

PRESS CONTACT

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**BERKELEY REP'S GROUND FLOOR AWARDS RESIDENCIES****TO DOZENS OF ESTEEMED ARTISTS****R&D facility for theatre picks 18 exhilarating projects for third summer lab**

FEBRUARY 26, 2014 – Today, [The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work](#) announces that it has selected 18 projects from more than 30 innovative artists for its third Summer Residency Lab. This June, as part of an extraordinary laboratory for collaboration, some of the nation's most prominent and promising writers, directors, and composers will unite at the Theatre's campus in West Berkeley for an intense four-week period to live, dine, and create new plays together. Dozens more local and out-of-town actors and directors will join The Ground Floor process, bringing the number of artists involved close to 100.

From 400 applications, residencies have been awarded to **Annie Baker** (*Circle Mirror Transformation*); **Kara Lee Corthron** (*Etched in Skin on a Sunlit Night*); **Colman Domingo** (*Wild With Happy*); **Anna Deavere Smith** (*Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*); **Joan Holden** (*Seeing Double*); **Aditi Brennan Kapil** (*Love Person*), **Manu Narayan** (*The Love Guru*), and **Radovan Jovičević** of musical collaboration **Darunam**; **John Leguizamo** (*Ghetto Klown*); **Dave Malloy** (*Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*); **Gregory S. Moss** (*punkplay*); **Julie Marie Myatt** (*The Happy Ones*); **Dominic Orlando** (*Fissures lost & found*) and **Brian Carpenter** (leader of the band Beat Circus); **Jiehae Park** (*Hannah and the Dread Gazebo*) and set designer **Tristan Jeffers**; **Katie Pearl** and **Lisa D'Amour** of **PearlDamour** (*How to Build a Forest*); **Abigail Rezneck** and **Barbara Babcock** (making their theatrical debut as writers); **KJ Sanchez** (*ReEntry*) and actress **Jenny Mercein**; **Deborah Stein** and **Suli Holum** of **Stein | Holum Projects** (*Chimera*) and sound designer **James Sugg**; **Hadi Tabbal** (*After*); and Oakland-based band **The Kilbanes**.

"Berkeley Rep has a voracious appetite for new work, and The Ground Floor's Summer Residency Lab feeds us in so many ways," says **Madeleine Oldham**, director of The Ground Floor. "Having all of these fantastic and wildly talented artists under our roof energizes us so much and really pushes us to think deeply about how we make theatre. We try to challenge ourselves with as eclectic an array of projects as we can imagine, and this year's slate of artists promises to rise to that occasion. Established artists like Anna Deavere Smith and John Leguizamo will write alongside first-time playwrights Abigail Rezneck and Barbara Babcock. We'll have a community-focused experimental performance piece next to a roomful of monks next to the music of Oum Kalthoum. Arson will meet hip hop and cartography will meet the internet. June can't come soon enough!"

(MORE)

RECIPIENT OF THE TONY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING REGIONAL THEATRE

ARTISTS SELECTED FOR THIRD SUMMER LAB AT BERKELEY REP / 2 OF 7

The Ground Floor promotes cross-pollination among artists and champions the spirit of innovation inherent to Berkeley and the Bay Area. Two shows developed through the program have already appeared on Berkeley Rep's mainstage: Dan LeFranc's *Troublemaker, or the Freakin Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatright* had its world premiere in January 2013, and Marcus Gardley's [*The House that will not Stand*](#) debuted in February 2014 and is currently on stage in an extended run through March 23, 2014.

The Ground Floor is a bold new 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 became possible when Berkeley Rep united all its preproduction activities — its costume shop, prop shop, scene shop, and offices — at a spacious campus in West Berkeley. The Theatre is transforming a vacant warehouse on that site into a vibrant new creative center that will ultimately include rehearsal halls, intimate studios, and even housing for visiting artists. The result will be a dynamic home for play creation — an organic and energetic environment for artists where they can live, develop work in a flexible setting, challenge each other to expand the boundaries of theatre, and intersect with the public to create community. The leaders of this effort are Madeleine Oldham, Berkeley Rep's resident dramaturg and director of The Ground Floor, and Karena Fiorenza Ingersoll, Berkeley Rep's associate managing director and manager of The Ground Floor. The Ground Floor is made possible by a \$1 million grant from the James Irvine Foundation's Artistic Innovation Fund with additional support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Tournesol Project and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation.

