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The Hard Nut
Mark Morris Dance Group

Music by Tchaikovsky (The Nutcracker); Choreography by Mark Morris
Colin Fowler, conductor; Members of the Berkeley Symphony
Piedmont East Bay Children’s Choir, Ensemble; Robert Geary, founding artistic director

First Bay Area Performances in 5 years!

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
A long time ago, I remember watching an interview with Bob Dylan. He was being asked about the meaning of one of his songs. The interviewer admired the rich imagery and symbolism contained in the lyrics, but the overall theme eluded him. The larger narrative was contradictory and disjointed. Where was the coherence? the reporter wanted to know. What were we supposed to take away from the song? At the beginning of the conversation, Dylan seemed bemused, giving witty responses that had little to do with the questions. But the journalist wouldn’t quit. His frustrations grew with his subject’s unwillingness to talk. Finally, Dylan turned to him, irritated that he had to express what for him was a basic truth (and I’m paraphrasing here): “I don’t think it’s the job of the artist to explain the art. The art is the statement. Whatever you want it to mean, well...that’s what it means. I hope you like it.”

I’ve never forgotten Dylan’s statement, in particular, because my job frequently involves creating stories that are open to interpretation. It’s my belief, or perhaps simply my taste, that the best stories contain an element of mystery. Whether it’s in the plotting or the characters, the design or the theme itself, the real excitement for us comes when we have to use our minds to interpret the story for ourselves.

Daniel Handler has been telling us great stories for many years. Under the guise of Lemony Snicket, he has crafted an artistic voice that is terrifyingly funny and furiously imaginative, a worldview that is dark and delicious and yet somehow hopeful. His collected fiction for young adults reads like a series of fantastical self-help books entitled: How to Survive Unknowingness and Insanity and Still Get a Kick Out of Life!

And so it comes as no surprise that Imaginary Comforts, his new play for “adults” (another word for children of all ages), deals with the transformative power of story. Take a random group of wildly neurotic people and connect them with a weird story about a rabbit, and what do you get? People arguing about the motivations of rabbits, the real nature of human nature, and the meaning of life. This is a play that veers into the sometimes absurd, sometimes compassionate recesses of each character’s story, revealing their differences, their similarities, and ultimately, what they need.

It’s great to bring Mr. Handler’s work back to our stage.

To quote the great Bob Dylan: “I hope you like it.”

Sincerely,

Tony Taccone
Doesn’t everyone have a really good story about their family? Whether it’s a narrative of immigration, a tale of an outlandish uncle, a remembrance of grandma’s cooking, or an appreciation of a child’s service to their country, stories about families, with all of their inherent possibilities for functionality and dysfunctionality, are fundamental to our own identities and our relationships. No wonder playwrights have mined this source material for thousands of years.

But only Daniel Handler can write of the kind of family featured in Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit. With a raised eyebrow, a wink, and a bit of a malevolent streak inherited from his alter ego Lemony Snicket, he tells us a story of a family in crisis—a really good story that’s sophisticated, funny, tragic, and emotionally true. It’s a privilege to welcome this Bay Area writer back to Berkeley Rep, working alongside Tony Taccone once more. Imaginary Comforts is a bit of a reunion, not only between Daniel and Tony, but also with the return of veteran Berkeley Rep actors Sharon Lockwood, Danny Scheie, Jarion Monroe, Julian López-Morillas, Susan Lynskey, and Marilee Talkington. Our relationship with some of these actors goes back to the 1980s, and we’re so pleased to welcome them to our home again.

The Bay Area is blessed with remarkably talented actors who have chosen to make this place their home. And among those on stage with us right now, we have some of the very best. You have seen them again and again in theatres throughout the bay. It is a great privilege and honor to have them back with us for Imaginary Comforts.

Warmly,

Susan Medak

Managing Director
You’ve spent your life accumulating wealth. And, no doubt, that wealth now takes many forms, sits in many places, and is managed by many advisors. Unfortunately, that kind of fragmentation creates gaps that can hold your wealth back from its full potential. The Private Bank can help.

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LILLIAN HELLMAN'S

WATCH ON THE RHINE

DIRECTED BY
LISA PETERSON

Co-production with the Guthrie Theater

STARTS NOV 30
This fall, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre brings you numerous ways to connect with the amazing season lineup on Berkeley Rep’s stages, including the show you’re about to see.

In The Art of Adaptation — Folktales and your own: Creating new work through nontraditional approaches, adult students will have the opportunity to develop original work based on questions posed by Imaginary Comforts. How can our personal stories both sustain and explain us? How can we connect these narratives to the work? How are our everyday lives enriched by stories? Not only will Susan Lynskey, a member of the cast of Imaginary Comforts, teach the class, but Tony Taccone, director of Imaginary Comforts, will visit, and we hope Daniel Handler and other cast members will join us to discuss their creative process. This will be a class you won’t want to miss.

Also this fall, students have a broad selection of opportunities to discover and challenge their best artistic selves regardless of age or level of experience. Young students can revive the wonderful world of The Addams Family, engage their imagination with Shadow Puppetry Design, and dive into the fascinating world of acting, directing, and filmmaking with our Act, Direct, and Film class. Teens can explore movement with our Breakdance and Contemporary Dance class and investigate musical theatre with Green Day’s conceptual rock-opera American Idiot. There are plenty of acting, directing, improv, and writing and devising classes for our adult and advanced students as well.

