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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**BERKELEY REP LAUNCHES 10-EPIISODE AUDIO SERIES TITLED
*PLACE/SETTINGS: BERKELEY***

Ten Esteemed Writers Take Listeners on an Aural Adventure to Meaningful Places Around Berkeley

Eisa Davis, Philip Kan Gotanda, Daniel Handler, Aya de León, Adam Mansbach, Richard Montoya, Itamar Moses, Kamala Parks, Sarah Ruhl, Sean San José, and Cartoonist Tom Toro All Bring Their Exceptional Talents to the Project

January 5, 2021 - Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced a new 10-episode series titled ***Place/Settings: Berkeley*** as part of their **Rep On- Air** season. Ten revered writers, each with deep ties to Berkeley, have all crafted a story around a place or a setting within the City of Berkeley that is significant to them. ***Place/Settings: Berkeley*** will debut one story per week starting Tuesday, January 12, 2021 with each episode running approximately 10-15 minutes. Celebrated *New Yorker* illustrator Tom Toro has created a fold out (physical) map that will be mailed to each ticket buyer. ***Place/Settings: Berkeley*** is free to 2021 Berkeley Rep 7- Play subscribers and \$10 for others.

Listeners are encouraged to write their own stories of no more than 100 words about a special place in or a meaningful memory about Berkeley that is important to them. These stories will be shared as part of Berkeley Rep's Small Plates series, and hosted on the [BerkeleySide](http://BerkeleySide.com) website, a sponsor of the project.

"In this pandemic moment, longing for our theatres and all the stories, memories, and history they contain, but knowing that it's going to be a little while before we can return to those spaces, we started to think about how the City of Berkeley could essentially function as our stage," said Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer. "We know that each street we walk down, each building we pass, places we take for granted in our everyday lives, are of great significance to someone. Can we think about the surroundings in which we find ourselves in the same way we think about our theatre space? What has a particular place witnessed? Can its stories be shared? With these questions in mind, we approached 10 extraordinary writers, and are now so excited to get to share their stories with our community."

A virtual opening night is planned for Tuesday, January 12 at 5:30pm and will include a conversation with **Itamar Moses, Eisa Davis, and Sean San José**. Artistic Director **Johanna Pfaelzer** and Berkeley Rep's Resident Dramaturg **Madeleine Oldham** will facilitate live from the Peet's Theatre.

***Place/Settings: Berkeley*
Descriptions**

***The Fundamental Kiss, With Overtones* by Eisa Davis:** corner of Oxford and Center
A young oboist kisses a pianist on a street corner. At long last! But the kiss unlocks pressures, expectations, dreams, and fears. Can we learn to live with uncertainty? To ask for what we need?

***night fishing* by Philip Kan Gotanda:** an imaginary dried-up lake in Tilden Park

On a chilly autumn night, an old fisherman makes his way to the lake in the dark. He casts a line...and reels in the ghost he's been seeking.

***The Black Mass Sonata* by Daniel Handler:** The Musical Offering Café

Bored, lost, and lonely, a teenager stumbles into a café. While eating a cup of soup, he hears a wondrously inscrutable sonata, and begins to sense that being lost might not be such a lonesome condition after all.

***West Berkeley West Indian* by Aya de León:** Franklin School

How do you find your people in middle school – especially when you don't quite fit the mold? A girl experiments, assimilates, adapts, and journeys towards genuine self-love and community.

***20 Weeks* by Adam Mansbach:** Alta Bates

Hope, fear, excitement, and a dizzying array of possibilities unspool across an expectant dad's imagination, as he and his partner navigate medical uncertainties and rediscover each other as almost-parents.

***Suicide on Telegraph* by Richard Montoya:** Robbie's Coffee House and Diner on Telegraph Ave.

It's 1959, and tobacco smoke snakes across the bustling café from its prized corner table, where artists and students debate political treatises, muse on philosophy, and share thrilling new poetry.

***The Slide* by Itamar Moses:** the slide in Codornices Park

A neighborhood park – its playground, sloping hillside, and basketball court; its tunnel to a rose garden and many paths – bears witness to a boy, growing up and growing old.

***The Third Sphere* by Kamala Parks:** North Berkeley BART

Straddling the worlds of her divorced parents, Yasmine doesn't feel fully at home in either. Desperate to see her best friend in San Francisco, she embarks on the voyage across the Bay alone, exhilarated at her newfound independence.

