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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HIP-HOP THEATRE PIONEER DANNY HOCH IS *TAKING OVER* BERKELEY REP**  
**Obie Award-winning performer returns in a world premiere directed by Tony Taccone**

NOVEMBER 26, 2007 – This January, Obie Award-winner **Danny Hoch** is *Taking Over* Berkeley Repertory Theatre with his first new solo show in ten years. *Taking Over* invades Berkeley Rep's Thrust Stage – an intimate theatre that has been a favorite venue for stellar performers such as Sarah Jones and Anna Deavere Smith. Berkeley Rep's artistic director, **Tony Taccone**, applies his expertise with solo artists to stage this triumphant return. *Taking Over* begins previews on **January 11**, opens **January 16**, and closes **February 10**, 2008. The executive producer is the Strauch Kulhanjian Family, and the production sponsors are 24 Hour Fitness and the National Endowment for the Arts. The official season sponsors for Berkeley Rep's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday are BART and Wells Fargo.

"There's nowhere I'd rather launch a new show than Berkeley Rep," **Hoch comments**. "Tony is simply one of the best directors out there – despite the fact that I yell at him all the time. The audience is smart and savvy and can really listen on multiple levels. And the community embraces new stories, contemporary stories that move us and make us think. I can't wait to get back on that stage."

"It's a thrill to bring Danny back to Berkeley Rep," **Taccone remarks**. "I've been trying for four years to get him to perform again – and he's back with a vengeance. We've been developing this show together, and it has all the elements of his best work. His agile voice, his expressive body, his sharp mind hones in on a series of real-life characters – and each is depicted with Danny's trademark insight and edge, emotion and humor. As usual, Danny doesn't pull any punches as he becomes people from all ethnicities and all walks of life."

Danny Hoch bursts back onto the stage with *Taking Over* – a one-man *tour de force* that captures the indelible characters of his neighborhood in Brooklyn, where the melting pot is boiling over with ethnic and economic tensions. Danny transforms effortlessly across the boundaries of race, age, and gender, masterfully depicting a city in transition with comical and compassionate results. A pioneer of hip-hop theatre, Danny took Berkeley Rep by storm with the world premiere

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of *Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop* in 1997. He went on to win an Obie Award for that show and to start the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, which wows audiences across America every year. Moviegoers have become accustomed to his magnificent characterizations in recent films such as *We Own the Night*. Now see Danny live!

“In a sea of self-obsessed solo performers, Hoch floats to the top,” declares ***Time Out New York***. “He goes far beyond what normally passes for impersonation. Instead, he digs deep into his characters’ psyches, creating a fierce and specific inner logic for them. Then, like an expert tailor, he sews each tic and vocal inflection into a slightly flashy, perfectly fitting suit.” The ***Village Voice*** proclaims that “his timing is flawless... His strength, like Anna Deavere Smith’s, lies in his ability to represent people as they are rather than as political discourse would dictate.” And the ***New York Times*** calls him “prodigiously gifted... Hoch glides dazzlingly through a repertory of New York characters. He’s a master impersonator, the rhythms and cadences of his various people caught perfectly.”

**Danny Hoch** is the creator of *Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop*; *Pot Melting*; *Some People*; and *Till the Break of Dawn*, a play which premiered in September at the Abrons Arts Center in New York. His work has toured to 50 U.S. cities and 15 countries, earning him numerous awards including two Obies, an NEA Solo Theatre Fellowship, the CalArts/Alpert Award in Theatre, and a Tennessee Williams Fellowship. A senior fellow at the New School’s Vera List Center for Art and Politics, his writings on hip-hop, race, and class have appeared in *American Theatre*, *Harper’s*, *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, and several books: *Creating Your Own Monologue*, *Extreme Exposure*, *Out of Character*, and *Total Chaos*. Danny’s film and television credits include *American Splendor*, *Bamboozled*, *Blackhawk Down*, HBO’s *Def Poetry*, *Lucky You*, *Prison Song*, *Subway Stories*, *Thin Red Line*, *War of the Worlds*, *Washington Heights*, *We Own the Night*, and *Whiteboys*. In 2000, Hoch founded the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, which has presented over 100 hip-hop generation plays and appears annually in the Bay Area, Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC. As a director, his work includes the bilingual *Representa* for the San Francisco International Arts Festival at La Peña Cultural Center and Will Power’s hit show *Flow* at the New York Theatre Workshop, which was named one of the Top 10 Plays of 2003 by the *New York Times*. Danny is the 2007 playwright-in-residence at the Sundance Theatre Lab.