At the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, we are excited to connect with our audience through our programming this season and to continue to inspire and expand the local theatre community. We thrive on the diversity of that community and strive to create a unique platform to inspire each other, to face our common challenges, and to bring out the best of our human spirit. We are thrilled to invite you to join us on this adventure at the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre.
The Origin Story

Daniel Handler, otherwise known as Lemony Snicket, the creator of the popular book and TV series A Series of Unfortunate Events, met with Tony Taccone a little under two years ago to discuss the first play he had written for adults. Daniel had some trepidation about claiming the title of "play," as he had written many pieces that spanned genres, but never penned a full-length play before. Nevertheless, he had a hunch that what he wrote was, in fact, theatrical.

Tony laughed out loud as he read Imaginary Comforts, and wanted to hear the play to see if it was as delightful as he imagined. Turns out, Berkeley Rep has a program designed especially for working on new plays: The Ground Floor. So in July 2016, a company of Bay Area actors sat around the table to read the play in a Ground Floor workshop, allowing Daniel to begin flexing his theatre muscles. Shortly after the workshop, we committed to producing Imaginary Comforts. The production assembled a cast and design team, and returned to The Ground Floor for the 2017 Summer Residency Lab to hear new rewrites and dive into character work. The cast officially began rehearsals in September, exploring the wonderful zany world of Daniel Handler's imagination.
Daniel Handler was last at Berkeley Rep in 2010 with his adaptation of his children’s book and Nathaniel Stookey’s composition, *The Composer is Dead*. He returns to our stages with his first straight play, *Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit*. The play’s cast of characters grapple with the chaos unleashed following an important death, displaying Handler’s signature effervescence and insight. Literary Manager Sarah Rose Leonard spoke with Handler shortly after his 2017 residency at Berkeley Rep’s Ground Floor Summer Residency Lab.

You work in many different mediums: fiction, music, children’s literature, etc. How do you know what form to use for an artistic idea?

I guess it just depends project by project. With *Imaginary Comforts* it was a quite unusual situation where I was starting work on it but I didn’t know what it was. I was just writing things and I thought it was some kind of story or novel. I had different scenes on individual documents I was moving around but I didn’t really know anything about them.

How did you know it was a play?

I think mostly the structure of it. That I knew it consisted of conversations that happened between people in a certain order. And there were different narrative and structural things that made it seem clear to me that it wasn’t a novel. And so I worked out that it was a play.

You had worked with Tony Taccone before on *The Composer is Dead*. Can you talk about how that project came to fruition?

It was initially commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony. It’s a piece for orchestra and narrator not unlike *Peter and the Wolf*, and it’s been performed all over the world by various orchestras. And I met Phantom Limb, this puppet company, and we began to have the idea of adapting it for the stage. They had some contact with Berkeley Rep and the project kind of grew out of that. So it was already a collaborative piece with the composer and with an orchestra putting it on, which is of course its own collaboration, and then with the puppet people, and then with Berkeley Rep, so it was really quite the relay race.

Working with Tony was a powerful and positive experience. And over the course of my career I’ve learned that it’s always worthwhile to work with great people. So when I realized I was writing a play I thought, “Oh I know this guy whom I work well with.” So I gave it to him. And I think if he hadn’t liked it probably nothing would have happened.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
You would have just kept it in the drawer?

Yeah I think so. Because I’d never written a play before. So I think I was justifiably nervous about participating in an art form that was not my own. I think my email actually said, “Hey I wrote a thing,” because I was afraid to say I’d written a play. And then he said, “I read it, let’s have lunch.” And my first thought was, “Well it’s very nice that he’s willing to take someone to lunch to tell them that their play doesn’t work.” It was really about 10 minutes into the lunch when I thought, “Oh he’s talking about it like we’re gonna do it.” Which was a remarkable and delightful moment for me.

You’ve had two workshops of Imaginary Comforts at The Ground Floor. What has rewriting looked like for you?

Honestly I wish all of my books could be developed by The Ground Floor. That would be nice.

I read all my own work out loud; that’s how I work my way through when I want to see if something works. I’m a big mutterer. Walking around by myself. You can find me in my neighborhood clutching a few pieces of paper when I’m taking a walk and reading out loud. So it was really handy to have trained professionals around. It was just a perfect experience to have each of the actors and the director ask me questions from their own points of view in terms of how things are working. I don’t get questions asked by my own characters when I’m working. The process of just having it a little bit enacted is quite a magical one.

How has revising a play been different than revising a novel?

I would just say that it’s entirely experiential and that in a novel sometimes you want to do something with the structure that you think is working very deep under the surface, and maybe it’s only being noticed by you. In fact, a lot of time you hope no one’s noticing what you’re doing because you’re doing something structurally and rhetorically for an intended emotional effect. And so you use the same language when you describe two people walking into the room, but you don’t want anyone to notice, so you do it in such a subtle way so that you hope the brain is connecting these two people but not saying, “Oh my goodness that’s the same phrase they used!”

In theatre, I think it’s much more literal. So if you repeat a line, the chances of anyone not noticing are pretty slim. I use a lot of repetition in my work and in theatre a little of that goes a lot farther than it does in prose. So mostly I had to pull back. I’ve heard, “Okay, you’ve said the same things seven times, Daniel.”

The play deals with addiction in various forms. What interests you about that topic?

I’m interested in the mechanisms by which people attempt to fix their own lives. I’m also interested in people’s situations improving over the course of the story. Because I think that’s more interesting. You want to stick with the story if you feel like it has some forward momentum. If you begin to glimpse a downward spiral it gets wearying. It gets wearying for me anyway. Mostly I’m interested in a strict regimen that some people go through in order to improve their lives. It has comic and powerful possibilities because it often works, but it’s ridiculous at the same time.

