

BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES ITS NEWEST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM, IN DIALOGUE

The innovative program was developed to place the capacity of Berkeley Rep’s theatre-making skills and resources in service of the community

BERKELEY, CA (August 30, 2023)— After two years of research, connecting, deep listening, and experimentation, **Berkeley Repertory Theatre** is thrilled to formally launch IN DIALOGUE, its next iteration of community engagement. IN DIALOGUE was developed to place the capacity of Berkeley Rep’s theatre-making skills and resources in service of the community. Inspired by and leveraging the work and themes presented on its stages, Berkeley Rep has built multi-faceted relationships with more than 17 socially centered organizations over the last two years, amplifying their work alongside and/or adjacent to the organization’s theatrical and educational programs.

“Berkeley Rep is committed to our values of storytelling, equity, and discovery,” said **Berkeley Repertory Theatre’s Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer**. “IN DIALOGUE creates space for diverse voices to be heard, seen, and experienced in new ways and deepens our collective understanding of the human story.”

On July 29, a gathering was held at Berkeley Rep’s Michael’s Second Act cabaret located at its Addison Campus to celebrate the partnerships that brought this new program to life and share what the future holds for the initiative and the community. In attendance were members from Berkeley Rep community partners including **Afro Urban Society, Asian Art Museum, Community Works West, Formerly Incarcerated People’s Performance Project (FIPPP)**, and **Women’s Daytime Drop-In Center**.

The evening kicked off with Berkeley Rep Associate Managing Director **Sunshine Deffner** and Associate Artistic Director **David Mendizábal**—who together developed IN DIALOGUE—welcoming guests with a land acknowledgement developed in partnership with **Sogorea Te’ Land Trust**. Throughout the evening, guests witnessed a return appearance by visual artist **Olubori Babaoye** who live painted the scene. **Afro Urban Society’s Kanukai Chigamba** shared her take on the meaning of authentic connection and partners who listen for understanding. She wrapped her remarks by engaging the full event in a call and response traditional Zimbabwean gathering song. Wrapping up the evening’s presentation was **Algiin Ford**, a renowned artist and actor with the **Formerly Incarcerated People’s Performance Project (FIPPP)**. Ford presented a monologue from his new solo piece, *Divine Presence*, which will be presented in Fall 2023 at the United Solo Theatre Festival in New York City.

The evening was filled with gratitude for centering and uplifting community with **Dawn Sagorski** of the **Women's Daytime Drop-In Center** stating, "I left the IN DIALOGUE event tonight buzzing with inspiration! Thank you for bringing us together to share space, community, song, and story."

"Hearing the voices of formerly incarcerated individuals is a must," said **FIPPP performer Freddy Lee Johnson**. "The overall impact will continue to chip away at the inhumane injustices of the incarcerated and broader community. It is time, and society as a whole benefits."

As to future programming and relationships, on select Friday evenings throughout the 2023/24 season, IN DIALOGUE is hosting a Community Salon: An Artist Sharing Series for every production in the season. The Community Salons occur prior to the evening performances and are free and open to the public. In addition to the Community Salons, IN DIALOGUE hosts Community Dialogues, moderated discussions adjacent to the show material and featuring subject matter experts who participate in civic dialogue with the audiences after the performance.

For more information on IN DIALOGUE, visit: berkeleyrep.org/about/in-dialogue/.

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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 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