The artists and projects selected for the third annual Summer Residency Lab are as follows:

Annie Baker: *The Last of the Little Hours*

Winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and three Obie Awards, Annie Baker's full-length plays include *the Flick*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *The Aliens*, and *Body Awareness*. While at the Summer Residency Lab, Baker will be working on a draft of her play, *The Last of the Little Hours*, which tracks the daily life of a group of Benedictine monks.

Kara Lee Corthron: untitled 1977/Hip-Hop/Arson/Bronx Jam

Internationally produced New York City-based playwright Kara Lee Corthron is a recipient of the Princess Grace Award and Helen Merrill Award and writer of *Julius by Design*, *Etched in Skin on a Sunlit Night*, and *AliceGraceAnon*. Using the theatrical style of early hip hop, this currently untitled jam will tell a simple story...about arson. In 1977, a young MC character — long before MC'ing was cool — finds himself in a situation where he is offered an enticing amount of money to set a building in his own neighborhood ablaze.

(MORE)

PearlDamour: *Milton*

Playwright Lisa D'Amour is a 2013 Doris Duke Artist, and her widely successful play *Detroit* was nominated for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize. Katie Pearl authors alternative, often site-specific performances and develops new works for theatre with artists around the United States. Together they make up PearlDamour, an Obie Award-winning interdisciplinary performance company. Through a combination of spoken and sung performance, video design, and an installation of artifacts from five towns all named Milton around the United States (North Carolina, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Oregon), the piece poses questions about what it means to be part of an American community, and if such a thing is even possible. *Milton* is a performance and community engagement experiment that explores the tiny American individual living under a huge, shared sky.

Colman Domingo: *Dot*

Actor, director, and playwright Colman Domingo has been very busy making his mark on the international arts scene. You may have last seen him at Berkeley Rep in *Passing Strange*, or in the Tony Award-winning *Scottsboro Boys*, or in Tony Kushner's film *Lincoln*. Domingo's new play *Dot* is a darkly comedic piece that tells the story of a woman suffering from early stages of dementia who plans on killing herself. Her three adult children struggle to cope with this decision, as well as their own personal disasters.

Joan Holden, Bruce Barthol, Daniel Savio & Marge Betley: *FSM*

As playwright for the Tony Award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe, Joan Holden wrote or co-wrote most of the company's plays from 1970 to 2000. She is best-known nationally for the widely produced stage adaptation of Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed*. Holden is joined at the Lab by Bruce Barthol (music and lyrics), who was resident composer/lyricist with the San Francisco Mime Troupe from 1976 to 2007; Bay Area composer Daniel Savio (music and lyrics); and dramaturg Marge Betley, who is also the executive director of Stagebridge. *FSM* is a new work commissioned by Stagebridge to mark the 50th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at UC Berkeley. The movement was an historic turning point: for the first time, masses of white middle-class youth joined African Americans in protesting the established order. The work celebrates the FSM, but also provokes lingering questions about the unintended ramifications and political fallout of the movement and the nature of activism.

Aditi Brennan Kapil, Manu Narayan & Radovan Jovićević: *Untitled*

Aditi Brennan Kapil is a writer, actress, and director of Bulgarian and Indian descent who was raised in Sweden. She resides in Minneapolis, MN where she is the playwright in residence at Mixed Blood Theatre. Manu Narayan is an accomplished actor, vocalist, and songwriter who also plays classical and Indian Classical saxophone. This Broadway star of *Bombay Dreams* is also the lead singer of fusion band Darunam with Radovan Jovićević, a Serbian pop-rock/folk music composer, producer, and band leader. Darunam brings together the melodies and rhythms from three homelands: America, India, and Serbia.

(MORE)

The as-yet-untitled musical collaboration between these three artists explores survival, friendship, and redemption through the collision of people from different musical styles and cultures in a world where isolation, either cultural or artistic, is no longer an option.

John Leguizamo: *Untitled*

Emmy Award winner, Obie Award recipient, two-time Drama Desk winner, and Tony nominee John Leguizamo brings his provocative and uproarious work back to Berkeley Rep for The Ground Floor. Known for his solo shows like *Ghetto Clown*, *Mambo Mouth*, *Spic-O-Rama*, and *Freak*, Leguizamo has also appeared on TV's hit shows *ER* and *My Name is Earl*, and in films like *Kick Ass 2*, *King of the Jungle*, and *Moulin Rouge*. He recently penned his autobiography *Pimps, Hos, Playa Hatas, and All the Rest of My Hollywood Friends*. With an outrageous sense of humor and artistic sensitivity, Leguizamo will hone a series of sketches and vignettes at the Summer Residency Lab.

