BERKELEY REP PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE OF
IMAGINARY COMFORTS, OR THE STORY OF THE GHOST OF THE DEAD RABBIT
New play written by acclaimed author Daniel Handler

August 18, 2017- Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced the world premiere of Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit, written by Daniel Handler and directed by Tony Taccone. The new play begins previews on Thursday, October 5 and the show runs through Sunday, November 19. Individual tickets begin at $30 and can be purchased online at berkeleyrep.org or by phone, 510 647-2949. Press night will be on Thursday, October 12.

“It’s a great pleasure to welcome the eminent Mr. Daniel Handler to our stage,” says Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone. “Best known for writing wickedly inspired young adult fiction, it turns out that he’s equally at home writing for adults. In Imaginary Comforts, Daniel applies his uniquely comedic worldview to dramatic subjects of every variety. The result is a play that is both funny and serious, and in true Handler fashion, wonderfully bent.”

“As a novelist writing a play I am a stranger in a strange land,” says author Daniel Handler. “I’m grateful to the charming and lively cast and the whip-smart and ingenious Tony Taccone for bringing this play to the Bay Area, the strange land where I am from.”

The literary genius behind Lemony Snicket brings his relentlessly mischievous style to a new play for adults. Sarah’s father is dead, her mother is in hysterics, and the new rabbi totally bungled the funeral. To further the absurdity, the ghost of a rabbit hops into her life, pushing her to confront her deepest issues. Fantastical and wise, hilarious and sobering, Imaginary Comforts celebrates ordinary people trying to make sense out of life in the midst of endless, comedic chaos.

Imaginary Comforts, or The Story of the Ghost of the Dead Rabbit was developed in The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work.

Daniel Handler (Playwright)
Daniel Handler is the author of six novels, including Why We Broke Up, We Are Pirates, and, most recently, All The Dirty Parts. As Lemony Snicket, he is responsible for numerous books for children, including the 13-volume A Series of Unfortunate Events, the four-volume All The Wrong Questions, and The Composer Is Dead, which was commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony and then adapted for Berkeley Rep in 2010. Other collaborations include a series of books with artist Maira Kalman for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and serving as an adjunct accordionist for the Magnetic Fields. His books have sold more than 70 million copies and have been translated into 40 languages, and have been adapted for film, stage, and television. He lives in San Francisco with the illustrator Lisa Brown, to whom he is married and with whom he has collaborated on several books and one son.

Tony Taccone (Director)
Tony Taccone 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.

Cassidy Brown (Michael)
Cassidy is thrilled to make his Berkeley Rep debut. He has appeared at TheatreWorks in Fallen Angels, Doubt, Distracted, The 39 Steps, and The Loudest Man on Earth, and at San Jose Repertory Theatre in Game On. Other Bay Area credits include Center Rep in Ella, The Underpants, Don't Dress for Dinner, and The 39 Steps; Aurora Theatre in Bosoms and Neglect and Safe House; Marin Shakespeare Company in Don Quixote and Othello; San Jose Stage in The 39 Steps; and Golden Thread in Autobiography of a Terrorist. Regionally he has appeared in The Totalitarians, The North Plan, and Hunter/Gatherers at Capital Stage and in A Servant of Two Masters, God of Carnage, Twelfth Night, Doubt, and The 39 Steps at Pacific Repertory Theatre.

Michael Goorjian (Clovis)
Michael is making his Berkeley Rep debut. A Bay Area native, his theatre credits include title roles in Modigliani, The Apollo of Bellac, and J.B. (Buffalo Nights Theatre Company, Los Angeles). He won an Emmy Award for Best Supporting Actor in the television movie David’s Mother and was a series regular on Fox’s Party of Five. Other television credits include Lie to Me, House, Alias, Monk, Covert Affairs, and HBO’s The Wizard of Lies. Film credits include Newsies, Chaplin, Leaving Las Vegas, Hard Rain, SLC Punk, and Illusion. A film Michael wrote, directed, and starred in alongside Hollywood legend Kirk Douglas. Michael’s first novel What Lies Beyond the Stars was released in 2016. He is currently working on a follow-up novel due out in 2018.

Julian López-Morillas (Dr. Marcus Gold)
Julian has previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in The Winter’s Tale, Volpone, Pentecost, Much Ado About Nothing, Homebody/Kabul, and Fraulein Else. A resident of the Bay Area for the past 45 years, he has worked at virtually all the major theatres in Northern California, including the American Conservatory Theater, the Aurora Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, San Jose Stage, TheatreWorks, Marin Theatre Company, Pacific Repertory Theatre, and for many years with the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival/California Shakespeare Theater, where he directed a dozen Shakespeare productions and played roles including King Lear, Prospero, Shylock, Malvolio, and Brutus. A well-known authority on Shakespeare, he also teaches verse technique at the Berkeley Rep’s School of Theatre and has taught at UC Berkeley, Mills College, and San Jose State University. Julian has acted professionally in all 38 of Shakespeare’s plays and was a two-day winner on Jeopardy!

Sharon Lockwood (Mrs. Gold)
Sharon was last seen at Berkeley Rep in the world premiere of It Can’t Happen Here. She also appeared as Sonia in Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, for which she received the Bay Area Critics Circle Award for lead performance. Other favorite Berkeley Rep credits include Zorro in Hell, Volpone, The Alchemist, Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Triumph of Love, Pentecost, and The Magic Fire. Sharon has also performed extensively at American Conservatory Theater, most recently in Love and Information. She originated the role of Barbara in the world premiere of Nickel and Dimed under the direction of Bartlett Sher, which premiered at Intiman Theatre in Seattle and played the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Other local credits include appearances at California Shakespeare Theater, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Aurora Theatre, and many years with the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Regionally, she has performed at La Jolla Playhouse, the Old Globe, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, the Alley Theatre, and Long Wharf Theatre. Sharon was honored with the 2016 Lunt-Fontanne Fellowship and participated in the Master Class at Ten Chimneys in Wisconsin with master teacher actor Jason Alexander.

