For Immediate Release

BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR WORLD PREMIERE OF
MONSOON WEDDING
New musical adapted from the acclaimed film

January 25, 2017- Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced the casting for the world premiere of Monsoon Wedding. The musical stage production will be directed by acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair and hosts a cast of 20 actors from around the globe.

Monsoon Wedding is the perfect storm that starts brewing when family members from around the world descend on Delhi for a nonstop four-day celebration of an arranged marriage between a modern upper middle-class Indian family’s only daughter and an American guy she’s never met. But the bride is having an affair, her father’s financial troubles deepen, and dark family secrets surface. The forecast calls for drama, love, hope, laughs and a whole lot of rain. Previews begin Friday, May 5, 2017 and the show runs through Sunday, June 25, 2017. Press night for Monsoon Wedding will be Friday, May 19, 2017. Individual tickets start at $35 and can be purchased online at berkeleyrep.org and also be available by phone at 510 647-2949.

“It’s about time that our audiences get a taste of the extraordinary depth of South Asian talent in singing, acting, dancing,” says Director Mira Nair. “We have travelled the world looking for such ‘triple threats’ and happy to say have found them in the unique skill of the extraordinary cast of Monsoon Wedding.”

Monsoon Wedding features a book by Sabrina Dhawan, music by Vishal Bhardwaj, lyrics by Susan Birkenhead, scenic design by Mikiko Suzuki MacAdams, costume design by Arjun Bhasin, lighting design by Donald Holder, sound design by Scott Lehrer, projection design by Peter Nigrini, music supervision by Carmel Dean, music direction by Greg Kenna, and choreography by Lorin Latarro.

Jolly Abraham (Pimmi) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. Broadway credits include Coram Boy and Bombay Dreams. Off-Broadway credits include The Winter’s Tale, Hamlet, The Bald Soprano (the Pearl Theatre Company), Massacre (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater), Twelfth Night (Sonnet Repertory Theatre), and McReele (Roundabout Theatre Company). Regional credits include Comedy of Errors (Hartford Stage), Sense and Sensibility (the Guthrie Theater), The Wolfe Twins (the Studio Theatre), Scorched (the Wilma Theater, Barrymore nomination), Loves Labour’s Lost (the Shakespeare Theatre Company and Royal Shakespeare Company), and Pentecost (the Old Globe). Television credits include Law and Order: Special Victims Unit, Smash, Gossip Girl, Sex and the City, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, White Collar, and Nurse Jackie. Films include A Walk Among the Tombstones, The Adderall Diaries, and After You Left. Jolly is a resident actor with the Pearl Theatre Company in NYC and a BFA from the North Carolina School of the Arts.

Monsoon Latané Bissell (Shashi) is making her debut at Berkeley Rep. She was the first assistant director of the film Monsoon Wedding. She is the co-creator of Two Women Talking, an improvisational storytelling performance highlighting the intersections of culture, family, gender, violence, and tradition performed in the U.S. and abroad. A non-actress, her television credits include the role of Cathy in the popular Pakistani serial, Jackson Heights.
Meetu Chilana (Ma/Maid/Auntie/Ensemble) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. Her credits include lead vocalist in Cirque du Soleil’s Zarkana (Radio City Music Hall, State Kremlin Palace Moscow), Cirque du Soleil’s Kooza (national tour), The Shaking Earth (New York Theatre Workshop), Jihad: The Musical (Edinburgh), and This is Our Youth (George Street Playhouse). She is host of Visit the USA (US Tourism Board) and AVS TV, an internationally syndicated Bollywood program. She has released two original albums as a singer/songwriter and her voice-over work can be heard on Ubisoft’s Far Cry 4, Google, and Cuisinart, as well as numerous books on Audible. Visit MeetuMusic.com.

Namit Das (Dubey) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. He is a regular face on Indian television and films and has been working in the theatre for over 12 years. He has been involved with the long-running Mumbai hit, Hamlet the Clown Prince for eight years. Other theatre credits include Stories in a Song and The President Is Coming. Film credits include the much acclaimed Wake Up Sid, Ghanchakkar, and Ankhon Dekhi. Television credits include Sumit Sambhal Lega (the official Indian version of Everybody Loves Raymond).

Sharvari Deshpande (Ria) is currently living in New York and making her Berkeley Rep debut. Regional theatre credits include Kyun Kyun Ladki (Gillo Theatre Repertory), Hanuman Ki Ramayan, and She-He-Shay. New York theatre credits include Chokher Bali and The Queen. She is also trained in Indian music and dance. She is studying acting at Columbia University.

Jaaved Jaferi (Lalit) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. His film credits include Ishq Forever, Bang Bang, Mr. Joe B Carvalho, Society, and Hello Darling. His television credits include Back to Flashback, One More with Jaaved Jaferi, Boogie Woogie, and History of Whatever. In addition to being an actor, he is a trained voice actor, dancer, comedian, and impressionist.