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One of things that I like about theatre is the kind of space that can be made. That someone can walk out of a bedroom scene and take off their pajamas and put on a coat and then be walking outside. The space transforms. Those are always nice moments in the theatre.

The play is largely about a Jewish family. You identify as an atheist but your background is Jewish, right?

Yeah. Which is not really that complicated in Judaism. I was raised Jewish but not particularly religious. So Judaism is very culturally important to me, but I believe in different forces in the universe. I don’t believe in one centralized God. But I like the idea of ritual and community and storytelling that Judaism provides. And then, if you’re raised Jewish you can’t get away from it anyway, it haunts you in its own way, so it’s a good thing I like it.

What compelled you to make the protagonist a rabbi?

Well, the whole spark for the idea of the play came after my father died. Our rabbi came to our house to talk about the funeral and I had always liked her and thought she was good at being a rabbi, but she was really wonderful at this. She created a space that was really calming and welcoming. As we were grief stricken, we were talking about my dad and she managed to turn that into a conversation about the funeral and what we wanted to do for him and what she could say about him, and it was a really comforting time. But me being the narrative brain that I am, what I thought after she left was, “Gosh what if that had been terrible? What if she had just been awful at it?” And then I also noticed while thinking that, in my calendar I had written “rabbi” instead of “rabb” in my distracted grieved state. And then I began to think “rabbi” and “rabbit”—that’s funny! And I then I tried to think what kind of person would confuse a rabbi and a rabbit and went from there.

How did you come up with the structure?

This was really right after my father died and I was alone at my house for a couple of weeks after the funeral and I was writing these little things, just a little bit every day to keep on being a writer and have something to do other than be full of grief. And they were all little conversations and I didn’t know what they were. Then I gradually started putting them in order, and I think I noticed that if I was putting them in order I could make the last line of one of them the first line of the next one. And also I liked the idea — particularly at the beginning of the play — of people telling each other stories. And so for a while every scene is being recounted by somebody. Then they just began to link up and that’s when I began to see, “Oh that would be really confusing on the page to have the last line of dialogue be the first line of dialogue, you couldn’t tell you were switching!” I began to think, “In a play I am not sure if that’s possible? To have someone talk and then turn around and talk to somebody else?” That seems like a magical moment.

One of things that I like about theatre is the kind of space that can project almost anything. It doesn’t actually have its own personality. If it was a story about a tiger, that has ferocity and bravery, things like that. But a rabbit you can put any story on top of.

What professional therapists call “narrative therapy” can play a major role in repairing the damage caused by addiction. In Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, the stories that fill most meetings have two parts. First is the “drunkalogue,” the painful account of losing self-control to substance abuse and hitting rock bottom. The second is the “sobriety story,” the often inspiring tale of the struggle to stay sober and to make amends. The basic text for AA, also known as the “Big Book,” founds that tradition of giving testimony on the principle that, “Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.” Addicts who share their experience can understand their testimonial act as a “conversion” or a “bridge burning” between an old, alcoholic identity and a new, sober one.

In the very different setting of childhood abuse therapy, stories are also used as powerful tools for getting better. During sessions with a traumatized child, a therapist might share a story that addresses the traumatic experience thematically or metaphorically in order to discuss the problem indirectly. Alternatively, the child might be encouraged to give their own account through a number of narrative and imaginative mediums such as acting, singing, or drawing. Play with animals can also help a child to express difficult emotions as they project their feelings onto a nonjudgmental and loving companion.

By distancing a child from the subject of their trauma, storytelling can create nonthreatening opportunities to tackle otherwise paralyzing topics. Similarly, the AA testimonial allows the speaker to represent their experience of addiction in a narrative register where events have a meaning and symbolic significance beyond that of the individual’s life. Much as the dungeons, magical forests, and quests of a child’s fairytale might be analogous to experiences of trauma, “rock bottom,” “bridge burning,” and even “drunkalogue” can be metaphorical mechanisms for understanding the “plot” of alcoholism. For an alcoholic and a troubled child alike, those stories and debates about their meanings have great potential to heal and to deepen understanding of the twists and turns of the real world.
When telling any kind of story, an author must confront the question of what to do about time. On occasion, a play will take place in real time, and a clock will tick off the 90 minutes or so that the narrative unfolds within. But more often than not, a story will encompass a week, a few months, or even a lifetime, and a writer must figure out how to engage with a story’s duration. Every play has its own time signature, and while the goal is to create a seamless experience for an audience, plays are stitched together in all kinds of different ways.

If we look back to the beginning, Aristotle described what he called “the unity of time,” which meant that the action of a play takes place over 24 hours, or one revolution of the sun. He observed this as one ingredient in the recipe for what makes a successful drama. But Greek plays did not last for 24 hours, so the “unity” wasn’t literal—even from the origins of modern theatre, liberties were taken to condense events into a stage-worthy timeline. The notion of believability had little relevance back then—theatre wasn’t meant to mirror reality, or reflect an average person’s life; rather, drama wanted to heighten an experience, and create something larger than life. So the stage was set for experimentation with techniques that compressed or stretched time to achieve an illusion of expansiveness.

In both Shakespeare’s and Molière’s plays, most of the action unfurls in a generally linear way. But they do skip ahead in time, and when a story pivots from one location to another to see what’s going on with a different set of characters, one scene doesn’t necessarily follow on the heels of the other—they frequently occur simultaneously, and time can stack on top of itself. Both writers also press the pause button, essentially stopping time, for characters to deliver soliloquies or asides, and then pick up again where they left off.