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**Tony Taccone** is in his 11<sup>th</sup> year as artistic director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, where he has staged more than 35 shows, including the world premieres of *The Convict's Return*, *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa*, *The First 100 Years*, *Geni(us)*, *Ravenshead*, *Virgin Molly*, and *Zorro in Hell*. He commissioned Tony Kushner's renowned *Angels in America*, co-directed its world premiere at the Mark Taper Forum, and has collaborated with Kushner on six projects. Their latest piece, *Brundibar*, featured designs by beloved children's author Maurice Sendak. It debuted at Berkeley Rep and then traveled to Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven and the New Victory Theatre in New York City, where it sold out its run and was nominated for two Drama Desk Awards. Taccone recently made his Broadway debut with *Bridge & Tunnel*, which was universally lauded by the critics and won a Tony Award for its star, Sarah Jones. He also staged the show's record-breaking off-Broadway run, workshopped it for Broadway at Berkeley Rep and directed Jones' previous hit, *Surface Transit*. In 2004, his production of David Edgar's *Continental Divide* transferred to the Barbican in London after playing the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, and England's Birmingham Rep. His regional credits also include noted theatres such as Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arizona Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and San Francisco's Eureka Theatre, where he served six years as artistic director before coming to Berkeley Rep.

Like all good leaders committed to *Taking Over*, Taccone has surrounded himself with trusted advisers. The show features two **brilliant designers** familiar to local audiences. **Annie Smart** (scenic design/costume design) has created sets and costumes for countless theatres in the United States and her native England. Berkeley Rep audiences will recall her stunning designs for *Big Love*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *Finn in the Underworld*, *Honour*, *Irma Vep*, *Passing Strange*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Yellowman*. **Alexander V. Nichols** (lighting design) has designed scenery, costumes, lights, and projections for dance and theatre companies across America, including 13 previous shows at Berkeley Rep: *Civil Sex*, *Continental Divide*, *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa*, *Culture Clash's Zorro in Hell*, *Fêtes de la Nuit*, *The Guys*, *Honour*, *The Life of Galileo*, *Menocchio*, *Mother Courage*, *Ravenshead*, *Rhinoceros*, and *Surface Transit*. The stage manager for this production is **Michael Suenkel**, Berkeley Rep's resident production stage manager.

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People who love the idea of *Taking Over* can march into Berkeley Rep for **15 special events**:

- *Target @ Teen Night* begins at 6:30 PM on Friday, January 11, and includes dinner, a behind-the-scenes discussion with a member of the artistic team, and a performance of *Takign Over*. Tickets are \$8 for members of Berkeley Rep's Teen Council, \$12 for all other teens. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- Berkeley Rep's newest event, *30 Below* returns on Friday, January 11. It's the coolest night of theatre for the under-30 crowd with a performance starting at 8:00 PM and a wild post-show party with free food, drinks, music, and more. Tickets start at only \$13.50 for anyone under 30 years old. That's cheaper than a movie and popcorn!
- *Opening night* festivities for *Taking Over* are held on Wednesday, January 16, including a pre-show dinner for donors at Downtown Restaurant and a post-show party for the audience featuring food from Liaison Bistro and wines from Raymond Vineyards.
- *Student matinees* sponsored by Citi Foundation occur at noon on Wednesday, January 23 and Thursday, January 24. Tickets are \$10 each, and a chaperone is admitted free for every 10 students. For details, call 510.647.2978 or e-mail [school@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:school@berkeleyrep.org).
- Berkeley Rep's new *book club* meets at 6:30 PM on Friday, February 1. Please read *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up* by Lance Freeman before attending – and RSVP at 510.647.2916 or [bookclub@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:bookclub@berkeleyrep.org).
- Free 30-minute *docent presentations* about the show take place before every Tuesday and Thursday performance. Join in at 7:00 PM on January 15, January 17, January 22, January 29, January 31, and February 7.
- *Post-play discussions* moderated by theatre professionals follow the 8:00 PM shows on Thursday, January 17; Friday, January 25; and Tuesday, January 29.

For fans of hip-hop theatre, the **Berkeley Rep School of Theatre** also offers three special programs during the run of *Taking Over*:

- The free monthly *Family Series* invites all ages to focus on language, poetry, and rhythm on Sunday, January 6 at 11:00 AM.
- A teacher training workshop entitled *Hip-Hop Theatre: Staging Student Poetry* takes place on Saturday, January 19 at 1:00 PM.
- A five-week class on *Performing Hip-Hop Techniques* for students in grades 7 through 10 begins Friday, February 8.

