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**BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES FULL CAST FOR THE OFF BROADWAY HIT, *OCTET*
Critics Have Hailed the Musical Set to Make its West Coast Premiere**

March 16, 2022- Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced today the full cast for the upcoming west coast premiere chamber choir musical, ***Octet*** written by three- time Tony Award nominee **Dave Malloy** (*Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*) and directed by **Annie Tippe**, produced by special arrangement with **Diana DiMenna** and **Plate Spinner Productions**.

“***Octet*** feels so relevant in this particular moment. We have had two years during which technology has been our lifeline, as we have navigated the physical isolation imposed by Covid. ,” says Artistic Director **Johanna Pfaelzer**. “***Octet*** helps us figure out a way to lean into the very human need to come together in shared spaces once again as the world reopens, at the same time recognizing the complicated and necessary role that technology plays in our lives. Dave Malloy and Annie Tippe have reassembled an extraordinarily talented cast and Berkeley Rep is honored that so many of the original company members are able to join us for this west coast premiere.”

In its off-Broadway premiere, *The New York Times* called ***Octet*** “ravishing, beautiful, and absorbing” and *The New Yorker* said it was “Revelatory. Exactly what theatre is for.”

Eight internet-obsessed people meet in real life to share their stories and wrestle their demons, using nothing but a pitch pipe and the transcendent quality of their voices. With witty lyrics, shimmering harmonies, and virtuosic solos, ***Octet*** sings of connection, redemption, hope—and how we can be truly present with each other.

Octet cast members include **Adam Bashian** (*In Transit*), **Kim Blanck** (*Alice By Heart*), **Alex Gibson** (*Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*), **Justin Gregory Lopez** (*Jesus Christ Superstar Live*), **J.D. Mollison** (*Moby Dick*), **Isabel Santiago** (*Leonard Bernstein’s MASS* on PBS’ Great Performances), **Margo Seibert** (*Unknown Soldier*), and **Kuhoo Verma** (*Plan B* on Hulu and *Monsoon Wedding*). The cast is completed by understudies **Dean Linnard**, **Roee Nooran**, **Lili Thomas** and **Nicole Weiss**.

The creative team includes **Or Matias** (music direction), **Amy Rubin** (co-scenic design), **Brittany Vasta** (co-scenic design), **Brenda Abbandolo** (costume design), **Christopher Bowser** (lighting design) **Hidenori Nakajo** (sound design), and **Sam Schloegel** (associate sound design).

Octet begins previews on **Wednesday, April 20** and runs through **Sunday, May 29**. Tickets can be purchased at berkeleyrep.org or by phone 510 647-2949. Press night will be on **Wednesday, April 27**.

Octet was commissioned and received its world premiere at Signature Theatre Company, where Dave Malloy is resident playwright.

BIOS

Dave Malloy (book, music and lyrics)

Dave Malloy is a composer/writer/performer/orchestrator. He has written music for 15 musicals, including *Moby-Dick*, a four-part musical reckoning with Melville's classic novel; *Octet*, a chamber choir musical about internet addiction; *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*, an electropop opera based on a slice of Tolstoy's *War & Peace* (12 Tony nominations, including Best Musical, Score, Book, and Orchestrations); *Ghost Quartet*, a song cycle about love, death, and whiskey; *Preludes*, a musical fantasia set in the hypnotized mind of Sergei Rachmaninoff; *Little Bunny Foo Foo*, a forest entertainment for small people; *Three Pianos*, a drunken romp through Schubert's "Winterreise"; and several shows written in the Bay Area, including *Beowulf—A Thousand Years of Baggage*, an anti-academia rock opera (which was commissioned by the Shotgun Players and did a one-night-only performance on Berkeley Rep's Roda stage in 2009); *Beardo*, a reinterpretation of the Rasputin myth (Shotgun Players); *Sandwich*, a musical about killing animals (EXIT Theatre); and *Clown Bible*, Genesis to Revelation told through clowns (Willard Metalshop Theater/Ten Red Hen). Other notable shows include *All Hands*, *The Sewers*, and *(The 99-cent) Miss Saigon*. He has won three Obie Awards, a Smithsonian Ingenuity Award, a Drama Desk Award, a Lortel Award, a Theater World Award, the Richard Rodgers Award, an ASCAP New Horizons Award, and a Jonathan Larson Grant; has been a MacDowell fellow and Composer-in-Residence at Ars Nova; and is a Residency 5 Writer at the Signature Theatre. He lives in New York. davemalloy.com

