



BERKELEY REP

2023/24 SEASON REPORT

OUR MISSION


Berkeley Rep creates ambitious theatre that entertains and challenges its audiences, provokes civic engagement, and inspires people to experience the world in new and surprising ways.

BERKELEY REP BY THE NUMBERS

- > Founded in **1968**
- > **6M+** people have seen shows in the organization's history
- > Received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in **1997**
- > **36th** world premiere was staged during the 2023/24 season
- > **124K+** tickets issued for 2023/24 productions
- > **18%** growth in audience since 2022/23
- > **12K** youth and life-long arts learners served through our School of Theatre in 2023/24
- > **11** artists under active commission
- > **12** early career arts professionals mentored annually through the Next Generation Fellowship Program
- > Employed nearly **600** artists, technicians, craftspeople, educators, arts administrators, and staff in 2023/24



Cover: Raúl Esparza leads the cast of *Galileo*.
This page: Tommy Bo in *The Far Country*



Billy Crudup in *Harry Clarke*

ON STAGE

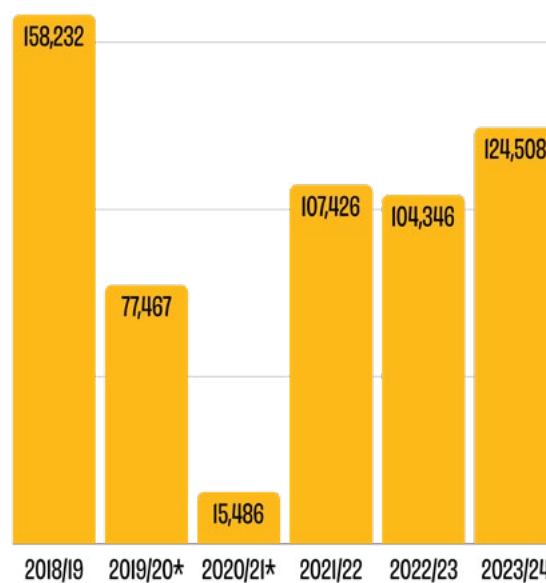
Berkeley Rep's 2023/24 season opened with Selina Fillinger's gleefully feminist satire *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive* and was followed by Berkeley native Eisa Davis' Pulitzer Prize finalist *Bulrusher*. In November 2023, we celebrated Tony and Emmy Award-winning actor Billy Crudup's return to Berkeley Rep with packed houses throughout the record-breaking, sold-out run of his tour-de-force performance in *Harry Clarke* by Obie Award winner David Cale. In January 2024, *Cult of Love* from playwright Leslye Headland played in our Roda Theatre (and later opened on Broadway in December 2024), followed by the West Coast premiere of playwright Lloyd Suh's *The Far Country*. In May, we produced the world premiere musical *Galileo*, written by two-time Emmy winner Danny Strong, with music and lyrics by Michael Weiner and Zoe Sarnak, directed by Tony Award winner and Berkeley Rep favorite Michael Mayer, and starring four-time Tony Award nominee Raúl Esparza. The season closed with Octavio Solis' mythic *Mother Road*, a 21st-century tale inspired by John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Alongside these productions, Berkeley Rep presented three special comedy engagements, Alex Edelman's *Just for Us*, *The Best of The Second City*, and *W. Kamau Bell Gets His Act Together*.

***Galileo* drew ticket buyers from 28 states and 6 countries outside the U.S.**

In the 2023/24 season, ticket sales covered 34% of operating costs

Audience regrowth following the pandemic continues to be a priority for the organization, and we achieved 18% growth over the 2022/23 season. Throughout 2023/24, we experimented with strategies to increase access and create multiple entry points into our work and to raise awareness of Berkeley Rep's work through new channels. Early promotion, accessible pricing, and partnerships with leaders and influencers rooted in the community have been helping increase our reach and welcome new theatregoers into our venues. The organization's subscriber base stabilized, and subscription revenue has grown 35% since the 2021/22 season. Our ongoing work will be informed by the valuable insights gained from efforts in 2023/24, with a goal to expand our audience base while continuing to foster loyalty and retention.