Dave Malloy: *Ghost Quartet*

Obie Award-winning composer, performer, and sound designer Dave Malloy returns to the Bay Area to work on his latest piece, *Ghost Quartet*, with cellist and composer Brent Arnold, performer and musician Brittain Ashford, and singer-songwriter Gelsey Bell. *Ghost Quartet* is an immersive chamber music theatre piece exploring love, death, and whiskey. Using an amalgam of folk, bluegrass, indie rock, and experimental sound and texts from Edgar Allan Poe, ghost stories, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, the piece examines the use of alcohol to medicate after heartbreak and death, and questions whether faith in the occult is a conscious choice or an unconscious instinct.

Gregory S. Moss: *Fran/k*

Gregory S. Moss is a writer, educator, and performer whose plays include *sixsixsix*, *Billy Witch*, *House of Gold*, *Reunion*, and *punkplay*, among others. *Fran/k* will tell a fictionalized version of the true story of Frank Dalton, a photographer who lived and worked in the playwright's hometown of Newburyport, Massachusetts, and who underwent gender reassignment surgery in the mid-1980s. When Frank's lover Connie died, he began wearing Connie's scarves and hats, and was seen with his long gray hair pulled up in a bun, his face powdered and colored with crudely applied make up. After completing a surgical transition in the late '80s, in this deeply Catholic, Polish, and Irish working-class part of the country, Frank became Fran, very much in public. A love story and a formal examination of the theatricality of gender, *Fran/k* is dramatic, comedic portrait of the effects of cultural change in a small town.

Julie Marie Myatt: *Frank is a miracle*

LA-based playwright Julie Marie Myatt's work has appeared at the Magic Theatre, South Coast Repertory, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Guthrie Theater, and the Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors of Theatre Louisville. She is a resident member of New Dramatists and a Mellon Playwright in Residence at South Coast Rep. In her new piece *Frank is a miracle*, she explores the assumptions we make about our neighbors. What if every person has a family or miracle hidden inside their home and silence? Frank Groemke has more than his heartbroken neighbor Harriet and her dog could have ever imagined.

(MORE)

Dominic Orlando & Brian Carpenter: *The Barbary Coast*

Playwright Dominic Orlando and composer Brian Carpenter return to the Summer Residency Lab (they first participated in 2012) to continue work on their Berkeley Rep commission, *The Barbary Coast*, a musical about the criminal culture that thrived during the San Francisco Gold Rush. Based on historical material, it's humorous and epic in scope — a vibrant, violent, theatrical portrayal of a cynical world of prostitutes, outlaws, flagrant racism, slavery, and all stripes of political corruption. Like those who stumbled into the actual Barbary Coast, the audience may not know whether to laugh or scream at this action-packed romp filled with both terror and excitement.

Jiehae Park & Tristan Jeffers: *Here We Are Here*

Emerging playwright Jiehae Park (*Hannah and the Dread Gazebo*) is currently a member of the Writer/Director Lab at Soho Rep and the 2015 Emerging Writers Group at The Public Theater. She served two years as co-artistic director of title3, a Los Angeles company dedicated to new works by women, and is a proud member Ma Yi Writers Lab. Jiehae teams up with set designer Tristan Jeffers, who is a founding member and artistic associate at Fault Line Theatre in New York, and the pair seeks to develop a new work about place through three lenses: cartography, the internet, and the loneliness of clock time.

Abigail Rezneck & Barbara Babcock: *The Lady Lawyer*

Abigail Rezneck is a criminal defense lawyer and former public defender who graduated from Harvard College with a degree in history and literature and from Stanford Law School, where she was a student of Professor Barbara Babcock's. Babcock was the first woman appointed to the regular faculty at Stanford Law School in 1972, and is now the law school's first professor emerita. She is the author of *Woman Lawyer: The Trials of Clara Foltz* (Stanford Press 2011), a biography of Clara Foltz, a single mother of five who was the first woman lawyer in the west, the founder of the public defender movement, and now the subject of their collaboration *The Lady Lawyer*. The play explores the complex character of this unsung heroine of feminism and social reform, and dramatizes the events that transformed her from an ordinary housewife to the renowned "Portia of the Pacific." This is their first play.

