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THE GROUND FLOOR: BERKELEY REP'S CENTER FOR THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WORK ANNOUNCES PARTICIPANTS FOR 2026 SUMMER RESIDENCY LAB

Berkeley Rep to welcome over 100 local and national artists to develop 20 innovative theatrical projects during nationally recognized developmental laboratory

Since its inception, The Ground Floor has been instrumental in the creation of dozens of new works for the American theatre

***** LAB DATES: JUNE 15–JULY 12, 2026 *****

BERKELEY, CA (June 15, 2026)—Today, Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Artistic Director **Johanna Pfaelzer** and Managing Director **Tom Parrish** announced the **Summer Residency Lab** participants of **The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work**. Now in its 14th year, this nationally recognized incubator has become a much-anticipated laboratory for collaboration and creation. This year, over 100 local and national artists representing 20 projects will unite at Berkeley Rep's West Berkeley campus from **June 15–July 12, 2026**, for an intensive four-week period to exchange ideas, incubate new theatrical work, receive bespoke developmental support, and build artistic community.

Since launching in 2012, The Ground Floor has become one of the country's leading new work development programs, supporting more than 1,000 artists and helping incubate over 200 projects. Works developed through the program have gone on to receive fully staged productions at Berkeley Rep, as well as on stages across the country and around the world.

"The Ground Floor's Summer Residency Lab continues to be one of the most vibrant expressions of Berkeley Rep's commitment to new work," said **Pfaelzer**. "Each year, artists from across the country gather in Berkeley to take creative risks and explore new possibilities for the theatre. The 2026 cohort represents an extraordinary range of voices, perspectives, and theatrical forms. We are honored to provide the time, space, and support these artists need to bring their boldest ideas to life."

"I am proud to welcome an electrifying cohort from a global application pool for this year's Summer Residency Lab," adds **victor cervantes jr.**, Berkeley Rep Associate Producer – New Work. "This summer's community of artists are generating a breadth of stories responsive to the current complexities in the world — from spotlighting women's experiences in solitary confinement within the American prison

system to examining American migrant pharmaceutical tourism into Mexico to exploring the Disability Rights Movement that emerged from the Bay Area to the intricacies of living as a magician. These artists are interrogating some of the most challenging realities we are faced with today, yet they are creating from a place of joy and optimism for the world — so we hope people take the time to read about these artists and their work.”

The Residency Lab brings artists to Berkeley to work on projects in one- to two-week residencies over the course of four weeks. Artists have been selected through an open application process and evaluated by a panel of internal and external readers (made up of arts leaders around the country). A record-breaking 1,300 projects applied to participate in the 2026 Residency Lab. Depending on the expressed wishes of the artists, a project may culminate in a public sharing, though there is no requirement that the work be presented. Sign-up for the Berkeley Rep newsletter [here](#) to be alerted about The Ground Floor..

The following artists and projects have been selected to participate in The Ground Floor’s 2026 Summer Residency Lab.

***** WEEK 1: JUNE 15 TO JUNE 21, 2026 *****

- ***Belly Dancing Lessons***
by **Borna Barzin**, directed by **Pirronne Yousefzadeh**
Belly Dancing Lessons follows a group of high school students who form an illicit belly dancing studio in the basement of a bakery in 1980s Iran.
- ***Dandelion***
by **Becca Blackwell**, in collaboration with **Madeleine George**
Blackwell’s comedy show *Dandelion* asks what we need to let get blown off in a world obsessed with freedom but terrified of how to get there.
- ***I Had a Brother Once***
by **Adam Mansbach**, directed by **Kevin Coval** and in collaboration with **Josh Begley, DJ Frane, Vivien Mansbach, Nino Moschella, and Martín Perna**
In the shadow of his brother’s suicide, Adam is forced to re-imagine the person he thought he knew — confronting his unsettled family history, his distant relationship with tradition and faith, and his desperate need to understand an event that always slides just out of his grasp. Adapted from Mansbach’s memoir-in-verse, *I Had a Brother Once*.
- ***It Comes with the Building***
book by **Harrison David Rivers**, music by **Jacob Yandura**, and lyrics by **Rebekah Greer Melocik** (a two week residency through June 28)
Theo and Henry move to New York City for a fresh start, only to find their dream home might just be a nightmare.
- ***Solitary* (working title)**
by **Cat Brooks**
Three Black women defy the violent constraints of concrete walls and metal bars by fostering sisterhood, humanity, and resilience despite the trappings of solitary confinement. As part of the docu-theatre process, Cat Brooks is collecting the lived experiences of incarcerated women through a partnership with award-winning incarcerated journalist Kwaneta Harris who is serving time in a Texas state prison and California-based Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition.