TICKETS ISSUED



*Impacted by COVID-19 shutdowns

SPOTLIGHT:
CALIFORNIA STORIES

Three plays in the 2023/24 season put California stories in the spotlight which gave audiences insights into neighboring communities and underrepresented local history. *Bulrusher* transported audiences to 1950s Boonville in Mendocino County, *The Far Country* delved into a multigenerational story of Chinese immigrants detained on Angel Island in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and *Mother Road* cast the Central Valley as the starting point for a larger-than-life road trip inspired by John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.



PHOTO: KEVIN BERNE

James Carpenter and Emilio Garcia-Sanchez in *Mother Road*



THE GROUND FLOOR

The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work enhances and expands the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre through flexible, customized support for artists creating new work. With theatres across the industry facing dire fiscal challenges, organizations able to take on the financial risk to stage ambitious new work are becoming increasingly rare. As an established new play incubator and producing theatre on comparatively stable footing, we have felt only an increased obligation and renewed conviction to our commitment to staging ambitious world premiere productions in our mainstage season and laying the groundwork to increase our capacity to support projects in development. As we see demand for the program continue to grow year over year at the same time many other prominent new play developmental programs have closed their doors, we recognize the evident need The Ground Floor fills within the industry for flexible, artist-centered institutional support of new work.

SUMMER RESIDENCY LAB

The 2024 Ground Floor Summer Residency Lab brought together over 100 local and national artists over four weeks to make art in a flexible, supportive environment. The 23 projects in this year's Summer Residency Lab were diverse in scope and size and included plays, adaptations, musicals, devised pieces, and a few ideas still in nascent stages. This year's artists were incredibly generous in their support of each other's projects, jumping in as readers, providing a receptive audience during internal readings, and acting as sounding boards for their cohort's ideas.

During the Summer Residency Lab, we hosted three Ground Floor Artist Salons prior to mainstage productions in our downtown venues. These salons gave our mainstage audiences an opportunity to hear directly from Summer Residency Lab artists about their projects and their experiences at Berkeley Rep. Each of the salons had an excellent turnout, helping to raise the profile of our artists and their projects and to raise awareness about our new play development activities as we work to build a community of new play advocates among our audiences.

At least 3 major new play development hubs around the country have ceased operations since 2020.

2024 SUMMER RESIDENCY LAB PROJECTS

ASSISTED

Book by Adam Chanler-Berat
Composed/Lyrics by Julian Hornik
Directed by Annie Tippe

BANGLADESH

Written by The Lazours
Directed by Ritesh Batra

THE BROKEN EAR TRILOGY

Written/Performed by The Bengsons
Directed by Anne Kauffman
and Caitlin Sullivan

THE BYGONES

Written by Sanaz Toossi
Co-created by Tala Ashe

THE CARLISLE PROJECT

Book/Lyrics by Annalisa Dias
Composed/Lyrics by Ronee Penoi
Orchestrations by Danielle Jagelski

CHOSIN

Written, Directed, and Choreographed
by John Carrafa
Creative Consultation/Dramaturgy
by Carey Perloff

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS: THE MUSICAL

Based on the novel by Walter Mosley
Music/Lyrics by Elsa Davis
Book by Walter Mosley and Jerome Hairston
Music Direction by Ben Moss

