For Immediate Release

BERKELEY REP PRESENTS LILLIAN HELLMAN’S WATCH ON THE RHINE
Rarely produced political play highlights fight against fascism

October 19, 2017 - Berkeley Repertory Theatre presents Watch on the Rhine, Lillian Hellman’s 1940s political thriller about loyalty, family, and sacrifice. The play, directed by Berkeley Rep’s associate director Lisa Peterson, begins previews on Thursday, November 30, 2017 and runs through Sunday, January 14, 2018. Individual tickets begin at $30 and can be purchased online at berkeleyrep.org or by phone at 510 647-2949. Press night will be on Monday, December 4.

“This play is a revelation to me,” says director Lisa Peterson. “It’s witty, and it’s frightening, and it’s a wonderful exploration of the birth of activism, at a time in America where that was deeply necessary. It’s a compelling play, and I think Berkeley audiences will find it inspiring.”

It’s 1940 — and Fanny Farrelly, a wealthy matriarch living in Washington, DC, is about to learn it’s no longer the world she once knew. After spending 20 years abroad, Fanny’s daughter arrives home with her German husband, Kurt, an anti-fascist activist. When a houseguest and Nazi sympathizer threatens to turn Kurt in, the family discovers how far they’ll go to fight for what they believe — and for each other. Written in 1941 by activist playwright Lillian Hellman, Watch on the Rhine is a timely examination of moral obligation, sacrifice, and what it means to be American.

Watch on the Rhine is a co-production with the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, MN.

Lillian Hellman (Playwright)
Lillian Hellman (1906-1984) remains one of the most notable writers of the twentieth century, and her work is finding new revival in the twenty-first. Hellman was a playwright, screen writer, essayist, novelist and memoirist, winning the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best American Play (for Watch on the Rhine and Toys in the Attic); a Tony Award (for Toys in the Attic); the National Book Award (for her memoir An Unfinished Woman), among countless award nominations and honors. Hellman was also a lifelong anti-Fascist and activist, championing causes such as the Republican faction of the Spanish Civil War and the Hollywood anti-Fascist movement. When called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952 and asked to name those who may have ties to the Communist Party, she famously stated, “I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year’s fashions…” Hellman’s theatrical works include The Children’s Hour (1934), The Little Foxes (1939), Watch on the Rhine (1941), Another Part of the Forest (1946) and Toys in the Attic (1960). Her three memoirs are An Unfinished Woman (1969), Pentimento (1973) and Scoundrel Time (1976).

Lisa Peterson (Director)
Lisa is a two-time Obie Award-winning writer and director whose previous projects at Berkeley Rep include It Can’t Happen Here (2016); Madwoman in the Volvo (2016); An Iliad (2012), which Lisa co-wrote with Denis O’Hare, and which won Obie and Lortel Awards for Best Solo Performance; Mother Courage (2006); The Fall (2001); and Antony & Cleopatra (1999). Other recent West Coast productions include You Never Can Tell (California Shakespeare Theater), Hamlet (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), and Chavez Ravine (Ovation Award for Best Production—Center Theatre Group). She has directed world premieres by many major American writers, including Tony Kushner, Beth Henley, Donald Margulies, José Rivera, David Henry Hwang, Luis Alfaro, Marlane Meyer, Naomi Wallace, Basil Kreimendahl, and many others. She regularly works at the Guthrie Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Mark Taper...
Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, and New York Theatre Workshop. Lisa and Denis are working on a new play about faith called The Good Book, and a commission for McCarter Theatre Center titled The Song of Rome. Lisa is also writing a new music-theatre piece with Todd Almond called The Idea of Order, co-commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse, Berkeley Rep, and Seattle Rep.

Sarah Agnew (Sara Muller)
Sarah appeared at Berkeley Rep in Roe (also Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Arena Stage), as well as in Theatre de la Jeune Lune’s Don Juan Giovanni, The Green Bird, and The Miser. Regional credits include Richard III and Dead Man’s Cell Phone (OSF), Hamlet (New Victory Theater), Twelfth Night (Shakespeare Theatre Company), The Servant of Two Masters (Yale Repertory Theatre), Sarah Ruhl’s Three Sisters and Behind the Eye (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park), The Syringa Tree (Jungle Theater), and Time Stands Still, The 39 Steps, Dollhouse, Major Barbara, Home Place, The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde, and As You Like It (the Guthrie Theater), and The Miser and Amerika (American Repertory Theatre). Film/TV credits include Lady Dynamite, Detective Fiction, and Older Than America. Sarah is a 2012 McKnight Theater Fellow and received the Cincinnati Acclaim Award and Princess Grace Honorarium.

