FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES COMPLETE CASTING
FOR NEW ADAPTATION OF IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE
Single tickets go on sale Sunday, August 14

Berkeley, CA (August 8, 2016) — Berkeley Repertory Theatre presents a new adaptation of Sinclair Lewis’ novel, It Can’t Happen Here. Written in 1935 during the rise of fascism in Europe, Lewis’ darkly satirical It Can’t Happen Here follows the ascent of a demagogue who becomes president of the United States by promising to return the country to greatness. Witnessing the new president’s authoritarian tyranny from the sidelines is a liberal, middle-class newspaper editor from Vermont who is caught in the chaos of social upheaval.

Berkeley Rep’s Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone and screenwriter Bennett S. Cohen are adapting this eerily prescient novel — called “a message to thinking Americans” upon its publication — just in time for the election season. Lisa Peterson, a two-time Obie Award winner and Berkeley Rep’s recently named associate director, takes the helm as director.

Taccone, Cohen, and Peterson have assembled a large cast of actors to bring this political drama to life. “The combination of such a timely story and our cast of terrific actors, many of whom are new to Berkeley Rep, will make for a strong opening to our season,” says Taccone. “I’m looking forward to working on this relevant material with all these talented individuals.”

It Can’t Happen Here starts previews on Friday, September 23, 2016, and the show runs through Sunday, November 6, 2016. Press night for It Can’t Happen Here will be held on Friday, September 30, 2016. Individual tickets start at $29 and can be purchased starting Sunday, August 14 by phone at 510 647-2949 or online at berkeleyrep.org.

Tony Taccone (Adaptor) is the Michael Leibert artistic director of Berkeley Rep. In 19 years of Taccone’s tenure, Berkeley Rep has presented more than 70 world, American, and West Coast premieres and sent 23 shows to New York, two to London, and one to Hong Kong. Taccone has staged more than 40 plays in Berkeley, including new work from Julia Cho, Culture Clash, Rinde Eckert, David Edgar, Danny Hoch, Geoff Hoyle, Quincy Long, Itamar Moses, and Lemony Snicket. As a playwright, he debuted Ghost Light, Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup, and Game On, written with Dan Hoyle.

Bennett S. Cohen (Adaptor) is a graduate of Yale University’s School of Drama and UC Berkeley. Cohen has worked in theatre, film, and television. His play American Music was chosen to be part of the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center and has had numerous productions. His play Tequila was originally produced by the Eureka Theatre in San Francisco and has been published in West Coast Plays #8. Cohen has written extensively for film and television, working with such companies as Showtime, Paramount Television, Universal Television, and Fox International Productions, among others. He has adapted two novels for the screen, Jack Higgins’ WWII-era thriller Night of the Fox.

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and Roderick Thorpe’s police drama *Rainbow Drive*. Most recently, Cohen wrote the feature film *The Last Voyage of Zheng He*.

**Lisa Peterson** (Director) is a two-time Obie Award-winning writer and director. Previous projects at Berkeley Rep include *An Iliad* (2012), which Peterson co-wrote with Denis O’Hare and which won Obie and Lortel Awards for Best Solo Performance; *Mother Courage* (2006); *The Fall* (2001); and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1999). Peterson was recently named associate director at Berkeley Rep.

The full cast for *It Can’t Happen Here*, in alphabetical order, includes:

- **Scott Coopwood** (Shad) was recently seen at Berkeley Rep as Lennox in *Macbeth*. His regional favorites include the title roles in *Hamlet, Macbeth, Cymbeline, King John*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Coopwood is also co-executive director of Shakespearience!, a Bay Area nonprofit education program for children.

- **Deidrie Henry** (Lorinda) previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in *Yellowman*. Her other regional credits include *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Closer* (Portland Center Stage), *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Parade* (Center Theatre Group), and *Coming Home* and *Yellowman* (winner of Best Actress Award from NAACP, Ovation Award, Backstage Garland Award, and the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award), both at the Fountain Theatre.

- **William Thomas Hodgson** (Fowler) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. His regional credits include *Disney’s The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (La Jolla Playhouse), *An Octoroon* (Mixed Blood Theatre), *El Henry* (San Diego Repertory Theatre), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (PCPA), *Trufaldino Says No* (Shotgun Players), *Seussical the Musical* (Berkeley Playhouse), and *I Am My Own Wife* (Ubuntu Theater Project). He is co-artistic director of the Ubuntu Theater Project in Oakland, CA.