***** WEEK 2: JUNE 22 – JUNE 28, 2026 *****

- **Day Trippers**
book by **James Hindman**, music and lyrics by **Carmel Dean**, in collaboration with **Robbie Simpson**
When eight desperate Americans board a discount bus to Mexico for medications they can't afford at home, their simple pharmacy-run spirals into a chaotic, hilarious, and unexpectedly healing journey — discovering unexpected community, absurd adventure, and hard truths about survival in modern America.
- **MAMA**
by **Britton Smith**
MAMA is a theatrical concert ritual that follows a southern queer Black artist's spiritual awakening through water—transforming grief, memory, science, and music into a communal revival calling humanity back into the right relationship with the Earth and each other.
- **Six Nations: One Fire**
by **Vickie Ramirez, Ty Defoe, and Jeanette Harrison**
This new performance blends text, movement, and song to explore the timeless wisdom of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's Great Law of Peace, its relevance to modern democracy, and its historical impact both within the Confederacy and on the United States.
- **Star Mother**
by **Gabriel Holman**
Star Mother explores queer family through a lens of eldritch horror and multiverse theory. The production aims to eventually incorporate immersive stagecraft to thrill audiences.
- **The Story I Keep Telling**
by **Jonathan Moscone**, in collaboration with **Joy Meads**
A solo performance that uses one person's experience of devastating loss to examine how theatre can create space for grief and collective mourning.

***** WEEK 3: JUNE 29 – JULY 5, 2026 *****

- **Amo Juliano**
by **Fouad Dakwar**, in collaboration with **Sivan Battat**
Part standup comedy, part punk-rock, part family-history, part spectral-ritual, *Amo Juliano* is a musical account of the life & assassination of Jewish Palestinian activist theatre-maker, Juliano Mer-Khamis.
- **Crip Camp**
by **Ryan J. Haddad and Abigail and Shaun Bengson**, directed by **Sam Gold**, in collaboration with **Alison Kopit and Sarah Lunnie** (a two week residency through July 12)
Crip Camp is a wild, joyous, uninhibited live musical adaptation of the Academy Award-nominated documentary. With original music, text, jokes, robust interviews, and dirty stories, *Crip Camp* is the story of a group of young activists, many of whom met at Camp Jened and went on to fight for disability rights. Original seed commission and ongoing development by The Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director and Patrick Willingham, Executive Director)
- **Something in the Balete Tree**
by **Ren Dara Santiago**, directed by **Ludmila de Brito**
A young man travels from Harlem to Manila to find his roots, only to be drawn into a hidden rebellion led by his mother and his pen-pal, inciting a supernatural struggle where the line

between hero and monster — and the true cost of freedom — are tested. Dramaturgical revision workshop incorporating movement and the connection between folklore, systemic sexual exploitation, and colonization.