Dani Jazzar (Ensemble) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. His European credits include Saturday Night Fever (Cologne, European tour), Miami Nights (Dusseldorf), and Fame the musical (UK tour). Canadian credits include Bernardo in several productions of West Side Story (Vancouver Opera, Citadel Edmonton, Theatre Calgary); UPS guy in Legally Blonde, Cabaret, and Spamalot (Theatre Aquarius/Drayton Entertainment); Rum Tum Tugger in Cats (Stirling Festival Theatre); Pirates of Penzance, 9 to 5 The Musical, Oklahoma!, and The Little Mermaid (Drayton Entertainment); Jesus Christ Superstar (Stage West Calgary); and several Christmas pantomimes (Elgin Theatre/Ross Petty Productions). His film and TV credits include appearances in American Gods, The Strain, Covert Affairs, Nikita, Traitor, Anon, Mirror Mirror, The Love Guru, and Once Upon a Mattress.

Rohan Gupta (Varun) is making his professional theatre debut at Berkeley Rep. He is a graduate of Bard College, and has appeared in the films The Reluctant Fundamentalist (directed by Mira Nair) and Framed.

Mahira Kakkar (Vijaya) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. New York credits include Trial of An American President and Sophistry (Theatre Row), Romeo and Juliet (the Public Theater mobile unit), Clive (the New Group), Opus (Primary Stages), Miss Witherspoon (Playwrights Horizons), When January Feels Like Summer (Ensemble Studio Theatre), Betrothed (Ripe Time), and Cavedwellers (the Pearl Theatre Company). Regional credits include work at Hartford Stage, the Huntington Theatre Company, Cleveland Playhouse, the Old Globe, Denver Center Theatre Company, Magic Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Virginia Stage Company, Florida Studio Theatre, and Arden Theatre Company. Film work includes Oil and Vinegar, Hechki, Hank and Asha, and A Night in the Hills. TV credits include Blue Bloods, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, Odd Mom Out, The Big C, and Blacklist. Mahira is a proud member of EST, Hero Theatre, and the Actors Center. Training - Juilliard. Visit mahirakakkar.com.

Namita Kapoor (Ensemble) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. She is the artistic director of Hindu Swing, a rhythmic dance journey exploring Jack Cole’s relationship between American jazz and classical Indian dance. Performing credits include the first national tour of Bombay Dreams (Theater of the Stars), The King and I (American Musical Theater), Corsoposnic (Lincoln Center), Jazz Tap Ensemble (the Joyce
Theater), The International Body Music Festival (SF Jazz), The Love Guru (Paramount Pictures), and Just Dance India (Star TV). Her choreographer, performer, and teacher credits span from India, Brazil, Turkey and Iceland to Japan. She recently choreographed for the first annual Broadway Bares SF (Club Fugazi) and is currently on faculty at ODC and Alonzo King Lines Dance Center.

Krystal Kiran (Saroj Rai) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. Her live stage and theatre credits include Bombay Dreams (original Broadway cast, New York), AR Rahman’s Jai Ho World Tour, Lord of the Rings (Mirvish Productions, Toronto), and West Side Story (Citadel Theatre, Edmonton). Select film and television credits include Suicide Squad, Minority Report, Hemlock Grove, Hairspray, Workin’ Moms (CBC), Hellcats, and The Love Guru. Krystal is a graduate of the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts in Toronto and was recently a scholarship recipient/participant of the Professional Theatre Training Program at the Banff Centre, Alberta.

Michael Maliakel (Hemant) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. A classically trained baritone, Michael’s operatic credits include the title role in The Marriage of Figaro, the Shoe Salesman in Argento’s Postcard from Morocco, Monsieur Presto in Les mamelles de Tirésias, and the Baritone in Philip Glass’ Hydrogen Jukebox. He has performed as a soloist with orchestras and ensembles across the country, including the Savannah Philharmonic, the New Jersey Festival Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Aeolus Quartet, the Greenwich Choral Society, and the Long Island Choral Society. Awards include the Gold Medal in the American Traditions Competition, First Prize in the NATS National Music Theater Competition, and Third Prize in the Lotte Lenya Competition.

Ali Momen (Vikram/Congress) is thrilled to be making his Berkeley Rep debut with this amazing team. A Canadian, his credits include Disgraced (Mirvish Productions), Much Ado About Nothing (Tarragon Theatre), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Canadian Stage), Kite Runner (Theatre Calgary and Citadel Theatre), and Born Yesterday, An Ideal Husband, Serious Money, After The Dance, and Devil’s Disciple for the Shaw Festival. His film and television credits include Beeba Boys (dir. Deepa Mehta), Traitor (dir. Jeffrey Nachmanoff), Houdini and Doyle, Incorporated, The Strain, L.A. Complex, and Combat Hospital.