THE FEMALE POPE

Book/Lyrics by Shannon Burkett
Composed by Heather Christian

FORK

Written by Mikael Sulaiman

HARLEM CANARY / TOKYO CROW

Written by Andrew Saito
Directed by Steven Sapp

HE WHO HAS TEN THOUSAND HORSES

Written by Nikki Massoud
Directed by Sivan Battat

JURY DUTY

Created by Milo Cramer and Morgan Green

LEAST OF MY CHILDREN

Created by Jen Anaya, Dean Linnard,
Caterina Nonis, Andy Peterson

THE MAKING OF A SAINT

Written/Performed by KJ Sanchez

THE MISSING SONGS

Written by Linda Amayo-Hassan

THE MONSTERS

By Ngozi Anyanwu

MOONCHILDREN: THE OPERA

Written by Christopher Sears

THE ORCHARDS

Written by Jaelyn Backhaus

PORT ISABEL, TEXAS

Written by Lucy Thurber
Directed by Caitríona McLaughlin

REAL. AMERICAN. COWBOY.

Written by Marvin González De León

SCRUB

Written by Margot Bordelon

SIC, HEUNG, MEI 色香味

Written/Performed by Phil Wong

THAT GIRL

Book by Rehana Lew Mirza
Composed/Lyrics by Ari Afsar

QUICK FACTS:

**GROUND FLOOR
SUMMER RESIDENCY LAB**

- > 2024 marked the Summer Lab's **13th** year
- > Applications to the Summer Residency Lab doubled from around 300 in 2023 to well over **600** in 2024
- > This year's Lab welcomed **45** lead artists on **23** projects
- > **100+** artists in total participated during the 2024 Summer Residency Lab
- > **15** presentations of work were given, of which **11** were open to the public

COMMISSIONS IN DEVELOPMENT

Berkeley Rep currently has 11 artists under commission working on eight projects. During the 2023/24 season, we hosted two workshops with playwright Richard Montoya for his commissioned play *Suicide on Telegraph*. In November 2023, Montoya was in residence to work on the draft of his script, and in August 2024, Montoya and his team collaborated during a workshop that culminated in a private work-in-progress reading of the play.

**WORLD PREMIERES**

The world premiere of *Galileo* was the penultimate production of Berkeley Rep's 2023/24 season. Featuring large-scale spectacle through a stunning set and projections, lavish period costumes, and sweeping musical numbers, *Galileo* was a considerable undertaking and was one of the largest productions in Berkeley Rep's history. The new musical brought together the talents of director Michael Mayer, book writer Danny Strong, composers Michael Weiner and Zoe Sarnak, choreographer David Neumann alongside award-winning designers, and an extraordinary 22-member cast led by four-time Tony Award nominee Raúl Esparza. After close to a decade-long development journey, the creative team was elated to finally present the fully staged production to a receptive Bay Area audience. The *Galileo* team enthusiastically expressed throughout their time here how truly grateful they were to have a new play incubator like Berkeley Rep where they could take bold artistic risks that will help set the musical on the path for future success.

SPOTLIGHT:

SUPPORTING PLAYWRIGHTS' EVOLVING WORK

In addition to a world premiere, we mounted three plays in our 2023/24 season with the playwrights in residence to continue work on their scripts, with Leslye Headland delivering new pages to the *Cult of Love* cast right up until the production's January 31 opening night, Lloyd Suh in rehearsals reworking scenes for our West Coast premiere of *The Far Country*, and Octavio Solis continuing to hone his play *Mother Road* five years after its 2019 world premiere. This opportunity to revisit a script after its world premiere is invaluable to playwrights who use the knowledge gained during the first production to refine and strengthen the piece for subsequent runs.





SCHOOL OF THEATRE

The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre served close to 12,000 children, teens, and lifelong learners from 11 California counties in 2023/24. Research over the past two decades has demonstrated that arts education not only enhances students' skills in the arts but also positively affects academic performance in other subjects by increasing engagement, motivation, and social-emotional learning. Providing arts learning opportunities young people may not otherwise have access to during the school day, particularly those attending economically under resourced schools, our Outreach programs in Bay Area schools helped build over 4,000 students' competence in skills like empathy, creative thinking, communication, curiosity, and human connection that will not only help enhance their academic performance but are among the top skills that will equip them for success in their future life and careers, whatever they may be.

