FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES A NATIONWIDE READING OF IT CAN’T HAPPEN HERE
Event commemorates the 80th anniversary of original nationwide productions

Berkeley, CA. (September 26) - Berkeley Repertory Theatre announced today A Nationwide Reading, a national series of free public readings of the new stage adaptation of It Can’t Happen Here, based on the 1935 novel written by Sinclair Lewis.

In 1936, 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 forthcoming production of a new adaptation of the novel, regional theatres, universities, and communities across the country will read the new adaptation on Monday, October 24. This new version has been adapted 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.

“Lewis’ novel reads like it was ripped out of today’s headlines,” says Taccone. “Whether he’s describing the demagogue who wins the presidency based on the promise of making our country great again, or the liberal newspaper editor who simply waits too long to take the threat seriously, Lewis’ understanding of our political system was precise and far-reaching.”

“ Critics in 1935 called the book ‘a message to thinking Americans,’ and that is exactly whom we are hoping to reach with this national initiative,” adds Berkeley Rep Managing Director Susan Medak. “We are grateful to the Sinclair Lewis estate for supporting this project and sharing our vision of bringing this compelling and important work to as broad an audience as possible in this eventful season.”

Organizations committed to participate in A Nationwide Reading are:

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (as of September 26)

**California**

Berkeley Public Library Playreaders
Berkeley, CA
berkeleypubliclibrary.org

Custom Made Theatre Co.
San Francisco, CA
custommade.org

USC School of Dramatic Arts
Los Angeles, CA
dramaticarts.usc.edu

**Will Geer’s Theatricum Botanicum**
Topanga, CA
theatrericom.com

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More details on participating organizations and the most up-to-date list of participants can be found online here.

The new adaptation of It Can’t Happen Here will have its world premiere at Berkeley Rep on Friday, September 30. Previews began on Friday, September 23.

A 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