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BERKELEY REP’S OVATION GALA RAISES OVER $800,000

Funds Will Benefit Artistic and Educational Programming

June 12, 2018 – On Saturday evening, June 9, nearly 400 of the Bay Area’s finest arts supporters gathered at The Ritz-Carlton San Francisco to celebrate Berkeley Rep, the Tony Award-winning theatre company known for its groundbreaking and challenging productions. Ovation: 50 Years and Glowing raised over $800,000 to support the Theatre’s artistic and innovative efforts, including its educational programming and new play development.

This year’s signature event celebrated the organization’s 50th anniversary by honoring the Theatre’s past and projecting its future. Guests were able to reminisce with luminary artists and friends from Berkeley Rep’s earliest days, including former artistic director Sharon Ott, former managing director Mitzi Sales, and the family of the late artistic director Michael Leibert, including Flicka McGurrin and their children Meighan and McGurrin Leibert. Other notable attendees at the celebration included Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, Joe Spano, (who was in Berkeley Rep’s first production of Woyzeck in 1968 and acted with the company for many years), prominent actors Tony Amendola and Hope Alexander-Willis, and local actor favorites Charles Dean, Sharon Lockwood, Margo Hall, Jim Carpenter, Jarion Monroe, Joy Carlin, and Safiya Fredericks.

Hosted by award-winning actor, director and playwright, Colman Domingo, the celebratory evening kicked off with a performance by the Berkeley “Golden Singing Thespians” (aka Dean, Lockwood, Spano, and Fredericks) who sang a hilarious and heartwarming homage to Berkeley Rep’s 50-year history, set to the tune of “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.” Before bidding on collectable wines and exclusive cultural adventures, guests were graced with a special performance by cast members from the 2017 hit production AIN’T TOO PROUD: The Life and Times of The Temptations. The evening continued with a four-course spread prepared by The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco’s executive chef, Jason Rea, including braised short rib paired with splendid wines. After the sumptuous meal, auctioneer DawnMarie Kotsonis led a spirited live auction, in which guests vied for marvelous prizes including a private movie night party with EGOT-winner Rita Moreno, opening night tickets to see AIN'T TOO PROUD during its upcoming run in Toronto, and dinner onstage with John Leguizamo and Tony Taccone to celebrate Taccone’s final production as artistic director with Kiss My Aztec! during the 2018-19 season.

The top bid of the night captured a two-week voyage for four on the luxury residential yacht, The World, from Malta to Spain.

“The evening was a celebration of artistry, ambition, and chutzpah,” said Managing Director Susan Medak. “Who would ever have thought that the passion and vision that created a storefront theatre in 1968 would persevere and grow into one of the most important theatres in the country?”

“It was a tremendous way to kick off our 50th anniversary festivities,” said Michael Leibert Artistic Director Tony Taccone. “It was great to have so many artists past and present here to celebrate.”

A standout hit of the night was the array of exquisite wines from Merry Edwards, Hafner Vineyard, Ramsay Winery, WindRacer, Quady Winery, Domaine Carneros by Taltinger, as well as craft beer from Drake’s Brewing Company.

OVATION: 50 Years and Glowing was made possible by the generosity of lead sponsors Fossil Group, Rich and Robin Edwards, Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer, Richard Grand Foundation, The Strauch...
Kulhanjian Family, and Kelli and Steffan Tomlinson. The planning committee for the event included Narsai David, Rich Edwards, Robin Edwards, Sandra Eggers, Jill Fugaro, Scott Haber, Sandra McCandless, Stewart Owen, Sudha Pennathur, Margaret Rothschild, Laura Severino, Audrey Sockolov, Jean Strunsky, Deborah Taylor Barrera, and Gail Wagner.

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 five decades, over 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 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

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