IN SCHOOL RESIDENCIES

Recognizing the emotional toll of our turbulent social, environmental, and political moment on students, we adapted our approach to in-school programming to emphasize activities that fostered joy, collaboration, empowerment, and fun. We also made a conscious shift toward longer residencies that promote deeper and more meaningful relationships with schools and students. This shift ensured our contact hours with students remain at pre-pandemic levels with over 90% of our residencies being three visits or more. Story Builders workshops for TK–4th grade students was our most popular offering, which helped enhance the creative expression and literacy skills of 555 elementary school children.



"My kids absolutely loved Berkeley Rep. It got my quiet kids out of their comfort zone and helped focus my more energetic kids. This is the first special class that my entire class looked forward to each week."

— 6th Grade Olinda Elementary School Teacher

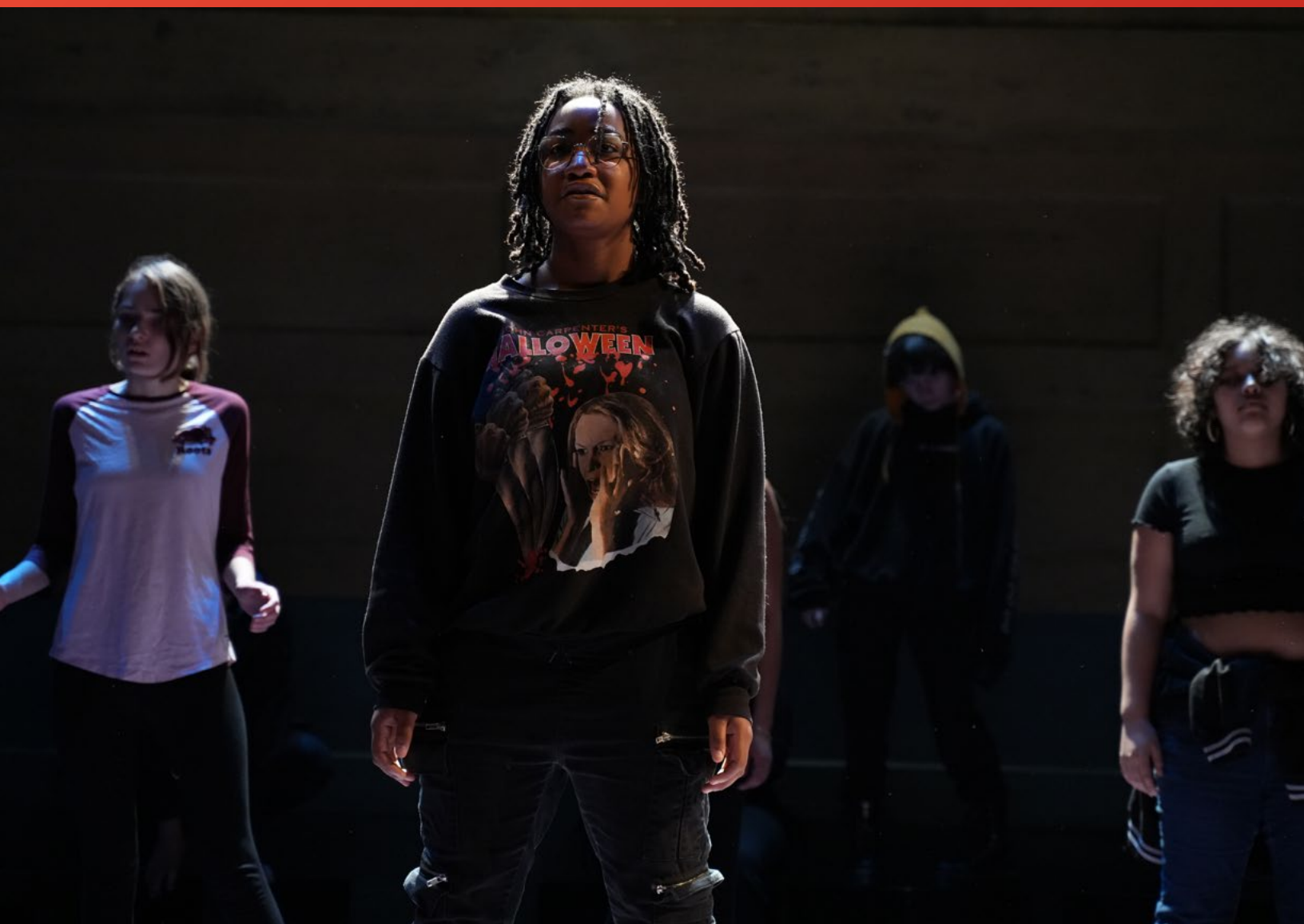
SPOTLIGHT:
**IN RESIDENCY WITH
OAKLAND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