- ***The Bag***
by Felonious (**Carlos Aguirre, Keith Pinto, Tommy Soulati Shepherd, and Dan Wolf**), directed by **Elizabeth Carter**
Four estranged emcees reunite for a \$200,000 gig at a former fan's 40th birthday party. One part live hip-hop concert and one part love letter to their artform — the show weaves together the live spectacle of their music set with a deeper exploration of their personal histories, their brotherhood, and the sacrifices they've made for each other. It's not just about getting "The Bag" — it's about what you find when you reach for it. *The Bag's* 2026 Ground Floor Summer Lab residency is supported by Circuit Network with funding from the Gerbode Foundation and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation.
- ***Untitled Project***
by **Mathilde Dratwa**, directed by **Jeremy Cohen**
When a woman realizes she may no longer control the narrative of her own life, she begins searching for a way back to herself. A darkly funny play about identity, intimacy, performance, and the unstable line between private life and public narrative.
- ***What We Leave Behind***
by **Gloria Calderón Kellett**
Three estranged siblings reunite to keep vigil for their dying mother, confronting grief, buried resentments, and the enduring love that binds their family together.

***** WEEK 4: JULY 6 – JULY 12, 2026 ****

- ***Él y Ella: A New Musical***
music by **Jaime Lozano**, book and lyrics by **Jaime Lozano** and **Florencia Cuenca**, with additional book and lyrics by **Adrian Alexander Alea**; conceived by **Jaime Lozano** and **Florencia Cuenca**; developed and directed by **Adrian Alexander Alea**; in collaboration with **Yahir Montes, Hugo Moreno, George Sáenz**
A Spanglish new musical where multi-instrumentalists blend memory, Mexican musical traditions, and modern beats into a story of love, home, and ambition. Inspired by a true story, *Él y Ella* follows two Mexican artists who fall in love, move to New York on a whim, and discover the exhilaration and cost of building a home, a family, and a shared dream through art.
- ***Jewish American Magician***
by **Rachel Wax**, directed by **Anne Kauffman**, in collaboration with **Eli Bosnick** and **Eric Shethar**
Jewish American Magician is an original comedic-theatrical magic show that draws from illusion, variety shows, standup comedy, and solo performance to create a new experience for magic and theatre audiences alike.
- ***Kill Local: A New Musical***
with book by **Mat Smart**, music and lyrics by **Liza Anne**, directed by **Jaime Castañeda**, in collaboration with **Kyle Ryan**
A dark comedy with music about blood ties, revenge, and how hard it is to get unstuck — especially when your life is dedicated to ending others. Based on the play, *Kill Local* by Mat Smart.
- ***Saving Face: The Musical***
by **Alice Wu**, in collaboration with **Leigh Silverman**

A musical update of an old-fashioned romantic comedy featuring lesbian daughters, pregnant Chinese mothers, and a whole lot of dancing. Based on the 2005 film *Saving Face*, now in the Criterion Collection. As they say, "It's never too late to fall in love for the first time."

Numerous projects developed through Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor Summer Residency Lab have gone on to full productions at Berkeley Rep and on stages nationwide and internationally. Among them are the following projects (listed alphabetically):

