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

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**BERKELEY REP'S GROUND FLOOR
AWARDS RESIDENCIES TO 20 INNOVATIVE THEATRE PROJECTS**

**Theatre artists from across the country will develop new work at the
2019 Summer Residency Lab**

March 15, 2019 – Today, **The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work** announced the 20 projects selected for its 2019 Summer Residency Lab. Chosen from over 620 submissions, these projects represent an expansive array of voices and theatrical forms and bring an innovative spirit to the eighth summer of the Lab.

In June, some of the world's most revolutionary and talented theatre artists – from writers and directors to performers and composers – will converge at Berkeley Rep's bustling Harrison Street campus to collaborate and develop their new pieces. Over a heady four-week period, they will fill our halls, generating energy, exchanging ideas, sharing meals, and inspiring us as they craft their works-in-progress. Many more local and out-of-town collaborators will join the Summer Residency Lab to support these projects, bringing the number of participating artists close to 100.

2019 residencies are awarded to: The Bengsons; Alex Borinsky and Ezra Furman; Joe Cobden and Hannah Moscovitch; Mathilde Dratwa; Jessica Fechter; Emily Feldman; Vanessa Garcia, Victoria Collado, and Anna Driftmier; Dave Harris; Jessica Huang and Ashley Hanson; Julia Izumi; Raja Feather Kelly/the feath3r theory; David Mendizábal, Guadalís Del Carmen, Joél Pérez, and Emma Ramos; Itamar Moses; Sam Pinkleton / Pig Iron Theatre Company; Mason Rosenthal, Scott R. Sheppard, Alice Yorke, Morgan FitzPatrick Andrews, and Paul William Kruse; Asha Sundararaman; Caldwell Tidicue; Sanaz Toossi; Tom Toro; and Ikechukwu Ufomadu.

“As we prepare for our eighth Summer Lab, we are thrilled to support such an exciting group of artists and projects from across the country and beyond,” says Madeleine Oldham, director of The Ground Floor. Artistic Director Tony Taccone adds, “These artists have something fresh and personal to say, and are telling their stories in wildly original ways. We can't wait to welcome them to Berkeley this June for a month of creating and imagining together.”

The Ground Floor is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Tournesol Project, Bank of America, Frances Hellman & Warren Breslau, Michael & Sue Steinberg, Barry Williams & Lalita Tademy, and other individual supporters of Berkeley Rep's Create Campaign.

A complete list of the artists and projects selected for the eighth annual Summer Residency Lab:

- **The Bengsons'** *Ohio* is the third and final installment in the Bengsons' trilogy which began with *Hundred Days* and *The Lucky Ones*. It is a concert musical about faith, doubt, and fatherhood, chronicling several generations in Shaun Bengson's family, a line of music-loving pastors affected by congenital hearing loss.