At Oakland International High School, a public charter school serving refugees and recent immigrants, including many unaccompanied minors and those with less than two years in the United States, we conducted Acting residencies with four 11th grade classrooms. With many different languages spoken by students at different levels of English language acquisition, the residencies focused on storytelling to enhance communication skills, including non-verbal forms of expression, and using performing arts tools to help students gain confidence using spontaneous English skills in front of others.



HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE FESTIVAL

In its second year, Berkeley Rep's High School Theatre Festival invited students from four local high schools to devise short theatre pieces on the theme of "Rebuilding What Has Broken." After a multi-visit residency working with a Berkeley Rep Teaching Artist in their classroom, on festival day, students participated in workshop sessions on hip-hop spoken word with artists from Bay Area Theatre Cypher, engaged in an artist interview with *The Far Country* actor Tommy Bo, shared meals, and watched run throughs of each other's work, all before presenting their pieces to an audience of 150 in the Peet's Theatre. These opportunities created meaningful experiences and had students from varied communities and backgrounds in conversation with one another, congratulating each other on their work, supporting each other when they felt overwhelmed, and forging new friendships.



QUICK FACTS:


**SCHOOL OF THEATRE
OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

Students served through outreach:

- > **4,000** at 35 schools
- > **48%** of students served attended a Title I school

Compared to the previous school year, outreach programs saw:

- > a **110%** increase in workshop hours
- > a **20%** increase in unique schools served
- > an **84%** increase in individual workshops held



Outside a student matinee of *Galileo*

STUDENT MATINEES

Our 2023/24 Student Matinee Series welcomed middle and high school students to six performances of shows in Berkeley Rep's mainstage season. Every student attendee participated in a pre-show workshop that cultivated their understanding of the topics on stage, including satire's role in political narratives and media, the legacy of major national historical events — like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the Great Migration — on our local communities, standing up for one's beliefs, and much more. The workshops also primed students new to theatre about what to expect from their experience. One partner teacher shared, "Sometimes theatre can feel like a club that's only for certain people, but the pre-show workshop really helped to break down those barriers and make everyone feel welcome and in the know."

TEEN COUNCIL

Our Teen Council programs continue to empower young people in leadership and advocacy through the arts and increase arts access to Bay Area highschoolers. The Teen Leadership Council hosted their peers at Teen Nights for six shows during the 2023/24 season, which brought teens together in community to talk deeply about the themes of the productions and engage with some of the industry's leading artists, including Tony and Obie Award winners Trip Cullman, Rachel Hauck, Michael Mayer, and Leigh Silverman; Pulitzer Prize finalists Eisa Davis and Lloyd Suh; and more.

The 19 members of the 2023/24 Teen Leadership Council spent their year gaining insights into theatre careers and arts advocacy. This year's cohort participated in professional development sessions and attended the Theatre Communications Group Conference in Chicago and Arts Advocacy Day in Sacramento, broadening their networks and gaining insights into theatre careers.