Anisha Nagarajan (Alice) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. Broadway credits include the role of Priya in the original cast of Andrew Lloyd Webber and AR Rahman’s Bombay Dreams (Broadway Theatre), and the Actors’ Fund benefit concert of Hair (New Amsterdam Theatre). Most recently, she performed in the concert production of Secret Garden at Lincoln Center’s David Geffen Hall. Regional credits include Princesses (5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle), The Wiz (La Jolla Playhouse), and Rent (Hangar Theatre, Ithaca). She is best known for her role as Madhuri on NBC’s television series Outsourced. Other television and film credits include Rita (Bravo/Fox), Ugly Betty (ABC), Grey’s Anatomy (ABC), Code Black (CBS), and Jane Wants a Boyfriend, currently available for viewing on Showtime. She has performed with AR Rahman, U2’s Bono and the Edge, and Devo. She has a BFA from NYU’s Tisch School and the Stella Adler Studio of Acting.

Andrew Prashad (Mohan Rai/Sidekick) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. A trained and versatile dancer as well as a musician, singer, and actor, he is quickly becoming one of the leading tap dance artists in Canada. He is an award-winning actor, composer, and writer, having recently had his self-produced short film officially selected in 12 festivals around the world and winning four awards including Best Short Film. Andrew has worked in film, commercials, television, and theatre. He was a featured singer and dancer on 20th Anniversary World Tour of Riverdance and recently finished a production of Anything Goes with Drayton Entertainment. Andrew just finished mounting his one-person show One Step at a Time, and is extremely excited to journey forward with the Monsoon Wedding team. He graduated from the University of Toronto at Mississauga with an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre and Performance as well as French Literature.

Alok Tewari (Tej) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. His theatre credits include The Band’s Visit (Atlantic Theater Company; Awake and Sing! (the Public Theater/NAATCO); The Queen, Martyrs Street, and Blind Angels (Theater for the New City); A Fable, Through the Yellow Hour, and War (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater); Bunty Berman Presents, Rafta, Rafta…, and Marie and Bruce (the New Group); Night Over
Erzinda and Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo (Lark); Masked (Buenos Aires); Inana (Denver Center Theatre Company); Betrothed (Ripe Time); and Marco Polo (the Group, Argentina). Television credits include House of Cards, Royal Pains, The Blacklist, Madam Secretary, Deadbeat, Blue Bloods, 30 Rock, Homeland, Fringe, Law & Order, Law & Order: Criminal Intent, Law & Order: Special Victims Unit, and Guiding Light. Films include Shelter and Brooklyn’s Finest.

Levin Valayil (Sidekick) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. Regional credits include Craig Carnelia’s Poster Boy (Williamstown Theatre Festival) and The Fabulous Lipitones (the New Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, Virginia Repertory Theatre). He recently performed in the new musical We Live In Cairo as a part of NAMT at New World Stages, and has been seen by New York audiences as Bhuvan in Bollywood and Vine (the Lion Theatre) and as Michael in Zuccotti Park (Robert Moss Theater).

Kuhoo Verma (Aditi) is making her Berkeley Rep debut. Her New York credits include Good Kids, Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Spring Awakening (New York University) and as a soloist at Christopher Tin’s album premiere at Lincoln Center. Film credits include Judd Apatow’s The Big Sick.

Sorab Wadia (CI Chawla/Tameesuddin) is making his Berkeley Rep debut. Born in Bombay, he has performed internationally as an actor and singer in various projects ranging from The Play of Daniel, to the notorious Jihad! The Musical on London’s West End. Recently, he played Shylock and Gratiano in a historic production of The Merchant of Venice performed outdoors in the Jewish Ghetto in Venice, Italy. He garnered rave reviews for his performance as Ali Hakim on the Broadway tour of Trevor Nunn’s production of Oklahoma! Sorab tours internationally with Kite Runner, a one-man play directed by Wynn Handman. Off-Broadway shows include The Tempest (LaMama), Bunty Berman Presents… (the New Group) and Nymph Errant. TV credits include Madame Secretary, 30 Rock, and Chapelle’s Show. Films include The Spectacular Jihad of Taz Rahim, Suburban Girl, and Hiding Divya. You can find more at SorabWadia.com and follow him on Facebook at SorabWadiaPerformer.

For the 2016-17 season Berkeley Rep recognizes the generosity of season sponsors of BART, Peet’s Coffee, and Wells Fargo. Monsoon Wedding is also made possible by the support of lead sponsors Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer and Yogen and Peggy Dalal. Executive sponsors include Robin and Rich Edwards, Monica Lopez and Sameer Gandhi, Pam and Mitch Nichter, Gail and Arne Wagner, and The Tomlinson Family. Individual season sponsors 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