***The Character Actor* by Sarah Ruhl:** Berkeley Repertory Theatre

From a perch beyond this life, an actor observes as a group of masked people finally return to the courtyard of Berkeley Rep – to the theatre, the place we made to gather, breathe together, and share the stories that remind us of our humanity.

***For the Record* by Sean San José:** Leopold's Records on Durant Ave.

Sometimes music becomes indelibly linked to specific memories, invoking the people with whom we shared them. Songs by Isaac Hayes, Peter Tosh, Stevie Wonder, the Doors, the Knight Brothers, and Patti LaBelle conjure a deep friendship, one that began on a hot night in 1986 outside Leopold's Records.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Eisa Davis

Eisa Davis is a performer, composer, and writer working on stage and screen. A recipient of the 2020 Creative Capital Award, the Herb Alpert Award in Theater, and an Obie winner for Sustained Excellence in Performance, Eisa was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for her play *Bulrushes*, and wrote and starred in the stage memoir *Angela's Mixtape*. She has recorded two albums of her original music, *Something Else* and *Tinctures*, and performed her songs at numerous venues in New York and across the country. Current projects include her music theatre piece *The Essentialist* (Ground Floor 2017), the libretto for an opera adaptation of *Bulrushes*, and the songs for a musical version of *Devil in a Blue Dress*. Eisa has appeared in Theatre For One's virtual platform performances, *The Secret Life of Bees* (AUDELCO Award), *Kings* (Drama League nomination), *Julius Caesar* (Shakespeare in the Park 2017), Carrie Mae Weems' *Grace Notes*, Dave Malloy and Rachel Chavkin's *Preludes*, *The Cradle Will Rock*,

The Piano Lesson (Berniece, music director and composer), *This*, and *Passing Strange*. Television work includes *Pose* (upcoming), *Betty*, *Succession*, *Bluff City Law*, *Rise*, *Mare of Easttown* (upcoming), *God Friended Me*, *The Looming Tower*, *House of Cards*, *Hart of Dixie*, and *The Wire*. Eisa wrote the narration for Cirque du Soleil's *Crystal* and episodes for both seasons of Spike Lee's Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It*, and is presently writing and executive producing a Little Rock Nine limited series for UCP. Eisa was born in Berkeley and lives in Brooklyn.

Philip Kan Gotanda

Over the last four decades, playwright Philip Kan Gotanda has been a major influence in the broadening of our definition of theatre in America. The creator of one of the largest canon of Asian American-themed works, he has been instrumental in bringing stories of Asians in the United States to mainstream American theatre as well as to Europe and Asia. Mr. Gotanda has specialized in investigating the Japanese American family writing a cycle of works in theatre, film, song, and opera that chronicle Japanese America from the early 1900s to the present. Mr. Gotanda holds a law degree from Hastings College of Law and studied pottery in Japan with the late Hiroshi Seto. Mr. Gotanda is a respected independent filmmaker. His three films: *Life Tastes Good*, *Drinking Tea*, and *The Kiss*, all have been official entries at the Sundance Film Festival. A CD of Mr. Gotanda performing his original songs in a 1980 concert with violinist DH Hwang is now available for purchase. Mr. Gotanda's libretto for the opera, *Both Eyes Open*, with composer Max Duykers is scheduled to premiere later next year at the Presidio Theater in San Francisco. Mr. Gotanda is presently working on music projects with composer Shinji Eshima, and multi-instrumentalist David Coulter. Mr. Gotanda is the recipient of a Guggenheim as well as other honors and awards. Mr. Gotanda is a Professor with the Department of Theater Dance and Performance Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. He resides in the Berkeley Hills with his novelist wife, Alameda Arts Commissioner, Diane Emiko Takei, and their new dog, Cosmo Finn McCool. Website: philipkangotanda.com