So there’s a long history of playwrights employing various tools to address the passage of time. The technique of rewinding the clock, however, didn’t find its way into live storytelling until the mid-1900s. Flashbacks began to appear in more and more films during the late 1930s, and made a splash on the stage in 1949 when Arthur Miller relied heavily on them in Death of a Salesman. An argument could be made that Tennessee Williams’ The Glass Menagerie got there first in 1944, because the narrator tells the audience that the events of the play take place in his memory, thus the audience knows the action of the play transpires in the past.

Despite Death of a Salesman’s success, flashbacks did not evolve into a staple of a playwright’s toolbox until relatively recently. Notable plays from the late ’50s and ’60s, like Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun (1959) and Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1962), often took place in living
rooms with chronological narratives that might skip ahead, but rarely jumped backwards. (It is interesting to note that very few plays from the 1970s find their way onto various lists of great drama.) The ’80s saw celebrated artists like Sam Shepard, August Wilson, and Wendy Wasserstein continuing to write plays that largely embraced forward momentum.

Recent years have seen an explosion in plays that do not adhere to a linear progression of events. Contemporary writers frequently implement a technique of bouncing around in time, using it to build emotional momentum, rather than relying on chronology to do that for them. For these kinds of nonlinear plays, a common rehearsal room task involves breaking scenes apart and rearranging them in chronological order, so as to better understand the events of the story and their relationships to one another. Caryl Churchill’s Top Girls (1982) is often considered a pioneer of this type of storytelling. Tom Stoppard’s Arcadia (1993) sets the past and the present alongside one another. Paula Vogel’s 1997 play How I Learned to Drive provides an unparalleled example of nonlinear structure. Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori’s 2013 musical Fun Home flashes backward and forward, and requires three different actors to play its protagonist as a child, teenager, and adult.

With Imaginary Comforts, Daniel Handler joins the ranks of playwrights who adopt creative solutions to harness how time behaves in their work. Handler introduces a delightful device where the final moment of one scene is also the first moment of the next one, creating fluid and continuous action despite the fact that the play jumps around in time. So one line of dialogue might end a scene in one location, and begin another scene in a different location and a different moment in time. Arthur Schnitzler’s 1897 play La Ronde famously used a technique where a character would end one scene and then initiate a new one with no break in the action, but Mr. Handler ups the ante by using the exact same line of dialogue to close one scene and commence the next.

Time may seem linear in our everyday lives, but even something as simple and commonplace as doing one thing while thinking about something else presents a challenge to a writer. Nonlinear time is harder onstage than it is in film, where tools like sepia-tone and jump-cuts help define where each scene takes place. In the theatre, the writing has to play a large part in telling us where we are. We have sound effects and light shifts, but the same actors remain in front of us. To create an illusion of time passing, skipping, or rewinding takes profound skill to pull off artfully on stage, and it’s intensely satisfying when a playwright finds a unique way to do that, as Daniel Handler has done here.
Berkeley Repertory Theatre presents
the world premiere of

IMAGINARY COMFORTS
or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit

BY
Daniel Handler

DIRECTED BY
Tony Taccone

OCTOBER 5–NOVEMBER 19, 2017
PEET’S THEATRE · MAIN SEASON

This show is performed without an intermission.

Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit is made possible thanks to the generous support of

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CAST
Michael Cassidy Brown
Clovis Michael Goorjian
Mrs. Gold Sharon Lockwood
Dr. Marcus Gold Julian López-Morillas
Sarah Gold Susan Lynskey
Jack Jarion Monroe
Ghost Danny Scheie
Naomi Marilee Talkington

PRODUCTION STAFF
Scenic Design Todd Rosenthal
Costume Design Meg Neville
Lighting Design Nick Solyom
Sound Design Jake Rodriguez
Dramaturg Madeleine Oldham
Casting Amy Potozkin, CSA
Production Stage Manager Michael Suenkel

The cast and stage manager are members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

Imaginary Comforts was developed through The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work.

Affiliations
The director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union. The Scenic, Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE.
**BERKELEY REP PRESENTS**

**Cassidy Brown**  
**MICHAEL**

Cassidy is thrilled to make his Berkeley Rep debut. He has appeared at TheatreWorks in *Fallen Angels*, *Doubt*, *Distracted*, *The 39 Steps*, and *The Loudest Man on Earth*, and at San Jose Repertory Theatre in *Game On*. Other Bay Area credits include Center Rep in *Elia, The Underpants, Don’t Dress for Dinner*, and *The 39 Steps*; Aurora Theatre in *Fosoms and Neglect* and *Safe House*; Marin Shakespeare Company in *Don Quixote* and *Othello*; San Jose Stage in *The 39 Steps*; and Golden Thread in *Autobiography of a Terrorist*. Regionally he has appeared in *The Totalitarians*, *The North Plan*, and *Hunter/Gatherers* at Capital Stage and in *A Servant of Two Masters*, *God of Carnage*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The 39 Steps* at Pacific Repertory Theatre. Visit cassidybrownactor.weebly.com.

**Michael Goorjian**  
**CLOVIS**


**Sharon Lockwood**  
**MRS. GOLD**

Sharon was last seen at Berkeley Rep in the world premiere of *It Can’t Happen Here*. She also appeared as Sonia in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, for which she received the Bay Area Critics Circle Award for lead performance. Other favorite Berkeley Rep credits include *Zorro in Hell*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Triumph of Love*, *Pentecost*, and *The Magic Fire*. Sharon has also performed extensively at American Conservatory Theater, most recently in *Love and Information*. She originated the role of Barbara in the world premiere of *Nickel and Dimed* under the direction of Bartlett Sher, which premiered at Intiman Theatre in Seattle and played the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Other local credits include appearances at California Shakespeare Theater, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, the Aurora Theatre, and many years with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Regionally, she has performed at La Jolla Playhouse, the Old Globe, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, the Alley Theatre, and Long Wharf Theatre. Sharon was honored with the 2016 Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship and participated in the Master Class at Ten Chimneys in Wisconsin with master teacher actor Jason Alexander.

