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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**BERKELEY REP'S OVATION GALA: *IMAGINE* CELEBRATES THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS SCHOOL OF THEATRE**

Event hosted by School of Theatre alum and current *Saturday Night Live* cast member
Chloe Fineman

Grammy Award nominees The Avett Brothers and Oscar winner and Bay Area native Tom Hanks
scheduled to appear

April 30, 2021 – On **Saturday, June 5** Berkeley Repertory Theatre invites guests to **OVATION: *Imagine***, an evening to honor the 20th anniversary of its School of Theatre and to celebrate the anticipated reopening of its doors this fall. The event will be hosted by **Chloe Fineman**, a School of Theatre alum and a current cast member of *Saturday Night Live*. **OVATION** will feature an evening of exclusive performances from Grammy Award nominees **The Avett Brothers**, whose music is featured in Berkeley Rep's upcoming production of ***Swept Away***. This world premiere musical stars Tony Award winner **John Gallagher, Jr.**, who will also perform at the June 5 Gala. Tony Award nominee **Raúl Esparza**, who is currently starring in the Theatre's first musical film venture, ***The Waves in Quarantine***, is also scheduled to perform. Attendees will experience a few other sneak peeks of the upcoming season, including the world premiere production of ***Goddess*** with an appearance by **Amber Iman**, and a performance by **Kuhoo Verma** who will be seen next season in ***Octet***. Bay Area native **Tom Hanks** will round out the star-studded evening.

The livestream of **OVATION** is free to all who RSVP at berkeleyrep.org/ovation. The event is the Theatre's only fundraiser of the year and all gifts of support are welcome. Sponsorship tickets start at \$750; sponsors enjoy a host of benefits, such as home-delivered ***Imagine*** party kits and dinner with wine (Bay Area homes only). At present, there are no live performances in the Peet's or Roda Theatres, so **OVATION** guests are invited to gather virtually to support Berkeley Rep. The event will start at **6PM** with a virtual cocktail reception. Tributes, performances, and the online auction will begin at **6:30PM**. Guests can bid on dinner for two in the kitchen of the Restaurant at Chez Panisse, domestic getaways to Napa and Maui, special Berkeley Rep experiences such as dinner at the home of the Theatre's Managing Director Susie Medak, and many other items. All auction items will be available for viewing beginning Monday, May 24.

"We're excited to celebrate our 20th season of offering engaging, fun, and often life-changing training at Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre," says Managing Director **Susie Medak**. "This past year has cemented what a vital part the School plays in Berkeley Rep's success. This event is both a spectacular party and an opportunity to applaud and support the School of Theatre's innovative work on and off stage, from its Teen Council, Teen One Act Plays, in-person and online classes and its efforts to nurture the next generation of theatre makers and theatre lovers."

OVATION is made possible by the generosity of visionary sponsors **Jill & Steve Fugaro, Bruce Golden & Michelle Mercer, Marcia Grand, The Strauch Kulhanjian Family, and Gail & Arne Wagner**. The

planning committee for the event includes co-chairs **Sandra Eggers, Jill Fugaro, and Laura Severino**. Additional members include **Deborah Barrera, Ronnie Caplane, Narsai M. David, Rich Edwards, Robin Edwards, Scott Haber, Sandra McCandless, Sudha Pennathur, Margaret Rothschild, Audrey Rose Sockolov, Jean Strunsky, Gail Wagner, and Susan Wolin**.

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**.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF THEATRE

Berkeley Rep creates ambitious theatre that entertains and challenges its audiences, provokes civic engagement, and inspires people to experience the world in new and surprising ways. The School of Theatre supports this mission through meaningful connections between audiences and our mainstage work, creative entry points for new audiences, tools for artists and students to harness their imaginative power, and immersive training for future theatre makers.

Having first opened its doors in 2001, the School of Theatre offers programming as eclectic as the productions onstage at Berkeley Rep, reaching some 20,000 people in the Bay Area each year. Driven by an expanding community of inspired, curious, and creative theatre lovers, the School's programming provides opportunities for engagement on a variety of levels.

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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