Link to Phil & Dave Show: <https://bit.ly/3mhd9mr>

Daniel Handler

Daniel Handler is the author of seven novels, including *Why We Broke Up*, *We Are Pirates*, *All the Dirty Parts* and, most recently, *Bottle Grove*. As Lemony Snicket, he is responsible for numerous books for children, including the 13-volume *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, the four-volume *All The Wrong Questions*, and *The Dark*, which won the Charlotte Zolotow Award. He has received commissions from the San Francisco Symphony, Berkeley Rep, and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and has collaborated with artist Maira Kalman on a series of books for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, including *Girls Standing on Lawns*, *Hurry Up and Wait*, and *Weather, Weather*. His books have sold more than 70 million copies and have been translated into 40 languages, and have been adapted for film, stage, and television, including the recent adaptation of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* for which he was awarded both the Peabody and the Writers Guild of America awards. He lives in San Francisco with the illustrator Lisa Brown, to whom he is married and with whom he has collaborated on several books and one son.

Aya de León

Aya de León directs the Poetry for the People program in the African American Studies Department at UC Berkeley, teaching poetry and spoken word. Kensington Books publishes her award-winning feminist heist series, which includes [Side Chick Nation](#), the first novel published about Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. In May 2020, Aya published her first children's chapter book, [Equality Girls and the Purple Reflecto-Ray](#), about an Afro-Latina girl who uses her superpowers to confront the president's sexism. In December 2020 Kensington will publish her first standalone novel, *A Spy in the Struggle*, about FBI infiltration of an African American eco-racial justice organization. Aya is a founding blogger with [The Daily Dose: Feminist Voices for the Green New Deal](#), and she organizes with the climate movement and the Movement for Black Lives. Her work has also appeared in *Ebony*, *Guernica*, *Writers Digest*, *Bitch Magazine*, *Mutha Magazine*, *VICE*, *The Root*, *Ploughshares*, and on Def Poetry. In 2004, she was named Best Discovery in Theater by the *SF Chronicle* for her solo show, *Thieves in the Temple: The Reclaiming of Hip Hop*. Aya is at work on a YA black/Latina spy girl series for teens called *Going Dark*. She is an alumna of Cave Canem and VONA. Visit her online at ayadeleon.com, on Twitter at [@ayadeleon](#), and on Facebook or

Instagram at [@ayadeleonwrites](https://www.instagram.com/ayadeleonwrites), where she writes about race, class, gender, sexuality, culture, and climate.

Adam Mansbach

Adam Mansbach is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Go the Fuck to Sleep*, the novels *Rage is Back*, *Angry Black White Boy*, and *The End of the Jews* (winner of the California Book Award), and a dozen other books, most recently the bestselling *A Field Guide to the Jewish People*, co-written with Dave Barry and Alan Zweibel. Mansbach wrote the award-winning screenplay for the Netflix Original *Barry*, adapted his middle grades series *Jake the Fake Keeps it Real* series for Disney+ and DL Hughley's *How Not to Get Shot (and Other Advice From White People)* for Comedy Central, and for the last six months has served as the artistic director of Colehouse Walker Political Outcomes, where he has written, produced, and directed videos starring Samuel L. Jackson ("Stay the Fuck at Home"; "Same Old Dirty Tricks"), Daveed Diggs ("What to My People is the 4th of July?"), Sarah Cooper, Sarah Silverman, Craig Robinson, Lewis Black, and W. Kamau Bell ("912, What's Your White Emergency?"). His memoir in verse, *I Had A Brother Once*, is forthcoming from One World/Random House in January, and his next feature film, *Super High*, starring Andy Samberg, Craig Robinson, and Common, is forthcoming from New Line. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *New York Times Book Review*, *Esquire*, *The Believer*, *The Guardian*, and on National Public Radio's *This American Life*, *The Moth*, and *All Things Considered*.