**Julian López-Morillas**  
**DR. MARCUS GOLD**

Julian has previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in *The Winter’s Tale*, *Volpone*, *Pentecost*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Homebody/Kabul*, and *Fraulein Else*. A resident of the Bay Area for the past 45 years, he has worked at virtually all the major theatres in Northern California, including the American Conservatory Theater, Aurora Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, San Jose Stage, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company, Pacific Repertory Theatre, and for many years with the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival/California Shakespeare Theater, where he directed a dozen Shakespeare productions and played roles including King Lear, Prospero, Shylock, Malvolio, and Brutus. A well-known authority on Shakespeare, he also teaches verse一向于 Berkeley Rep in *The Winter’s Tale*, *Volpone*, *Pentecost*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Homebody/Kabul*, and *Fraulein Else*. A resident of the Bay Area for the past 45 years, he has worked at virtually all the major theatres in Northern California, including the American Conservatory Theater, Aurora Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, San Jose Stage, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company, Pacific Repertory Theatre, and for many years with the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival/California Shakespeare Theater, where he directed a dozen Shakespeare productions and played roles including King Lear, Prospero, Shylock, Malvolio, and Brutus. A well-known authority on Shakespeare, he also teaches verse, technique at Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre and has taught at UC Berkeley, Mills College, and San Jose State University. Julian has acted professionally in all 38 of Shakespeare’s plays and was a two-day winner on Jeopardy!

**Susan Lyskey**  
**SARAH GOLD**

Susan is unabashedly delighted to be returning to Berkeley Rep and to be working with Tony, Daniel, and this cast of Bay Area luminaries for this world premiere. Following last season’s tour in *Roe* (Berkeley Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Arena Stage in Washington, DC), some of her other favorite regional credits include *Well*, *Noises Off*, *The 39 Steps*, *Proof*, *Body Awareness*, *The Sisters Rosensweig*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Living Out*, *The Laramie Project*, *Ghost-Writer*, *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl*, *Richard II*, *Ben Uchida*, and *The ABC* (at Arena Stage, Olney Theatre Center, Theatre J, Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, MetroStage, the National Theater, and the Kennedy Center, respectively.) Dedicated to the development of new plays, Susan was so pleased to be a part of the The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work. Susan is a professor at Georgetown University, received the DC Arts Commission’s Individual Artist Award, and has garnered multiple Helen Hayes Award nominations and awards. In January 2018, Susan will be channelling Margaret Thatcher in the first U.S. production of *Handbagged*.

**Danny Scheie**  
**GHOST**

Danny previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in the world premieres of *Chuck Mee’s Fêtes de la Nuit* and *LeFranc’s Troublemaker*, or *The Freakin’ Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatright*, as well as *Cloud Nine*, *One Man, Two Guvners*; and *Amy Freed’s You, Nero* (Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Leading Actor). Recent credits include *Freed’s The Monster Builder* at South Coast Rep and Aurora

**Jarian Monroe**  
**JACK**

Jarian is delighted to be back at Berkeley Rep once again where he has been seen in *Volpone*, *Rhinoceros*, *House of Blue Leaves*, *Our Country’s Good*, *Hard Times*, and many others spanning back to 1986. He was one of the first *Seinfeld* and one of the last *Frasiers*; his films include *The Game*, and he was seen as Not-Professor-X in *The Internship*, where he got to punch out Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson from a wheelchair. He is Lynch in *Kane & Lynch*. Other theatres in which he has performed include American Conservatory Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, South Coast Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, Marin Shakespeare Company, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Arizona Repertory Theatre, and the Magic Theatre. He has also played Wotan in *Teatro Zinzanni’s Dinner at Wotan’s*, and participated in a tribute performance honoring Robin Williams along with comedians Mort Sahl and Rick Overton. While at U.C.L.A. he won the Natalie Wood Award for best actor, and immediately went on a *Bonanza* episode where Michael Landon punched him out to start his professional career.

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Theatre, You Never Can Tell (Critics Circle Award for Supporting Actor) at California Shakespeare Theater, and two plays at Z Space by Peter Nachtrieb: The Making of a Great Moment (also at Merrimack Rep) and A House Tour...originally developed at Berkeley Rep’s The Ground Floor. He has also acted at Arena Stage, Folger Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Theatre, Asolo Rep, Actors Theater of Louisville, the Old Globe, Pasadena Playhouse, A Noise Within, Theatre-Works, The Marsh, the Magic Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, and Theatre Rhinoceros. He received his Equity card playing Damis in Tartuffe at the Los Angeles Theater Center. He holds a professorship at UC Santa Cruz and a PhD from UC Berkeley.

Marilee Talkington

Marilee is an actor, writer, director, and activist. And is thrilled to be back to Berkeley Rep! She was previously seen at Berkeley Rep in X’s & O’s (A Football Love Story). Some of her Bay Area credits include Little Erik; Rapture, Blister, Burn; and Salomania (Aurora Theatre), She Rode Horses, The Taming, and The Secretaries (Crowded Fire), Lily’s Revenge with Taylor Mac (Magic Theatre), and A Christmas Carol (American Conservatory Theater). Some of her NYC credits include A Nervous Smile and The Middle Ages (Theater Breaking Through Barriers, off Broadway), The Last Day and What’s His Name (Ensemble Studio Theatre), and Truce: Solo Show (NYC Fringe, BBC Radio). Her recent original film, Sisterly Love, was nominated for best filmmaker and best actor. Marilee has an MFA in Acting from ACT and is a proud MacDowell Fellow, Center for Cultural Innovation Award winner, and Carol Channing Trouper Award winner. She is also a fierce advocate for performers with disabilities. Please visit marileetalkington.com.