YOUTH & TEEN SUMMER PROGRAMS

Summer programs activated the creativity of 150 students from grades 1 – 12 with intensives in play creation, filmmaking, and musical theatre. In response to community needs, this year we offered camps for elementary school-aged children for the first time, serving 60 families whose children engaged in a comprehensive exploration of storytelling fundamentals, including acting, voice, movement, and improv.

A highlight of this year's summer camps was connecting students with actors from Berkeley Rep's mainstage productions. Actors Christian Magby and DeMone Seraphin from world premiere musical *Galileo* led workshops on voice, movement, and creating original songs. High school students took classes on character exploration with *Mother Road* actor Marilet Martinez and acting with lead actor Emilio Garcia-Sanchez. Seeing Emilio put the skills they were learning into action onstage in *Mother Road* informed the students' own work in the rehearsal room. These opportunities to learn from actors working at the highest level in their field enriched the students' understanding of the craft and inspired them to push their creative boundaries.

NEXT GENERATION FELLOWSHIP

Our Next Generation Fellowship program engaged 12 early career arts professionals with training and mentorship throughout the 2023/24 season. Despite navigating a difficult time for the theatre industry, in which pursuing a career in the arts feels tenuous, many of our fellows were able to secure employment by the conclusion of their fellowship, with a few ending their fellowships early to pursue paid positions in the arts (including at Berkeley Rep). Members of the 2023/24 fellows class gained invaluable skills as they assistant directed Broadway-bound world premieres; facilitated community partnerships for our In Dialogue program; secured new grant funding; helped create the sets, costumes, and props for our productions; mentored teens in our High School Theatre Festival; and much more.

TRANSFORMATIONAL ARTS

The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre in partnership with the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project (FIPPP) led storytelling workshops with incarcerated individuals at the San Francisco San Bruno Jail and Downtown San Francisco Jail facilities. These workshops helped program participants craft original devised theatre pieces which they shared during a culminating performance within the facility.

In fall 2023, we completed a residency with an incredible group of women-identifying participants at the Downtown San Francisco Jail facility. The ensemble leaned into joy and truth as they presented a powerful performance filled with laughter and tears for their pod and members of the jail's deputies and support staff.



2023/24 Fellows with *Cult of Love* cast member Christopher Lowell on opening night



AAPI Night at *The Far Country*

IN DIALOGUE

Using storytelling as an anchor, Berkeley Rep's In Dialogue program is developing long-term collaborations with local, socially centered organizations, as well as educating and activating our audiences around organizations whose work aligns with the themes of our productions. Through In Dialogue, we aim to create lasting positive impacts that strengthen Berkeley Rep's bond with our audience, partner organizations, local artist community, and the broader Bay Area community. Overall, In Dialogue partnered with 40 community organizations, artists, community leaders, and small businesses in 2023/24.

Throughout the season, we engaged audiences and our community through events and activations in conversation with our mainstage productions. These events, most notably our Community Salons, Community Dialogues, and Community Celebration Days, amplified the work of local artists, cultural practitioners, activists, knowledge-bearers, and partner organizations, giving voice to community members with lived experiences related to a show.

By uplifting these community voices and introducing audiences to other organizations, we empower audiences with the tools and motivation to translate their responses to the show into meaningful action in service of our community. In this way, In Dialogue supports our mission to create work that provokes civic engagement by using theatre as a catalyst for positive change and civic participation.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION NIGHTS

Our six Community Celebration nights during the 2023/24 season filled our spaces with music, delicious food, community, and abundant joy. These free, public events included pre-show performances featuring local artists and performers with refreshments from local Asian-, Black-, Indigenous-, and Latine-owned businesses; post-show conversations; and discounted tickets.

By showcasing local artists, small businesses, and small community service organizations in our venues and highlighting them in emails and other promotions, we generated exposure that helped partners to sell out performances in their venues and drive traffic to their businesses.