Anna Deavere Smith: *The Pipeline Project*

Anna Deavere Smith is an actress, playwright, and author who has received two Drama Desk Awards, as well as nominations for the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award. When granted the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship, her work was described as "a blend of theatrical art, social commentary, journalism, and intimate reverie." She has performed in film and TV as well as on stage. Previously appearing at Berkeley Rep with historic solo shows *Fires in the Mirror*, *Twilight: Los Angeles*, 1992, and most recently, *Let Me Down Easy*, Deavere Smith returns to the Bay Area to explore new material at The Ground Floor. *The Pipeline Project* investigates the stories of children who do not complete their education and end up incarcerated.

(MORE)

Incorporating collected documentary materials and audience responses from town hall presentations, she uses artistic expression as a vehicle for engendering discussion about the crisis in American education and the crisis in American criminal justice. Though Deavere Smith is known for her solo work, her end artistic goal with *The Pipeline Project* is to create a piece for multiple performers.

Deborah Stein, Suli Holum & James Sugg: *Movers + Shakers*

Stein | Holum Projects (SHP) is an experimental and interdisciplinary collaboration between performer/creator Suli Holum (co-founder and former co-artistic director of the Pig Iron Theatre Company) and playwright Deborah Stein (a resident playwright at New Dramatists and frequent collaborator with Pig Iron). They team up with Obie Award-winning sound designer and composer James Sugg, also of Pig Iron, to explore the virtual mating habits of our 21st-century political elite. Starting with the now-cliché image of the contrite post-scandal press conference, where a disgraced politician euphemistically admits his wrongs, *Movers + Shakers* uses a combination of clowning and original songs to peel back the veneer of moralizing, hypocrisy, prudishness, and voyeurism to look at how we take pleasure in other people's pain and how power can be really, really sexy.

KJ Sanchez & Jenny Mercein: *The American Football Project*

As a playwright, KJ Sanchez's work has appeared at Asolo Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Two River Theater, Center Stage in Baltimore, Round House Theatre, Cornerstone Theater Company, and off Broadway at Urban Stages. Jenny Mercein is an actress, director, and writer who is also the daughter of legendary pro-football player Chuck Mercein. The two join The Ground Floor in June to continue work on a co-commission between Berkeley Rep and Center Stage. Based on interviews with players, coaches, medical staff, trainers, parents of young athletes, and other stakeholders, this play will take a look at how issues surrounding head injuries are affecting current and former players, what impact this information is having on standard practices, and how this might change the game.

Hadi Tabbal: *Untitled*

Hadi Tabbal is an actor, theatre director, and creator who most recently directed *After*, a piece by 2013 Ground Floor artists Mona Mansour and Tala Manassah. By following the journey of an Arab musicologist, a Midwestern prison guard in an occupied country in the Middle East, and an American transgendered soon-to-be whistle blower intelligence analyst who grows to be obsessed by legendary Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum, the play explores conditioned human behavior in those moments that we simply dismiss as evil and appalling. In this re-imagined world of intertwining languages, classical Arabic music, trials, sexual transformation, and betrayal, a question emerges: where does our human capacity to love go in moments of atrocious behavior?

(MORE)

The Kilbanes: *Eddie the Marvelous, Who Will Save the World*

The Kilbanes is the musical experiment of Kate Kilbane and Dan Moses, a songwriting duo (who also happen to be married). The Oakland-based theatrical rock band has a performance style that blends the raucous energy of a rock show with the intimate storytelling found in experimental theatre. Their newest piece is a David Bowie-inspired intergalactic rock opera nestled inside a realistic, coming-of-age drama. It's the story of Eddie, a mousy guy in his mid-20s who has a series of crippling social deficiencies that keep him isolated from the world, but who imagines himself to be the charismatic front man of a late 1970's glam rock band. The two plots — Eddie's actual life as a recluse and his imagined life as a rock star/intergalactic hero — then unfold in parallel as he struggles to accept the inevitability that his life must change.

GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR

The Ground Floor aims to create a truly safe space for artists that is not influenced by the pressure of imminent public exposure, so — unlike many other labs — it does not require recipients to present a reading or performance at the end of their residencies. Nonetheless, many projects will reach a stage where the creators request an invited audience or even engage community members as collaborators. For more information on each project, and for future announcements or opportunities to interact, visit: berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor.

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 more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its bustling facilities — the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize a renowned city.

###