Daniel Handler

Daniel Handler is the author of six novels, including Why We Broke Up, We Are Pirates, and, most recently, All The Dirty Parts. As Lemony Snicket, he is responsible for numerous books for children, including the 13-volume A Series Of Unfortunate Events, the four-volume All The Wrong Questions, and The Composer is Dead, which was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony and then adapted for Berkeley Rep in 2010. Other collaborations include a series of books with artist Maira Kalman for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and serving as an adjunct accordionist for the Magnetic Fields. His books have sold more than 70 million copies and have been translated into 40 languages, and have been adapted for film, stage, and television. He lives in San Francisco with the illustrator Lisa Brown, to whom he is married and with whom he has collaborated on several books and one son.

Tony Taccone

DIRECTOR/MICHAEL LEIBERT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Tony is celebrating his 20th anniversary season. During Tony’s tenure as artistic director of Berkeley Rep, the Tony Award-winning nonprofit has earned a reputation as an international leader in innovative theatre. In those 20 years, Berkeley Rep has presented more than 70 world, American, and West Coast premieres and sent 23 shows to New York, two to London, and one to Hong Kong. Tony has staged more than 40 plays in Berkeley, including new work from Julia Cho, John Leguizamo, Culture Clash, Rinde Eckert, David Edgar, Danny Hoch, Geoff Hoyle, Itamar Moses, and Lemony Snicket. He directed the shows that transferred to London, Continental Divide and Tiny Kushner, and two that landed on Broadway as well: Bridge & Tunnel and Wishful Drinking. Prior to working at Berkeley Rep, Tony served as a professional actor, director, and producer outside of New York, working on Broadway and off-Broadway, as well as with major regional companies in the U.S. and Canada, including the Mark Taper Forum, the Mark Taper Forum, the Mark Taper Forum, the Mark Taper Forum, the Mark Taper Forum.
as artistic director of Eureka Theatre, which produced the American premieres of plays by Dario Fo, Caryl Churchill, and David Edgar before focusing on a new generation of American writers. While at the Eureka, Tony commissioned Tony Kushner’s legendary Angels in America and co-directed its world premiere. He has collaborated with Kushner on eight plays at Berkeley Rep, including The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures. Tony’s regional credits include Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arena Stage, Center Theatre Group, the Eureka Theatre, the Guthrie Theater, the Huntington Theatre Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Public Theater, and Seattle Repertory Theatre. As a playwright, he debuted Ghost Light, Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup, Game On, written with Dan Hoyle, and It Can’t Happen Here, written with Bennett S. Cohen. In 2012, Tony received the Margo Jones Award for “demonstrating a significant impact, understanding, and affirmation of playwriting, with a commitment to the living theatre.”

Todd Rosenthal
SCENIC DESIGNER

Todd previously designed Treasure Island, X’s and O’s (A Football Love Story), Tribes, and Ghost Light at Berkeley Rep. Broadway credits include August Osage County (Tony Award), The Motherfucker with the Hat (Tony Award nomination), Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Of Mice and Men (filmed by National Theatre Live), This Is Our Youth, and Fish in the Dark. Upcoming Broadway: Roman Holiday and Straight White Men. Select off-Broadway credits include Red Light Winter (Barrow Street), Domesticated (Lincoln Center), Close Up Space (Manhattan Theatre Club), and Qualms (Playwrights Horizons). Todd was the set designer for six years for Big Apple Circus. International credits include August Osage County (London & Australia), The Beauty Queen of Leenane (Ireland), Madama Butterfly (Irish National Opera), and Nice Fish (London’s West End). Regional work includes Steppenwolf Theatre (30 productions), Goodman Theatre (artistic partner), the Guthrie Theater, the Mark Taper Forum, American Repertory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and many others. Museum exhibitions include “Mythbusters: The Explosive Exhibition” and “The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes.” He has received many other accolades, including the Laurence Olivier Award, the Helen Hayes Award, the Ovation Award, the Backstage Garland Award, the Joseph Jefferson Award, the Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Award, and the Michael Merritt Award for Excellence in Design and Collaboration. Todd is a full professor at Northwestern University and a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.

Meg Neville
COSTUME DESIGNER

Meg’s recent Berkeley Rep credits include Hand to God; It Can’t Happen Here; Macbeth; One Man, Two Guvnors; and Party People. She also worked on X’s and O’s (A Football Love Story); Tribes; The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide

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Madeleine Oldham
RESIDENT DRAMATURG/DIRECTOR, THE GROUND FLOOR

Madeleine is the director of The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work and the Theatre’s resident dramaturg. She oversees commissioning and new play development, and dramaturged the world premiere productions of An Octoroon, a tragedy: a tragedy; Suddenly Last Summer, Dinner with Friends; Closer; and The Life of Galileo. Meg’s other recent credits include Party People at the Public Theater and Baltimore Waltz at the Magic Theatre. Her Oregon Shakespeare Festival credits include Long Day’s Journey Into Night, The Cocoanuts, Taming of the Shrew, and Ghost Light. Her California Shakespeare Theater credits include Lady Windermere’s Fan, An Ideal Husband, Mrs. Warren’s Profession, and lots of Shakespeare. Other Bay Area theatre credits include Marin Theatre Company, the Cutting Ball Theater, American Conservatory Theater, Joe Goode Performance Group, and Magic Theatre. Regional credits include Second Stage Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Center Stage in Baltimore, South Coast Repertory, Atlantic Theater Company, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Chicago Opera Theater, NY Stage and Film, Hartford Stage, Kirk Douglas Theatre, Portland Stage Company, and Dallas Theater Center. Meg’s upcoming projects are Heisenberg at ACT and Blithe Spirit at the Guthrie Theater. Meg is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and Brown University and resides in Mill Valley with her family.