- Alex Borinsky and Ezra Furman's *Untitled Project for the New Jerusalem Tavern* is a concert for our last seven nights at the New Jerusalem Tavern in which transangelic humans – who grow wings – gather in a bar that will soon be gone.
- Performer Joe Cobden and writer Hannah Moscovitch will collaborate on “Q & A.” Question and Answer sessions typically follow the performance of a play. This Q & A will follow a fictional play the audience hasn't seen. The Q & A is the play. As the cast answers questions from the moderator and audience, a subtle narrative is revealed, building to a climax with direct accusations volleyed at the artistic director.
- In Mathilde Dratwa's *A Play about David Mamet Writing a Play about Harvey Weinstein*, Francesca, a playwright, has several Reasons to be Pretty Angry. Among them: David Mamet has actually, in real life, written a play about Harvey Weinstein. Francesca thinks that's bonkers. So this is her play about David Mamet.
- Jessica Fechter's *Jug End* is a play about empathy, its power and limitations, and our varying responses to our own mortality. It also explores hunting, taxidermy, illness, intimacy, magical thinking, and different kinds of guns in different kinds of hands.
- Emily Feldman will begin writing a currently untitled contemporary American comedy in conversation with an ancient Greek tragedy. Topics to be investigated include: oracles, prophecies, free will, family, and love in a time of many different kinds of plagues.
- Vanessa Garcia with Victoria Collado and Anna Driftmier are co-creating *1000 Miles*, a play about what it means to migrate to a new place, trying to find refuge amidst walls that block our path and the new doors we try to open to save ourselves and those we love.
- Dave Harris' Watch Me takes place in the subconscious void of an interracial couple from their first date, to their first time, to a reckoning with heritage, ancestry, and Black Jesus. How can I get over slavery if I can't even get over my ex?
- Jessica Huang and Ashley Hanson are writing their first musical together, *The Kim Loo Sisters Musical*, about sisters who shared top billing with Frank Sinatra, Jackie Gleason, and Ann Miller, but today their names – Alice, Maggie, Jenée, and Bubbles – are all but forgotten. Blending styles of the 1930s and '40s with contemporary sounds, the musical juxtaposes Hollywood glamour with the darker realities for artists of color during the era of Chinese Exclusion, Internment Camps, and anti-miscegenation laws.
- Julia Izumi's Akira Kurosawa Explains His Movies and Yogurt (With Live & Active Cultures!) is a fantastical lecture/performance hybrid about identity, cultural imperialism, and “healthy” consuming.
- Raja Feather Kelly with the feath3r theory will create *Wednesday*, which dismantles the ostensible plot and reimagines the film “Dog Day Afternoon” as a queer fantasia. A utopia for the untold stories of queer people, *Wednesday* is a cabaret club where film noir meets psychological thriller meets pop soap opera.
- *The Sábado Gigante Project*, by David Mendizábal, Guadalís Del Carmen, Joél Pérez, and Emma Ramos, is a bilingual satirical exploration of one of the most iconic, beloved, and problematic television shows in Latinx history. Through a queer lens, the piece seeks to unpack the systems of oppression and colonization internalized within the Latinx community and challenge the machismo patriarchy upheld for 53 years on air.
- Berkeley-born playwright Itamar Moses' Ally is about the tribalisms that lurk in all of us and what happens when two of them are in conflict.
- Sam Pinkleton and Pig Iron Theatre Company will collaborate on *House of Victory*, a large-scale American Entertainment loosely inspired by Aaron Copland and Martha Graham's wartime collaboration *Appalachian Spring*. A sweeping and epic dance-theatre ballet that aims to look and feel like (actual) America and examines what the hell “American Dancing” is.
- Mason Rosenthal will lead fellow Lightning Rod Special Co-Directors Scott R. Sheppard and Alice Yorke in workshoping a new piece of ensemble-devised theatre in collaboration with theatre artist/puppeteer Morgan FitzPatrick Andrews and playwright/videographer Paul William Kruse. Through historical research, contemporary interviews, and performative experiments with toys (plastic and digital), *Toys Are Us*

(working title) will chart shifts in American identity through an exploration of the toys we've trashed and treasured.

- Asha Sundararaman's *India/Indiana* is a new musical that weaves together the stories of two women on opposite sides of the globe to explore identity, migration, and coming of age.
- Caldwell Tidicue's *Harriet Tubman: Live In Concert* is the life, times, and impact of Harriet Tubman told through hip hop and storytelling. Imagine if *Hamilton* were written by John Cameron Mitchell.
- In Sanaz Toossi's *Your Broken Racket*, two friendships – one set in the present, one set in the past – unfold on a tennis court in Iran, where life is changing either too quickly or not quickly enough depending on whom you ask.
- Tom Toro's *Yes, The Planet Got Destroyed* is a theatrical adaptation of Tom's forthcoming graphic memoir about breaking into the *New Yorker* while battling depression. Equal parts haunting and humorous, portrait and parody, the drama unfolds with a surprising, nonlinear structure like that of a cartoon brainstorm session.
- Ikechukwu Ufomadu will create *Ike's Wonderful World of Leisure*, an evening-length solo comedic performance structured as a Master Class on Leisure.

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

As the umbrella for all new play activity at Berkeley Rep, The Ground Floor is a bold initiative designed to raise the bar on the Tony Award-winning nonprofit's already successful record of artistic innovation. Think of it as an incubator for theatrical startups or a top-notch R&D facility for artists. For more information on each project, and for future announcements or opportunities to interact, visit berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor.

INTERACTING WITH THE SUMMER RESIDENCY LAB

The Ground Floor's Summer Residency Lab aims to create a truly safe space for artists that is not influenced by the pressure of imminent public exposure, so — unlike many other development opportunities — 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 ambition, relevance, and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, which have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its School of Theatre engages and educates some 20,000 people a year and helps build the audiences of tomorrow with its nationally recognized teen programs. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities—which also include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley—are helping revitalize a renowned city. Be a Rep.

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