Susan Lynskey (Sarah Gold)
Susan is unabashedly delighted to be returning to Berkeley Rep and to be working with Tony, Daniel, and this cast of Bay Area luminaries for this world premiere. Following last season’s tour in Roe (Berkeley Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and Arena Stage in Washington, DC), some of her other favorite regional credits include Well, Noises Off, The 39 Steps, Proof, Body Awareness, The Sisters Rosensweig, The Cripple of Inishmaan, Living Out, The Laramie Project, Ghost-Writer, Girl in the Goldfish Bowl,
Richard II, Ben Uchida, and The BFG (performing at Arena Stage, Olney Theatre Center, Theatre J, Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, MetroStage, the National Theater, and the Kennedy Center, respectively.) Dedicated to the development of new plays, Susan was so happy to be a part of the The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work. Susan is a professor at Georgetown University, received the DC Arts Commission’s Individual Artist Award, and has garnered multiple Helen Hayes Award nominations and awards. In January 2018, Susan will be channeling Margaret Thatcher in the first U.S. production of Handbagged.

Jarion Monroe (Jack)
Jarion is delighted to be back at Berkeley Rep once again where he has been seen in Volpone, Rhinoceros, House of Blue Leaves, Our Country’s Good, Hard Times, and many others spanning back to 1986. He was in one of the first Seinfelds and one of the last Frasiers, his films include The Game, and he was seen as Not-Professor-X in The Internship, where he got to punch out Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson from a wheelchair. He is Lynch in Kane & Lynch. Other theatres in which he has performed include American Conservatory Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, South Coast Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, Marin Shakespeare Company, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Arizona Repertory Theatre, and the Magic Theatre. He has also played Wotan in Teatro Zinzanni’s Dinner at Wotan’s, and participated in a tribute performance honoring Robin Williams along with comedians Mort Sahl and Rick Overton. While at UCLA, he won the Natalie Wood Award for best actor, and immediately went on a Bonanza episode where Michael Landon punched him out to start his professional career.

Danny Scheie (Ghost)
Danny previously appeared at Berkeley Rep in the world premieres of Chuck Mee’s Fêtes de la Nuit and Dan LeFranc’s Troublemaker, or The Freakin Kick-A Adventures of Bradley Boatwright, as well as Cloud Nine; One Man, Two Guvnors; and Amy Freed’s You, Nero (Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Leading Actor)..< Recent credits include Freed’s The Monster Builder at South Coast Rep and Aurora Theatre, You Never Can Tell (Critics Circle Award for Supporting Actor) at California Shakespeare Theater, and two plays at Z Space by Peter Nachtrieb: The Making of a Great Moment (also at Merrimack Rep) and A House Tour ... originally developed at Berkeley Rep’s Ground Floor. He has also acted at Arena Stage, Folger Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Theatre, Asolo Rep, Actors Theater of Louisville, San Diego’s Old Globe, Pasadena Playhouse, A Noise Within, TheatreWorks, the Marsh, the Magic, Marin Theatre Company, and Theatre Rhinoceros. He received his Equity card playing Damis in Tartuffe at the Los Angeles Theater Center. He holds a professorship at UC Santa Cruz and a PhD from UC Berkeley.

Marilee Talkington (Naomi)
Marilee is an actor, writer, director, and activist. And is thrilled to be back to Berkeley Rep! She was previously seen at Berkeley Rep in X’s & O’s (A Football Love Story). Some of her other Bay Area credits include Little Erik, Rapture, Blisters, Burn, and Salomania (Aurora Theatre); She Rode Horses, The Taming, and The Secretaries (Crowded Fire); Lily’s Revenge with Taylor Mac (Magic Theatre); and A Christmas Carol (American Conservatory Theater). Some of her NYC credits include A Nervous Smile and The Middle Ages (Theater Breaking Through Barriers, off Broadway), The Last Day and What’s His Name (Ensemble Studio Theatre), and Truce: Solo Show (NYC Fringe, BBC Radio). Her recent original film, Sisterly Love, was nominated for best filmmaker and best actor. Marilee has an MFA in Acting from ACT and is a proud MacDowell Fellow, Center for Cultural Innovation Award winner, and Carol Channing Trouper Award winner. She is also a fierce advocate for performers with disabilities.

The creative team includes Todd Rosenthal (scenic designer), Meg Neville (costume designer), Nick Solyom (lighting designer), and Jake Rodriguez (sound designer).

For the 2017-18 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes BART and Wells Fargo, who have generously renewed their commitment as Berkeley Rep’s official season sponsors. Berkeley Rep is proud to have Peet’s Coffee as a third-year season sponsor. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to have Michael and Sue Steinberg on board as a season sponsors.
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, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org

ABOUT THE GROUND FLOOR: BERKELEY REP’S CENTER FOR THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WORK
As the umbrella for all new play activity at Berkeley Rep, The Ground Floor is a bold initiative designed to raise the bar on the Tony Award–winning nonprofit’s already successful record of artistic innovation. Think of it as an incubator for theatrical start-ups or a top-notch R&D facility for artists. The Ground Floor was launched with seed funding from the James Irvine Foundation’s Artistic Innovation Fund, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and ArtPlace. The Ground Floor is supported by the Michael and Sue Steinberg, the National Endowment for the Arts, The Tournesol Project, Bank of America, The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, and individual supporters of Berkeley Rep’s Create Campaign. For more information on each project, and for future announcements or opportunities to interact, visit berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor

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