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A new generation of theatregoers is taking over Berkeley Rep – thanks to exciting **new prices** that let more people experience the best theatre in the Bay Area. This change makes Berkeley Rep more affordable to people in the community who are just starting school, starting careers, and starting families – because lower prices are now available for every performance. **Tickets to *Taking Over* start as low as \$27** – and discounts are available for groups, seniors, students, and anyone under 30 years of age.

Find a seat you like and take it over! **Subscriptions are still on sale and start as low as \$84**, a savings of up to 33 percent on every ticket. Choose three or more shows in Berkeley Rep's 40<sup>th</sup> season and get the best seats at the lowest prices. With every package, subscribers receive valuable benefits such as discounts when purchasing tickets for guests, the right to reschedule for free, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events like Carrie Fisher's *Wishful Drinking*.

**Berkeley Rep's Thrust Stage** is located at 2025 Addison Street, one block from Berkeley's downtown BART station and close to AC Transit bus lines. For tickets or information, call **510.647.2949** or toll-free at **888-4-BRT-Tix** – or simply click [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org).

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Born in a storefront on College Avenue, **Berkeley Rep** has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. Founded in 1968 by Michael Leibert, the Theatre quickly earned respect for presenting the finest plays with top-flight actors. In 1980, with the support of the local community, Berkeley Rep built the 400-seat Thrust Stage where its reputation steadily grew over the next two decades. It gained renown for an adventurous combination of work, presenting important new dramatic voices alongside refreshing adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. The company celebrated by unveiling a new 600-seat proscenium stage in 2001, the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre. It also opened the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the permanent home for a 22-year tradition of outreach and education programs. The addition of these two buildings transformed a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex, the linchpin of a bustling Downtown Arts District which has helped revitalize Berkeley. In four decades, nearly four million people have enjoyed 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including more than 40 world premieres. The Theatre now welcomes an annual audience of 180,000, serves 20,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 400 artists, artisans, and administrators. In the last two years, four shows seen at Berkeley Rep have gone on to New York: *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, and *Passing Strange*. Now a series of gifted guests arrives with amazing stage presents for Berkeley Rep's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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# TAKING OVER

## FACT SHEET

**WHO:** Written and performed by Danny Hoch  
 Directed by Tony Taccone  
 Designed by Annie Smart (sets and costumes) and Alexander V. Nichols (lights)

**WHAT:** *Taking Over*  
 The world premiere of a powerful new show in which this Obie Award-winning solo performer depicts a Brooklyn neighborhood where the melting pot is boiling over with ethnic and economic tensions

**WHERE:** Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Thrust Stage  
 2025 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Downtown Berkeley

**WHEN:** Previews on 1/11 - 1/15 – Performances on 1/16 - 2/10/2008

- Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays @ 8:00 PM
- Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
- Saturdays @ 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM
- Sundays @ 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
- No performances on 1/23, 1/24 & 2/5
- No matinees during previews or on 1/19, 1/27 & 2/2

SUN	MON	TUE◆	WED	THU◆	FRI	SAT
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27 7	28	29 8■	30 7	31 8	1 8■ FEB	2 2
3 2,7	4	5	6 7	7 8	8 8	9 2,8
10 2,7						

- ◆ DOCENT TALKS
- PREVIEW
- T TARGET®
- ★ TEEN NIGHT
- ★ OPENING NIGHT
- BOOK CLUB
- DISCUSSION

**Special Events –**

- Target @ Teen Night:* Friday 1/11 @ 6:30 PM
- 30 Below* (party for the under-30 crowd): Friday 1/11 @ 8:00 PM
- Opening night:* Wednesday 1/16 @ 8:00 PM
- Student matinees:* Wednesday 1/23 & Thursday 1/24 @ noon
- Book club:* Friday 2/1 @ 6:30 PM
- Docent presentations:* 1/15, 1/17, 1/22, 1/29, 1/31 & 2/7 @ 7:00 PM
- Post-play discussions:* Thursday 1/17, Friday 1/25 & Tuesday 1/29 @ 8:00 PM

**HOW MUCH:**

	Section B	Section A	Premium
Previews .....	\$27	\$33	\$37
Tue 8 PM / Wed 7 PM / Sat 2 PM .....	\$33	\$45	\$50
Thu 8 PM / Sun 2 PM / Sun 7 PM .....	\$37	\$49	\$55
Friday @ 8 PM.....	\$43	\$55	\$61
Saturday @ 8 PM .....	\$49	\$61	\$69

- Discounts:**
- Half-price tickets available for anyone under 30 years of age
  - \$10 discount for students and seniors one hour before curtain
  - Groups of 10 or more, contact 510.647.2918 or groups@berkeleyrep.org

**TIX & INFO:** 510.647.2949 – toll-free 888-4-BRT-Tix – [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org)