Nick Solyom
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Nick is thrilled to return to Berkeley Rep after being the associate lighting designer on Amélie. His other recent designs include The Christians (Gulfshore Playhouse), The Prince of Players, Slow Dusk, and Markheim (Little Opera Theatre of NY), The Way We Get By (American Theater Group), and Generation Me and The Fourth Messenger (New York Musical Festival). Visit SolyomDesign.com.

Jake Rodriguez
SOUND DESIGNER

Jake is a sound designer and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area who last worked with Berkeley Rep on An Octoroon. His regional credits include the world premieres of X’s and O’s (A Football Love Story), Troublemaker, or The Freakin Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatright; Girlfriend; and Passing Strange at Berkeley Rep; The Christians at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Playwrights Horizons, and the Mark Taper Forum; the world premiere of A Thousand Splendid Suns at American Conservatory Theater and Theatre Calgary; Hamlet (2012) at California Shakespeare Theater; the world premieres of Bruja and Oedipus el Rey at Magic Theatre; and The Events at Shotgun Players. Jake is the recipient of a 2004 Princess Grace Award.

Madeleine Oldham
RESIDENT DRAMATURG/DIRECTOR, THE GROUND FLOOR

Madeleine is the director of The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work and the Theatre’s resident dramaturg. She oversees commissioning and new play development, and dramaturged the world premiere pro-

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Productions of Augeine, The House that will not Stand, Passing Strange, and In the Next Room (or the vibrator play), among others. As literary manager and associate dramaturg at Center Stage in Baltimore, she produced the First Look reading series and headed up its young audience initiative. Before moving to Baltimore, she was the literary manager at Seattle Children’s Theatre, where she oversaw an extensive commissioning program. She also acted as assistant and interim literary manager at Intiman Theatre in Seattle. Madeleine served for four years on the executive committee of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas and has also worked with ACT (Seattle), Austin Scriptworks, Crowded Fire, the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center, the Kennedy Center, New Dramatists, Playwrights Center, and Portland Center Stage.

Amy Potozkin, CSA
DIRECTOR OF CASTING/ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE

This is Amy’s 28th season at Berkeley Rep. Through the years she has also had the pleasure of casting plays for ACT (Seattle), Arizona Theatre Company, Aurora Theatre Company, B Street Theatre, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Dallas Theater Center, Marin Theatre Company, the Marsh, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Social Impact Productions Inc., and Traveling Jewish Theatre. Amy cast roles for various independent films, including Conceiving Ada, starring Tilda Swinton; Haiku Tunnel and Love & Taxes, both by Josh Kornbluth; and Beyond Redemption by Britta Sjogren. Amy received her MFA from Brandeis University, where she was also an artist in residence. She has been an audition coach to hundreds of actors and a presentation/communication coach to many businesspeople. Amy taught acting at Mills College and audition technique at Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre, and has led workshops at numerous other venues in the Bay Area. Prior to working at Berkeley Rep, she was an intern at Playwrights Horizons in New York. Amy is a member of CSA, the Casting Society of America, and was nominated for Artios Awards for Excellence in Casting for The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures and One Man, Two Guvnors.

Michael Suenkel
PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

Michael began his association with Berkeley Rep as the stage management intern for the 1984–85 season and is now in his 23rd year as production stage manager. Some of his favorite shows include 36 Views, Endgame, Eurydice, Hydriotaphia, and Mad Forest. He has also worked with the Barbican in London, the Huntington Theatre Company, the Juste Pour Rire Festival in Montreal, La Jolla Playhouse, Pittsburgh Public Theater, the Public Theater and Second Stage Theatre in New York, and Yale Repertory Theatre. For the Magic Theatre, he stage managed Albert Takazauckas’ Breaking the Code and Sam Shepard’s The Late Henry Moss.

Susan Medak
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Susan has served as Berkeley Rep’s managing director since 1990, leading the administration and operations of the Theatre. She has served as president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and treasurer of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), organizations that represent the interests of nonprofit theatres across the nation. Susan chairs panels for the Massachusetts Arts Council and has also served on program panels for Arts Midwest, the Joyce Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Closer to home, Susan serves on the board of the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA). She is the founding chair of the Berkeley Arts in Education Steering Committee for Berkeley Unified School District and the Berkeley Cultural Trust. Susan serves on the faculty of Yale School of Drama and is a member of the International Women’s Forum and the Mont Blanc Ladies’ Literary Guild and Trekking Society. She was awarded the 2012 Benjamin Ide Wheeler Medal by the Berkeley Community Fund and the 2017 Visionary Leadership Award by TCG. During her time in Berkeley, Susan has been instrumental in the construction of the Roda Theatre, the Nevo Education Center, the renovation of the Peet’s Theatre, and in the acquisition of the Harrison Street campus.

