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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Berkeley Rep Announces 2016-17 Season Opener**

Sinclair Lewis' Classic Novel *It Can't Happen Here* To Be Adapted by
Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone

March 28, 2016 - Berkeley Rep, always a leader in generating timely theatrical work, announced today that a new adaptation of the classic novel *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis will open its 2016-17 season. The new adaptation will be helmed by award-winning director Lisa Peterson.

A cautionary dark satire about the fragility of democracy and how fascism can take hold even in the land of liberty, *It Can't Happen Here* follows the ascent of a charismatic and corrupt politician who becomes president of the United States on a platform of "good ol' American values," promising "to return the country to greatness." Witnessing the new president's tyranny from the sidelines is Doremus Jessup, a financially comfortable, social-democratic newspaper editor from Vermont who trusts the system will fix itself – until he ends up in a prison camp. Sinclair Lewis' eerily prescient 1935 novel gets a fresh update in this world premiere adaptation that examines what brings a citizenry to the point of sacrificing its own freedom and how a courageous few can prevail to overcome the fall.

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"This story is as relevant today as it was in 1935," says Taccone. "As artists, we have a responsibility to respond to the current political climate. Every American has a shared stake in this culture of anger and fear. To me, what is most compelling is how we allow something like this to happen. These are the questions we must ask ourselves."

Shortly following the publication of Lewis's novel, the Federal Theatre Project sponsored development of a theatrical adaptation. Taccone explains, "Lewis's original book is epic in scope, capturing a large swath of the American experience. Our new adaptation will be equally ambitious in tackling these critical issues."

It Can't Happen Here follows the previously announced 2016-17 season which includes ***The Last Tiger in Haiti***, a co-production with La Jolla Playhouse and directed by **Joshua Kahan Brody**; and the return of Kneehigh with the U.S. premiere of **946: *The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips***, in association with Kneehigh and Birmingham Repertory Theatre and helmed by **Emma Rice**. After a successful Broadway run, the irreverent comedy ***Hand to God***, directed by **David Ivers**, will have its West Coast premiere; and ***Roe***, a new play by **Lisa Loomer** and a co-production with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Arena Stage.

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 nearly 400 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 – which include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org.

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