FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP’S ADAPTATION OF IT CAN’T HAPPEN HERE TO BE FEATURED TONIGHT AT STAR-STUDED, LIVE-STREAMED POLITICAL EVENT

Event previews nationwide readings of the play next week

October 17, 2016: Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced today a selection from the new adaptation of It Can’t Happen Here will be performed live on stage and on the internet tonight, October 17, 2016, by actors Jake Gyllenhaal and Jon Hamm. The scene, which is presented as part of a larger political event at the St. James Theatre in New York City, can be viewed via live stream at 8pm ET/ 5pm PT.

Tonight’s event provides a preview of the free public nationwide readings of It Can’t Happen Here that begins next Monday, October 24, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the original stage version of the book.

In 1936, Sinclair Lewis adapted his novel into a play under the auspices of the Federal Theatre Project, and theatres across the country opened productions on the same night. To commemorate the 80th anniversary of that undertaking and in conjunction with Berkeley Rep's production of a new adaptation of the novel, numerous regional theatres, universities, and communities across the country have signed on to read the new adaptation by Artistic Director Tony Taccone and screenwriter Bennett S. Cohen.

Written 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.

In addition to its own current production of It Can’t Happen Here, Berkeley Rep has organized a nationwide reading of the script. Currently 43 organizations in 20 states have committed to presenting a free public reading during the week of October 24, 2016. The list of participants is still growing.

“It is so exciting for us to recreate the national experience of how this play was first introduced in 1936 - in 17 cities simultaneously,” explains Susan Medak, managing director of Berkeley Rep. “We could not have had this impact without the unwavering support and enthusiasm of Barbara and Rodgin Cohen.”

The new adaptation of It Can’t Happen Here had its world premiere at Berkeley Rep on Friday, September 30 and runs through Sunday, November 6.

The nationwide reading is made possible thanks to the generous support of Barbara and Rodgin Cohen and Orin Kramer and is presented in cooperation with the Sinclair Lewis Estate.

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