- ***Aubergine* by Julia Cho** (Berkeley Rep's 2015/16 season)
- ***Becky Nurse of Salem* by Sarah Ruhl** (Berkeley Rep's 2019/20 season)
- ***Blue Cowboy* David Cale**
- ***Cambodian Rock Band* by Lauren Yee** (Berkeley Rep's 2022/23 season)
- ***Colonialism is Terrible, But Pho is Delicious* by Dustin Chinn**
- ***The (curious case of the) Watson Intelligence* by Madeleine George**
- ***Fairview* by Jackie Sibblies Drury** (Berkeley Rep's 2018/19 season)
- ***Flex* by Candrice Jones**
- ***Ghost Quartet* by Dave Malloy**
- ***Hadestown* by Anaïs Mitchell**
- ***Hold Me in the Water* by Ryan Haddad** (Berkeley Rep's 2026/27 season)
- ***The House that will not Stand* by Marcus Gardley** (Berkeley Rep's 2013/14 season)
- ***Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit* by Daniel Handler** (Berkeley Rep's 2017/18 season)
- ***Is This a Room* by Tina Satter**
- ***It Can't Happen Here* by Tony Taccone and Bennett Cohen** (Berkeley Rep's 2016/17 season)
- ***John Leguizamo: Latin History for Morons* by John Leguizamo** (Berkeley Rep's 2015/16 season)
- ***The Last Tiger in Haiti* by Jeff Augustin** (Berkeley Rep's 2016/17 season)
- ***Moby Dick* by Dave Malloy**
- ***The Monsters* by Ngoi Anyanwu** (Berkeley Rep's 2025/26 season)
- ***Mother of Exiles* by Jessica Huang** (Berkeley Rep's 2025/26 season)
- ***Notes From the Field: Doing Time In Education, The California Chapter* by Anna Deavere Smith** (Berkeley Rep's 2014/15 season)
- ***Out of Character* (now titled *Other*) by Ari'el Stachel** (Berkeley Rep's 2022/23 season)
- ***Party People* by Universes** (Berkeley Rep's 2014/15 season)
- ***Passage* by Christopher Chen**
- ***the ripple, the wave that carried me home* by Christina Anderson** (Berkeley Rep's 2021/22 season)
- ***She Rode Horses Like The Stock Exchange* by Amelia Roper**
- ***Teslas Make Me Sad* by Ashley Smiley**
- ***This Much I Know* by Jonathan Spector**
- ***Troublemaker, or The Freakin Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatright* by Dan LeFranc** (Berkeley Rep's 2012/13 season)
- ***Untitled F**k M**ss S**gon Play* by Kimber Lee**
- ***Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung**

- ***X'S and O'S (A Football Love Story)* by KJ Sanchez with Jenny Mercein** (Berkeley Rep's 2014/15 season)

Upcoming Ground Floor-developed projects include ***The Making of a Saint* by KJ Sanchez**, slated for the 2027/28 season at Dallas Theater Center, and ***The Carlisle Project* by Annalisa Dias, Ronee Penoi, and Danielle Jagelski**, which will be produced by ArtsEmerson during its 2027/28 season.

The Ground Floor is supported by **Louise Gund, Frances Hellman & Warren Breslau, Michael & Sue Steinberg**, and other individual supporters. Additional funding is provided by **The John Logan Foundation, The Maurer Family Foundation, and The Harold & Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust**. Some projects are supported by Berkeley Rep's Musical Theatre Development Fund with leadership support from **Yogen and Peggy Dalal**.

Berkeley Rep recognizes the generous support of its Season Presenting Sponsors, including **Peet's Coffee and The Shubert Foundation** as well as **Stephen & Susan Chamberlin, Yogen & Peggy Dalal, Bruce Golden & Michelle Mercer, Marcia Grand, Frances Hellman & Warren Breslau, Jonathan Logan & John Piane, Arjay R. and Frances F. Miller Foundation, the Strauch Kulhanjian Family, and Gail & Arne Wagner**. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to acknowledge support at our season sponsor level from **The Hearst Foundations and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**, as well as **Wayne Jordan & Quinn Delaney, Sudha Pennathur & Edward Messerly, and Jack & Betty Schafer**.

For more information on artists and projects, visit: berkeleyrep.org/the-ground-floor/summer-residency-lab/artists/.

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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 6 million people have enjoyed more than 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 91 world premieres. Berkeley Rep shows have gone on to win eight Tony Awards, nine Obie Awards, 14 Drama Desk Awards, nine Outer Critics Circle Awards, seven Lucille Lortel Awards, a Grammy Award, a Pulitzer Prize, 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. Through its annual seven-play season, together with up to four special event presentations, Berkeley Rep invites audiences to enjoy an eclectic range of theatrical experiences featuring diverse artistic voices, themes, and perspectives. To formalize, enhance, and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre, The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work was launched in 2012. Serving some 20,000 people a year, Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre ensures broad access to dynamic arts educational activities, especially for Bay Area youth, and provides immersive training for current and future theatre makers. In 2021, Berkeley Rep launched In Dialogue, a program that places its theatre-making skills and resources in service of the community. Using storytelling as an anchor, In Dialogue 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. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities — which include the 600-seat Roda Theatre, 400-seat Peet's Theatre, Medak Center, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley — are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org.