Annie Tippe (director)

Annie Tippe is a director and creator of new work, music theater and film. Recent theater credits include the premiere of Dave Malloy's *Octet* at Signature Theatre Company, for which she won the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Direction and was named an SDC Callaway Award Finalist. She also directed the premiere and subsequent tours of Dave Malloy's award-winning *Ghost Quartet*. Other credits include the premiere of Leslye Headland's *Cult of Love* (IAMA Theatre Company), Bess Wohl's *Continuity* (Goodman Theatre), *The Hombres* (Two River), *Cowboy Bob* (Village Theatre; New York Stage + Film), and James + Jerome's *Ink* (co-directed with Rachel Chavkin, Under the Radar/Met Museum) as well as *The Conversationalists* (Bushwick Starr). She is a former Ars Nova Director-in-Residence, Drama League Directing Fellow, and alumni of the Williamstown Directing Corps. Upcoming shows include *Life After* (Goodman Theatre '22) and *Cowboy Bob* (Alley Theatre '23). www.annietippe.com (she/her)

Adam Bashian (Ed)

Adam is elated to be returning to this transcendent piece after originating the role of Ed in 2019 at the Signature Theatre. Broadway/national tour: *In Transit* (OCR), *The Phantom of the Opera*. Select NYC/regional: *Love Life*, *On Your Toes* (City Center Encores), 2 seasons with NYGASP, *Octet* (OCR), *Edwin*, *Tamar of the River* (OCR), *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity*. TV: *House of Cards*, *Oddities*. Bass voice in numerous cast recordings and musical theatre demos. Parallel to performing, Adam is a New Jersey-based antiques and artifacts dealer: @Dark.Interiors. Love to my family, Dave, Annie, DSM, Laura, and Victor. AdamBashian.com @AdamBashian

Kim Blanck (Karly)

A Bay Area native, Kim is over the moon to make her Berkeley Rep debut with *Octet!* She originated the role of Karly in the world premiere production at New York City's Signature Theatre. Other New York credits include Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater's *Alice by Heart* (MCC Theater), Shaina Taub's musical adaptation of *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare in the Park), *Folk Wandering* (Pipeline Theatre Company), as well as numerous developmental workshops with The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, Ars Nova, and Atlantic Theater Company, among others. Regional credits include the world premiere of Dave Malloy's *Moby-Dick* (American Repertory Theater), *Twelfth Night* (Alley Theatre), *Chasing the Song* (La Jolla Playhouse), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Tantrum Theater), and the Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival. Kim can be seen onscreen in *Call Jane*, which premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival, the independent feature *Friday Afternoon*, *WeCrashed*, and *Dr. Death*. As a vocalist, she can be heard on

the original cast albums of *Octet* and *Alice by Heart*, Shaina Taub's newly released *Songs of the Great Hill*, and in Liann Kaye's award-winning miniseries, *The Blessing*. She earned her BFA in Drama from NYU Tisch and her MFA in Acting from UC San Diego. (she/her/hers) @kblanck

Alex Gibson (Henry)

Alex is making his Berkeley debut! His Broadway credits include *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*. New York/regional theatre credits include the off-Broadway premiere of *Octet* at Signature Theatre (for which he was nominated for a Lucille Lortel Award), *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* at Transport Group, *Goodnight, Tyler* at the Alliance Theatre, *The Pirates of Penzance* at Barrington Stage, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Guthrie Theater. Other credits include touring Japan with the Tokyo Philharmonic as Scar in *Disney On Classic* and *Adele: Live in New York City* at Radio City Music Hall for NBC. (He/him/his) AlexGibsonOnline.com

Dean Linnard (u/s Henry, Ed)