Richard Montoya

Richard Montoya is a co-founder and principal writer for Culture Clash, the nation's leading Chicano/LatinX Performance Trio established in 1984. Culture Clash began their performance history in the Bay Area at the height of many political movements and a performance art stand-up comedy boom, born in an art gallery in San Francisco's Mission District under the direction of curator and social justice warrior Rene Yanez. With Culture Clash, Montoya has appeared on the Berkeley Rep stage with *Culture Clash in America* and *Zorro in Hell*, both directed by Tony Taccone, and more recently *Culture Clash (Still) in America*, directed by Lisa Peterson. As a solo playwright he wrote *Anthem*, *Water & Power* ('07 LA Drama Critics Circle Award), *Palestine*, *New Mexico*, and *American Night* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. His potent collaboration with Campo Santo Family and comrade Sean San José has led to a trilogy of plays: *The River*, *Nogales*, and *Translating Selena*, all produced by the amazing Joan Osato. A filmmaker and screenwriter of several films, including *Almaraz: Playing with Fire* currently on Netflix, Montoya is an alumnus of the Sundance Institute Director & Writers Labs and is an Annenberg Film Fellow. He studied at American Conservatory Theater an entire summer. The son of a Poet and School Teacher, he lived the first years of life at the Lockwood Housing Projects in Oakland's Fruitvale Section at East 14th Street while his father Jose and uncle Malaquias Montoya attended the California College of Arts & Crafts in the early '60s. Montoya comes from a long line and family tradition of art and social justice. He is thrilled to be a part of *Place/Settings: Berkeley* – it brings great comfort to be working with Comrade Johanna Pfaelzer and the BRT Reptiles in these uncertain and critical times. Viva Berkeley Storytelling!

Itamar Moses

Itamar Moses is the Tony Award-winning author of the full-length plays *Outrage*, *Bach at Leipzig*, *Celebrity Row*, *The Four of Us*, *Yellowjackets*, *Back Back Back*, *Completeness*, *The Whistleblower*, and *The Ally*, the musicals *Nobody Loves You* (with Gaby Alter), *Fortress of Solitude* (with Michael Friedman), and *The Band's Visit* (with David Yazbek), and the evening of short plays *Love/Stories (Or But You Will Get Used To It)*. His work has appeared off Broadway and elsewhere in New York, at regional theatres across the country, and in Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, Venezuela, Turkey, and Chile, and is published by Faber & Faber and Samuel French. Other awards for his work include Lucille Lortel, New York Drama Critics Circle, Outer Critics Circle, and Obie awards in New York, as well as awards from the Portland, San Diego, Dallas, and Bay Area Theatre Critics Circles. He has received new play commissions from The McCarter, Playwrights Horizons, Berkeley Rep, The Wilma Theater, South Coast Rep, Manhattan Theatre Club, Lincoln Center, and The Goodman. Television work includes *Men of a Certain Age*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *Outsiders*, *The Affair*, and *Brave New World*. He holds an MFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU and has taught playwriting at Yale and NYU. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild and a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect. Born in Berkeley, CA, he now lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Kamala Parks

Kamala Parks lived in many San Francisco Bay Area cities growing up, but she always considers Berkeley to be her childhood home. She was raised by music lovers, resulting in equal passion for a diverse range of genres such as Stravinsky, the Beatles, and the Ohio Players. When Kamala was 15 years old, however, the punk scene of the 1980s was where she found the perfect combination of cathartic music, political activism, and strong community spirit. She became an eager scene participant, playing drums in bands, volunteering at and writing for *MaximumRockNRoll* zine and radio show, organizing gigs for local and touring bands, and booking international tours for acts as diverse as Operation Ivy, Citizen Fish, Neurosis, Dead and Gone, and the Offspring. She co-founded 924 Gilman in 1986, an all-ages, nonprofit, volunteer-run community space for music, art, and activism in Berkeley. Kamala served on the 924 Gilman fundraising board from 2014 to 2017 where she was instrumental in raising over \$150,000 for the community space's operation costs. She was featured in the 2017 documentary, *Turn It Around: The Story of East Bay Punk*. She currently plays drums in [Plot 66](#), a noir wave punk band that released its first record in November of 2020. She still "manages" bands she adores, like one of the most dynamic and under-appreciated Bay Area bands, [The Love Songs](#). Kamala works as a senior station planner for the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) District and has been in the transportation profession since 2002. Previously, she was a Math and French teacher at Berkeley High School and an employee at Peet's Coffee and Tea, among other money-earning jobs.