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Nancy Noman
Sandy Patel-Hilferty
Rebecca Pentzell
Perry Riani
Amy Robeson
Ira & Carol Serkes
Diane Verducci
Theresa Von Klug
GENERAL MANAGER
Before joining Berkeley Rep, Theresa had over 20 years of experience in the New York not-for-profit performing arts sector where she has planned and executed events for dance, theatre, music, television, and film. Her previous positions include the interim general manager for the Public Theater; general manager/line producer for Theatre for a New Audience, where she opened its new state-of-the-art theatre in Brooklyn and filmed a major motion picture of the inaugural production of Julie Taymor’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, released June 2015; production manager at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and New York City Center, including the famous Encores! Great American Musicals in Concert; and field representative/lead negotiator for the Association of Theatrical Press Agents and Managers. She holds a MS in Labor Relations and Human Resources Management from Baruch College.

Peter Dean
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Peter began his Berkeley Rep career in 2014, and since then some his favorite productions include Party People, X’s and O’s (A Football Love Story), Monsoon Wedding, and Aubergine. Previously, he served as production manager at the Public Theater, where favorite works include Here Lies Love, Father Comes Home from the War Parts 1–3, Mobile Shakespeare, and The Tempest as well as musical collaborations with Sting, the Roots, and the Eagles. Peter also helped Alex Timbers develop Rocky the Musical, The Last Goodbye, and the cult classic Dance Dance Revolution the Musical. Other favorites include working with Edward Albee to remount The Sandbox and The American Dream at their original home at the Cherry Lane Theatre, working on Little Flower of East Orange directed by the late Philip Seymour Hoffman, and being a part of the development team for The Ride, an interactive four-mile traveling performance in the heart of Times Square. Regionally Peter has worked with the Huntington Theatre Company, American Repertory Theater, Commonwealth Shakespeare, Trinity Rep, Hasty Pudding Theatricals, Colorado Ballet, Central City Opera, and the Denver Center Theatre Company. Peter is a graduate of Otterbein University.

Lisa Peterson
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
Lisa is a two-time Obie Award-winning writer and director whose previous projects at Berkeley Rep include It Can’t Happen Here, Madwoman in the Volvo; and An Iliad, which Lisa co-wrote with Denis O’Hare, and which won Obie and Lortel Awards for Best Solo Performance. Other recent West Coast productions include You Never Can Tell (California Shakespeare Theater), Hamlet (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), and Chavez Ravine (Ovation Award for Best Production — Center Theatre Group). She has directed world premieres by many major American writers, including Tony Kushner, Beth Henley, Donald Margulies, José Rivera, David Henry Hwang, Luis...
Alfaro, Marlane Meyer, Naomi Wallace, Basil Kreimendahl, and many others. She regularly works at the Guthrie Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, and New York Theatre Workshop. Lisa and Denis are working on a new play called The Good Book, as well as The Song of Rome. Lisa is writing a new music-theatre piece with Todd Almond called The Idea of Order, co-commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, and Seattle Rep.

**Jack & Betty Schafer SEASON SPONSORS**

Betty and Jack are proud to support Berkeley Rep. Jack just rotated off the Theatre's board and is now on the boards of San Francisco Opera and the Straus Historical Society. He is an emeritus trustee of the San Francisco Art Institute and the Oxbow School. Betty is on the board of EarthJustice, the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, and Sponsors of Educational Opportunity. In San Francisco, she is engaged in the launch of Wise Aging, a program for adults addressing the challenges of growing older. They have three daughters and eight grandchildren.

**Michael & Sue Steinberg SEASON SPONSORS**

Michael and Sue have been interested in the arts since they met and enjoy music, ballet, and live theatre. Michael, who recently retired as chairman and chief executive officer of Macy's West, served on Berkeley Rep's board of trustees from 1999 to 2006 and currently serves on the board of directors of the Jewish Museum. Sue serves on the board of the World of Children. The Steinbergs have always enjoyed regional theatre and are delighted to sponsor Berkeley Rep this season.

**The Strauch Kulhanjian Family SEASON SPONSOR**

Roger Strauch is a former president of Berkeley Rep's board of trustees and is currently vice president of the board. He is chairman of the Roda Group (rodagroup.com), a venture-development company based in Berkeley. The Roda Group is a lead investor in new battery, carbon capture, and water remediation technology companies based in Silicon Valley and Vancouver, Canada. Roger is chairman of the board of directors of Cool Systems, the manufacturer of Game Ready, a medical physical therapy system. He is also chairman of the board of trustees for the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute. He is a member of the UC Berkeley Engineering Dean's college advisory board; a member of the board of Northside Center, a mental-health services agency based in Harlem, New York City; and a co-founder of the William Saroyan Program in Armenian Studies at Cal. Roger also leads the Mosse Art Restitution Project, which searches for family art illegally confiscated during Germany's Third Reich. His wife, Julie A. Kulhanjian, is an attending physician at Oakland Children's Hospital. They have three college-age children.

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**ADDITIONAL STAFF**

Assistant to Daniel Handler
Suzi Young

Deck crew cover
Ross Copeland

Deck crew
Matt Reynolds - Zoey Russo

Production assistant
Sofie Miller

Props
Zoe Gopnik-McManus - Noah Kramer - Dara Ly - David Nolan - Rebecca Willis

Scene shop
Jennifer Costley - Erica Engel - Will Gering - Chance Grable - Carl Martin - Sean Miller - Baz Wenger

Scenic artists
Lassen Hines

Stage carpenter
Gabriel Holman

Medical consultation for Berkeley Rep provided by Cindy J. Chang, MD, UCSF Clinical Professor, and Steven Fugaro, MD.
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