Dean Linnard is a Berkeley Boy, born and raised, honored to make his Berkeley Rep debut. Bay Area credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *The Winter's Tale* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Twelfth Night*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Marin Shakespeare Company); *Hand to God*, *Bad Jews* (Left Edge Theatre — TBA Award); *Groundhog Day: The Musical* (San Francisco Playhouse — San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award). Regional credits include *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Vermont Shakespeare Festival); *Thrill Me* (Luna Stage); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey); *The Huntsmen* (Portland Playhouse); *The Rub* (New Orleans Fringe Festival). Dean toured to 25 states with the musical *The Lightning Thief*. New York credits include the world premiere of Dave Harris' *Tambo & Bones* at Playwrights Horizons. Dean holds a BFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where he was a proud member of the Vocaholics a cappella group. Dean studied at the Stella Adler Studio and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. In 2020 Dean founded a pandemic-era digital theatre collective called the Anti-Isolation Arts Factory (@ai_artsfactory) to give creative opportunities to out of work artists. DeanLinnard.com. (he/him/his)

Justin Gregory Lopez (Toby)

A New Jersey native, Justin is thrilled to make his Berkeley Repertory debut! Selected off-Broadway credits include *Octet* (and original cast recording) at the Signature Theatre and *bare* at New World Stages. He was an ensemble soloist in NBC's Emmy-winning, Grammy-nominated *Jesus Christ Superstar Live* starring John Legend. Regional credits include Orlando in a new musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* at Milwaukee Repertory Theater with music by The Beatles, Martín in the new musical *A Crossing* at Barrington Stage, Che in *Evita* at Asolo Repertory Theatre, Roy/Mark/Pete/Bobby Jeremy in *Fun Home* at Baltimore Center Stage, Usnavi in *In the Heights* at the Ordway Center, and originating the role of Armando in the regional tour of *Paint Your Wagon* which was revived at the 5th Avenue Theatre, among others. You can follow his meme addiction on Instagram: @JGregoryLopez

J.D. Mollison (Marvin)

J.D. Mollison is thrilled to be making his Berkeley Rep debut with *Octet* after appearing in the world premiere at Signature Theatre, for which he and the original cast were awarded the Drama Desk for Outstanding Ensemble. Other past productions include *Moby Dick* at American Repertory Theater, *X: or, Betty Shabazz v. the Nation* with The Acting Company, *black odyssey* at CalShakes, *Venice* at The Public Theater, *A Civil War Christmas* at New York Theatre Workshop, the first Broadway revival of *Les Misérables*, *Jelly's Last Jam* at Alliance Theatre for which he was awarded the Suzi Bass Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical, *Iphigenia 2.0* at Signature Theatre, *A Winter's Tale* at Dallas Theater Center Public Works, *Hands Up* with National Black Theatre, *The Box* at The Foundry, *Galois* with 2g, *Greater Angels* with Exit Pursued by a Bear, *Monstrosity* with 13P, *Avenue X* with Dreamlight Theatre Company, *Once On This Island* at Baltimore Center Stage, *Hair* at Barrington Stage Company, and *Julius Caesar* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* with The Acting Company. TV credits include

Shameless, Madam Secretary, SVU, Shades of Blue, Hawthorne, and Numb3rs. J.D. can currently be heard in Marcus Gardley's adaptation of *King Lear* at Playonpodcasts.com. Training: Carnegie Mellon University. (he/him/his)

Roeeen Nooran (u/s Toby, Marvin)

Roeeen Nooran has been absolutely in love with theatre since high school and last year was able to do his first paid show as an understudy/swing in *Bratpack* by For The Record at Feinstein's at the Hotel Nikko. From youth theatre to the professional world, he can't wait to perform for you! (he/him) IG:@roeeennooran

Isabel Santiago (Paula)