[LinkedIn](#) for Kamala Parks

[Facebook](#) for Plot 66

[Instagram](#) for Plot 66

Sarah Ruhl

Sarah Ruhl's plays include *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play*, *The Clean House*, *Passion Play*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Melancholy Play*, *For Peter Pan on her 70th Birthday*, *The Oldest Boy*, *Stage Kiss*, *Dear Elizabeth*, *Eurydice*, *Orlando*, *Late: a cowboy song*, and a translation of *Three Sisters*. She has been a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and a Tony Award nominee. Her plays have been produced on and off Broadway, around the country, and internationally where they have been translated into over 15 languages. Originally from Chicago, Ms. Ruhl received her MFA from Brown University where she studied with Paula Vogel. She has received the Steinberg Award, the Sam French Award, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Whiting Award, the Lily Award, a PEN Award for mid-career playwrights, and the MacArthur award. You can read more about her work on www.SarahRuhlplaywright.com. Her new book *100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write* was a *New York Times* notable book of the year, and she most recently published *Letters from Max* with Max Ritvo. She teaches at the Yale School of Drama, and she lives in Brooklyn with her family.

Sean San José

Sean San José is a Writer, Director, Performer, and Co-Founder of Campo Santo, a new performances company for People of Color in San Francisco. Founded in 1996, Campo Santo is an award-winning group committed to developing new Performance and to nurturing people of color centered new audiences and has premiered nearly 100 new pieces. For 15 years he was the Program Director of Performance for Intersection for the Arts, San Francisco's oldest alternative arts space. He co-created Alma Delfina Group-Teatro Contra el SIDA and "Pieces of the Quilt," a collection of 50+ short plays on AIDS. His writing commissions and productions include Play On! for Oregon Shakespeare Festival, American Conservatory Theater, Ictus Productions, Kronos Quartet, Kularts, and others. In his multi-genre work, San José has developed and directed the first performance pieces and plays with Jimmy Baca, Junot Diaz, Star Finch, Chinaka Hodge, Denis Johnson, Luís Saguar, Vendela Vida, and more and has enjoyed ongoing collaborations with creators Luis Alfaro, Jessica Hagedorn, Richard Montoya, and others. San José is a proud part of Colman Domingo's new production company Edith Productions. He frequently teaches in the Theater, Dance and Performance Studies Department at University of California at Berkeley.

Socials: @camposantof [facebook](#), [twitter](#), [instagram](#)

Tom Toro (mapmaker)

Tom Toro is a cartoonist and author. He has published over 200 cartoons in *The New Yorker* since 2010. He wrote and illustrated the children's picture book *How To Potty Train Your Porcupine* (Little, Brown

2020) and he illustrated the civics book *A User's Guide To Democracy* (Celadon Books, 2020). Tom is currently illustrating Simon Rich's debut picture book *I'm Terrified Of Bath Time* (Little, Brown 2022). His cartoons appear in *Playboy*, *The Paris Review*, the *New York Times*, *American Bystander*, and elsewhere. In 2020, Tom was a finalist for the National Cartoonist Society Reuben Award for gag cartoonist of the year. Tom's published writing includes short stories for the *New Haven Review*, *Slush Pile*, and *Litro* (UK), as well as a dozen essays for the *New Yorker Cartoon Encyclopedia*. His fiction has been shortlisted for the Disquiet International Literary Prize. Tom was an inaugural fellow at the Orchard Project Episodic Lab in screenwriting, where he developed a mixed animated TV series *The Strip*. He was also awarded a playwriting residency at Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Ground Floor. Tom is a lecturer on cartoon art, represented by the Cassidy & Fishman speakers' bureau, and he has given presentations at Columbia University, the Kansas City Art Institute, Litquake San Francisco, and Day of Knowledge in Mexico City. Tom attended NYU graduate film school, where he co-created films that played at Sundance, Tribeca, and Cannes. Tom graduated cum laude from Yale, receiving the Betts Prize for his literary work while also serving as captain of the national-champion lightweight rowing team and cartoon editor for the *Yale Herald*. He grew up in El Cerrito, California, where he was valedictorian of the local public high school. Tom currently lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife, kid, and cat.

For the 2021 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes the generous support of **BART** and **Peet's Coffee**, Berkeley Rep's official season sponsors. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to have **Bruce Golden** and **Michelle Mercer**, **Jack and Betty Schafer**, and **The Strauch Kulhanjian Family**, **Frances Hellman** and **Warren Breslau**, and **Michael and Sue Steinberg** on board as season sponsors. **Rep On-Air** is supported by a generous gift from **The Bernard Osher Foundation**.

Sound design by **Madeleine Oldham** and **Lane Elms**.

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 six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, one Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. 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. The Berkeley Rep 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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