

Press Contact:

Tim Etheridge, Public Relations Director
510 647-2917; tetheridge@berkeleyrep.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP'S *SPEAKEASY AT THE RITZ* RAISES \$750,000***Funds Will Benefit Artistic and Educational Programming***

APRIL 4, 2016 – On Saturday night, April 2, nearly 350 of the Bay Area's finest arts supporters gathered at **The Ritz- Carlton, San Francisco** to celebrate Berkeley Rep, the Tony Award-winning theatre company known for its innovative and challenging works. ***SPEAKEASY AT THE RITZ*** raised over \$750,000 to support the Theatre's artistic and creative efforts, including education and outreach programming.

This year's attendees found themselves surrounded by sophisticated artistic company all dressed to the nines and rubbed shoulders with the swells, including theatre producer **Carole Shorenstein Hayes**, San Francisco Giants Hall of Famer **Orlando Cepeda**, State Senate candidate **Nancy Skinner**, Peet's Coffee CEO **Dave Burwick**, Semifreddi's CEO **Tom Frainier**, composer **Paul Dresher**, dramaturg **Philippa Kelly** and **Roger Strauch** of the Roda Group.

The Gatsby-era festivities began with a reception and silent auction. While bidding on collectable wines and unique cultural adventures, guests were treated to a performance by Swing or Nothing Dancers and Roaring 1920s-themed music by the Cosmo Alley Cats. The evening continued with a three-course feast prepared by The Ritz- Carlton's executive chef **Luis Lujan**. Guests enjoyed tomato and pea tartare, beet carpaccio, goat cheese and citrus salad, and lamb top sirloin paired with sumptuous wines. Before dessert, auctioneer **DawnMarie Kotsonis** presided over an energetic live auction. It quickly became a spirited competition for fantastic prizes including hard-to-come-by tickets for *Hamilton* and *An American in Paris*.

The most popular lot of the night afforded dinner for 10 prepared by food and wine celebrity chef **Narsai David**, as well as a trip for four on the Mediterranean aboard the world's largest private yacht, *The World*.

"This was a great evening," said Managing Director Susan Medak. "It was one that exemplifies the spirit of Berkeley Rep. We're so grateful to everyone who came out to support us and help raise funds for all the important programming we do."

"I'm continually amazed by the love and support we receive from the community", said Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone. "I thank everyone for supporting our efforts to create new works that hopefully touch audiences in a deep and surprising way."

In the spotlight were wine, beers, and spirits from, C.G. Di Arie Vineyard & Winery, Domaine Carneros by Taittinger, Drake's Brewing Company, Folie à Deux, Hafner Vineyard, Match Vineyards, New York Distilling Company, Quady Winery, and St. George Spirits. Guests also took home delicious delicacies from Bare Snacks, OCHO Candy, Peet's Coffee, Semifreddi's, and Whole Foods Market, as well as gifts from Autumn Press and Fossil Group.

SPEAKEASY AT THE RITZ was supported by **sponsors** Curran Theatre, Fossil Group, Bruce & Michelle Golden, Stewart & Rachelle Owen, and The Strauch Kulhanjian Family.

The **planning committee** included Martha Ehmann Conte, Richard Edwards, Robin Edwards, David Fleishhacker, Jill Fugaro, Scott Haber, Lynn Hogan, Sandra McCandless, Patty Melvin,

RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

Rachelle Owen, Stewart Owen, Audrey Sockolov, Jean Strunsky, Deborah Taylor, and Gail Wagner.

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 new campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org

#