley Rep commission written by award-winning playwright Julia Cho and directed by Taccone. *Aubergine* follows an estranged son, his ill father, a visiting uncle carrying their memories in tow, a woman without an appetite, and a refugee from a forgotten country. These characters 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. *Aubergine* will begin previews on **Friday, February 5**, with opening night on **Friday, February 12**, and the run concluding on **Sunday, March 20, 2016**.

Aubergine was developed in The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work, the further growth of which will be a major focus of phase two of the Create Campaign.

The Create Campaign

Launched in 2013, the Create Campaign is a \$50 million comprehensive campaign to strengthen the relationship among artists, audiences, and the community, and to transform Berkeley Rep into one of the foremost centers for new play development in the country. At the core of the campaign are two major initiatives: the renovation of the Thrust Stage, Berkeley Rep's signature performance space, and the expansion of the Theatre's Harrison Street campus into a center for artistic innovation. The campaign will also bolster the Theatre's annual fund and capital reserve fund, and will invest in its staff. With the Create Campaign, Berkeley Rep is re-investing in its commitment to make transformative, bold, and ambitious theatre for generations to come.

Peet's Theatre lead design credits

Architect: Marcy Wong Donn Logan Architects

Contractor: Peacock Construction, Inc.

Theatrical Consultants: The Shalleck Group

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 nearly 400 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 – which include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org

ABOUT PEET'S COFFEE

Peet's Coffee is a U.S. specialty coffee company founded by Alfred Peet in 1966 in Berkeley, California. Mr. Peet grew up in the coffee trade and moved to America from Holland after World War II. His coffee style was unlike anything Americans had ever tasted before — small batches, fresh beans and a superior quality roast that is rich and complex. Mr. Peet's influence on the artisan coffee movement inspired a new generation of coffee entrepreneurs, including the founders of Starbucks. Today, Peet's Coffee upholds its commitment to high quality and freshness by sourcing the world's best beans, roasting in small batches, and maintaining a strict standard of freshness through its unique direct store delivery network. Peet's continues to grow its business through its retail, grocery and e-commerce channels while maintaining the premium quality of its coffee. Peet's is a private business owned by JAB Holding Co. For more information, visit peets.com. To access Peet's full store list, go [here](#).

ABOUT THE GROUND FLOOR: BERKELEY REP'S CENTER FOR THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WORK

As the umbrella for all new play activity at Berkeley Rep, 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. Think of it as an incubator for theatrical start-ups or a top-notch R&D facility for artists. The Ground Floor is made possible by the James Irvine Foundation; the National Endowment for the Arts; Bank of America; the Kenneth Rainin Foundation; supporters of Berkeley Rep's Create Campaign; and ArtPlace (artplaceamerica.org), a collaboration of top national foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and various federal agencies to accelerate creative place making across the U.S. For more information on each project, and for future announcements or opportunities to interact, visit berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor

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