Isabel is making her Berkeley Rep debut! She can currently be seen on *PBS' Great Performances* as a lead soloist with The Chicago Symphony Orchestra in *Leonard Bernstein's MASS*. Isabel's off-Broadway credits include *First Daughter Suite* and *GIANT* (The Public Theater). Her national tour, regional, and concert credits include *In the Heights* (First National Tour), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Hangar Theatre), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Engeman Theater and Flatrock Playhouse), *Show Boat* (Gateway Playhouse), *West Side Story*, *Candide* (The Philadelphia Orchestra), *Leonard Bernstein's MASS* (Ravinia). Her most recent film, television, and recording credits include *In the Heights* (Warner Bros.), *Blue Bloods* (CBS), *A Gifted Man* (CBS), *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (CBS), and *Martin Eden*. Instagram: @mynamesIsabel (she/her)

Margo Seibert (Jessica)

Margo was last seen on stage starring in Playwrights Horizon's production of Michael Friedman and Daniel Goldstein's *Unknown Soldier*, directed by Trip Cullman. Margo received a Special Ensemble Award at the 2020 Drama Desk Awards for her performance in *Octet's* award-winning world premiere at Signature Theatre Company. On Broadway, Margo won critical acclaim for her performance as Adrian in the Broadway musical *Rocky*, a role she originated and for which she was nominated for a Drama League Award. She later starred in the lead role of Jane in *Circle in the Square's* Broadway production of the a cappella musical *In Transit*. Other off-Broadway credits include Playwrights Horizons' *The Thanksgiving Play*; Tamar in Marisa Michelson and Josh Cohen's acclaimed *Tamar and the River*, for which she received a 2014 Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Actress in a Musical; and in Rattlestick Playwrights Theater's *The Undeniable Sound of Right Now*. She has developed work at The Public, MTC, Playwrights Horizons, NAMT, The O'Neill Center, New Dramatists, and has originated roles in pieces for award-winning writers, including David Byrne, Ahrens & Flaherty, Goldrich & Heisler, Adam Gwon, and more. Television: *FBI: International*, *Instinct*, *Elementary*, *The Good Cop*, and *Boardwalk Empire*. Margo is the cofounder of the nonprofit organization Racket, learn more here weracket.com. Margo's debut album, *77th Street*, is out now. (she/her/hers) margoseibert.com @margo_seibert

Kuhoo Verma (Velma)

Kuhoo Verma is thrilled to reprise the role of Velma in *Octet* after winning the Lucille Lortel and Drama Desk Awards for her performance in the Signature Theatre production. The role has been an incredible blessing, and they are excited to share it with you! Kuhoo is the breakout star of Hulu's original film *Plan B* and will soon star in the Netflix film *Murder Mystery 2*. Other credits include the Oscar-nominated *The Big Sick*. As a musician and vocalist, Kuhoo has performed in music venues all over New York City including Lincoln Center, Symphony Space, Joe's Pub, and 54 Below. @therealkuhoo (she/they)

Nicole Weiss (u/s Velma, Jessica)

Nicole Weiss is thrilled to make her Berkeley Rep debut with *Octet* after understudying all four women in the Signature Theatre Company production! Off-Broadway: *Folk Wandering* (Pipeline Theatre Company), *The Imbible* (New World Stages). National tour: *Vocalosity*. Other favorites include *Shapeshifters: A Queer Comic Book Musical*, *Prospect Hill: A 90s Park Slope Lesbian Musical*, *Nuclear Love Affair* (HERE). Nicole has performed at the Delacorte Theatre, The Bell House (with John Early), Ars Nova, Rockwood Music Hall, Joe's Pub, Carnegie Hall, The McKittrick Hotel, The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and probably your wedding. She has also performed regularly with Shaina Taub's Broadway sketch comedy

group Shiz at UCB & Asylum NYC. Nicole is currently working on her third EP! BFA NYU/Tisch.
(she/they) @nicole__weiss

For the 2021/22 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 recognize the support at the season sponsor level of **Bruce Golden** and **Michelle Mercer**, **Frances Hellman** and **Warren Breslau**, **Wayne Jordan** and **Quinn Delaney**, **Gisele** and **Kenneth F. Miller**, and **The Strauch Kulhanjian Family**. **Octet** is made possible by lead sponsors **Kelli and Steffan Tomlinson** and **The Bernard Osher Foundation**.

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. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org

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