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION DAYS

- **HISPANIC HERITAGE NIGHT CELEBRATION**
in partnership with La Pena Cultural Center
- **NATIVE HERITAGE NIGHT**
in partnership with Sogorea Te' Land Trust
- **BLACK THEATRE NIGHT**
in partnership with Afro Urban Society
- **AAPI HERITAGE NIGHT**
- **COSMIC ODYSSEY:
A PRIDE CELEBRATION**
- **LATINE THEATRE NIGHT**



Cosmic Odyssey: A Pride Celebration

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

We partnered with community leaders and organizations to engage in pre- and post-show dialogues that connected the themes explored in our onstage productions to real-life issues affecting our local community. Dialogues explored topics of sisterhood and empowerment with public officials and leaders of advocacy organizations during *POTUS*; immigration, legacy, and imagining futures with Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation and UC Berkeley Future Histories Lab during *The Far Country*; how Galileo's contributions to astronomy paved the way for our current cosmological theories with scientists from Lawrence Berkeley National Lab; the history of *The Grapes of Wrath* in pop culture with the National Steinbeck Center; and more.

"The Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project (FIPPP) is so grateful for the opportunity to be a company-in-residence at Berkeley Rep. It's no secret that things are tough in the world of theatre right now, and FIPPP has already experienced this firsthand with the shuttering of PianoFight Oakland. Partnering with Berkeley Rep allows us not only to have a home for our rehearsals and performances, but also to expand on collaborative possibilities with Berkeley Rep like the SF Jails project, and to make even more visible the stories of those most impacted by the carceral system."

— Mark Kenward, Co-Founder and Producer
The Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In Dialogue uses our theatre-making resources in service of community partners by providing space, expertise, training, and other tools for projects that support their missions.

In 2023/24, In Dialogue and the School of Theatre continued Berkeley Rep's partnership with East Bay Sanctuary Covenant and Amplifying Sanctuary Voices on a storytelling performance project by immigrant community members. Participants in the project engaged in monthly workshops with Berkeley Rep teaching artists to develop original stories. The year-long collaboration culminated in an invitation-only performance hosted at the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre's Nevo Education Center.

After losing their performance venue, our partners at the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project became Berkeley Rep's first ever company-in-residence, using space in our School of Theatre throughout the year as a rehearsal and performance venue for their Workshop Performances in May 2024, as well as upcoming performances in January 2025 in the lead up to a multi-week festival of new work in 2025.

QUICK FACTS: IN DIALOGUE

- > **525** attendees at In Dialogue events
- > **19** local artists/performance groups showcased
- > **6** local small businesses supported
- > **15** local non-profits/cultural organization partners
- > Close to **600** free and discounted tickets issued



AAPI Night at The Far Country

SPOTLIGHT: IN DIALOGUE WITH *THE FAR COUNTRY*

The Far Country's themes deeply resonated with our Bay Area audience, sparking meaningful conversations about heritage, identity, envisioning future narratives, and the impact of immigration throughout history and today. Through In Dialogue, we were able to forge a partnership with Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation with whom we partnered on a Community Dialogue as well as a press feature on the cast and creative team's tour of the Angel Island facility that amplified the history of Angel Island in the lead up to the production. Additionally, partnerships with organizations like UC Berkeley Future Histories Lab and individual leaders in the community enhanced outreach, forged connections with additional knowledge bearers and resources, and helped extend the conversation beyond the stage. Our Community Salons and AAPI Heritage Night activated our spaces with performances by The Last Hoisan Poets and Del Sol Quartet, Leung's White Crane, 2k Ave, Lion Dance ME, and Bay Area Independent Chinese Dancers; tabling from Berkeley bookstore Revolution Books; and delicious bites from local restaurant Dumpling Time. The vibrant community response and activation inspired by the production — 46% of single ticket buyers identified as East Asian — and our In Dialogue partnerships illustrated the impact this program can have in positioning the art on our stages to deepen connections with and within our community.



THANK YOU!

Thank you for your generous support of Berkeley Rep. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact grantsmanager@berkeleyrep.org.