- **Anna Ishida** (Mary) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. She has performed locally with American Conservatory Theater (*Mr. Burns: a post-electric play*), TheatreWorks (*Water by the Spoonful*), Central Works (*Red Virgin*), Crowded Fire Theater (*The Hundred Flowers Project*), and several Shotgun Players productions.

- **David Kelly** (Buzz Windrip/Buck) previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in *Fuente Ovejuna* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. In 25 seasons at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, he appeared in numerous productions, including *Imaginary Invalid*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *My Fair Lady*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Three Musketeers*, *Richard II*, and *Noises Off* among others. David is an instructor at Southern Oregon University.

- **Sharon Lockwood** (Emma) was last seen at Berkeley Rep as Sonia in *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*.

- **Alexander Lydon** (Julian) previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in *Untitled Cambodian Rock Play* (The Ground Floor) and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (understudy). His other credits include *King of the Yees* with Ashland New Plays Festival; *4 Immigrants: An American Musical Manga*, a workshop at TheatreWorks; *Belvile* in *The Rover* at Shotgun Players; and *Petruchio* (understudy) in *Taming of the Shrew* at San Francisco Shakespeare Festival.

- **Gabriel Montoya** (Ensemble) has spent much of his life in theatre working as an actor, director, and producer. He was seen most recently in San Francisco Shakespeare on Tour’s *Hamlet* as The Ghost/Claudius, as Einstein in Beverly Hills Playhouse of San Francisco’s *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, as Austin in Theater MadCap’s *True West*, and as Mickey in Boxcar Theatre’s *The Speakeasy*. He is the co-host/co-producer of two weekly radio shows, *The Next Round* and *Leave it in the Ring*.
Tom Nelis (Doremus Jessup) previously appeared at Berkeley Rep as Robert Lowell in *Dear Elizabeth*. His other Bay Area performances include Ahab in Laurie Anderson’s *Moby Dick* at Zellerbach Hall, *Going Going Gone* at Magic Theatre, Oscar Wilde in *Gross Indecencies* at Theater on the Square, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at San Jose Repertory Theatre. Tom has appeared on Broadway in *Aida*, *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, *Enron*, and *The Visit*.

Carolina Sanchez (Sissy) has appeared in *Milk Like Sugar* (Margie) at the Huntington Theatre Company, *Iowa* (Amanda) at Playwrights Horizons, the workshop of *Murder at the Gates* (Audrey), and the national tour of *West Side Story* (Rosalia).

Mark Kenneth Smaltz (Pollikop) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. His New York credits include several seasons with the New York Shakespeare Festival, the Vineyard Theatre, and the Working Theater. His regional theatre credits include Seattle Repertory Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Hartford Stage Company, Center Stage in Baltimore, and the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, amongst others.

Charles Shaw Robinson’s (Swan) work for Berkeley Rep includes the role of the Father in Sarah Ruhl’s *Eurydice* and John in her *For Peter Pan on her 70th birthday*. He also appeared in the world premiere of *Swimmers* by Rachel Bonds and in Howard Brenton’s *Anne Boleyn* — both at Marin Theatre Company.

Gerardo Rodriguez (Pascal) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. Other regional credits include *Seven Spots on the Sun* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park), *Elemeno Pea* (Actors Theatre of Louisville - Humana Festival), *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* (Mixed Blood Theatre), *Kingdom* (the Old Globe), and *Instructions for Breathing* (Passage Theatre).

Will Rogers (Phillip) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. On the New York stage, he has starred in *The Mound Builders* (Signature Theatre, directed by Jo Bonney), *Golden Age* (Manhattan Theatre Club, directed by Walter Bobbie), *As You Like It* (Shakespeare in the Park, directed by Daniel Sullivan), *The Submission* (MCC Theater), *Unnatural Acts* (Classic Stage Company), *From Up Here* (MTC), and *Columbinus* (New York Theatre Workshop).

The creative team includes Rachel Hauck (scenic design), Meg Neville (costume design), Alexander V. Nichols (lighting design), and Paul James Prendergast (sound design).

For the 2016-17 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes the generosity of season sponsors BART, Peet’s Coffee, and Wells Fargo. *It Can’t Happen Here* is made possible thanks to the generous support of executive sponsors Jean and Michael Strunsky, Stephanie and John Dains, and the Ira and Lenore S. Gershwin Fund; and lead sponsors Edgerton Foundation and the Bernard Osher Foundation. Individual season sponsors include Jack and Betty Schafer, Michael and Sue Steinberg, and the Strauch Kulhanjian Family.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP
Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its core values of imagination and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed nearly 400 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, 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. Its bustling facilities – which include the 400-seat Peet’s Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org

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