Elijah Alexander (Kurt Muller)
Elijah last appeared at Berkeley Rep in Much Ado About Nothing. He has been seen on Broadway in Metamorphoses and off Broadway in Shopping and Fucking (New York Theatre Workshop). Other New York credits include Throne of Blood at Brooklyn Academy of Music. He has performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Tantalus. Elijah’s regional credits include Fingersmith, Hamlet, Pride and Prejudice, and Henry VIII (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); Richard III, Julius Caesar, Gaslight, Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Art (Utah Shakespeare Festival); Man and Superman, Restoration Comedy, and An Ideal Husband (California Shakespeare Theater); Disgraced (Arizona Theatre Company); and The Invisible Hand (Gregory Award, A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle). His film and television credits include Mr. & Mrs. Smith, Amazing Love, Touch, Awake, JAG, and Summerland. Elijah received an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. Please visit elijahalexander.net.

Emma Curtin (Babette Muller)
Emma is thrilled to be making her debut at Berkeley Rep. Previous mainstage credits include Tarzan, Billy Elliott (Debbie), Fiddler on the Roof (Bielke), Mary Poppins, Shrek the Musical (Young Fiona), The Music Man, A Little Princess, and The Sound of Music (Gretl) at Berkeley Playhouse; Wait Until Dark (Gloria) and A Christmas Carol (Helen/Fan/Belinda) at Chanticleers; Oklahoma! (Virginia/featured dancer) and Our Town (Rebecca) at Altarena Playhouse; and Beauty and the Beast at Woodminster Summer Musicals. Emma attends Oakland School for the Arts (vocal emphasis) and does additional vocal training with Erica D’Ambrosio. She studies ballet, tap, hip-hop, lyrical, and jazz with Dance10 and Irish step dance with Annie McBride.

James Detmar (Joseph)
James is making his Berkeley Rep debut. He has performed around the country in West Side Story, White Christmas, and Sound of Music at Orway Center for the Performing Arts; Cabaret and Spring Awakening at Theater Latté Da; Fly by Night at Jungle Theater; Lombardi and The Highwaymen at History Theatre; Annie, Mid-Life: The Crisis Musical, and Beauty and the Beast at Chanhassen Dinner Theatres; Dirty Rotten Scoundrels at Old Log Theatre; and Glengarry Glen Ross at the Torch Theatre. James’ film and television credits include Thin Ice, Hap and Ashley, Factotum, Public Domain, Best Man Down, Ghost Light, From the Earth to the Moon, Carousel of Revenge, America’s Most Wanted, Santa Barbara, Clarissa Explains It All to You, Superboy, and Hi Honey, I’m Home!

Kate Guentzel (Marthe)
Kate is making her Berkeley Rep debut. She has appeared at the Guthrie Theater in The Master Butchers Singing Club and M. Butterfly, Jungle Theater in The Heiress and The Birthday Party, Park Square Theatre in School for Lies, Penumbra Theatre in Dutchman, Pillsbury House Theatre in The Children, and Illusion Theater in My Antonia. Her other theatre credits include Frank Theatre, TigerLion Arts, Gremlin Theatre, Pangea World Theater, Sandbox Theatre, and Four Humors Theater. She received an Ivey
Award for the role of Antonia in Illusion Theater’s *My Antonia*, and was *Star Tribune’s* Best Actress 2016. Kate trained at University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

**Jonah Horowitz** (Bodo Muller)

Jonah is honored to be making his debut with Berkeley Rep. Recent credits include Simon in 13, *The Musical* (CMT San Jose) and Small Boy in *Billy Elliot* (Berkeley Playhouse). This spring he is looking forward to playing the title role in *James and the Giant Peach* at Berkeley Playhouse. Jonah lives in Berkeley and is in the 6th grade at King Middle School. He enjoys making movies and building sets for his backyard theatre company.

**Hugh Kennedy** (David Farrelly)

Hugh is making his Berkeley Rep debut. He has appeared at the Guthrie Theater in *Tribes, Othello, Pride and Prejudice, The Primrose Path, Arsenic and Old Lace, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, A View from the Bridge, The Government Inspector, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Be Here Now*, and *A Christmas Carol*. He also appeared in *Hamlet* at Jungle Theater and in Anthony Tassa’s *Macbeth Arabia* in Dubai, UAE. His other theatre credits include the Public Theater, the Moving Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, New York Theatre Workshop, TheatreSquared, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, the Acting Company, and Pillsbury House Theatre. His film credits include *Suburbicon, The Goodbye*, and *Hope*. Hugh received the 2012 Ivey Award for *Buzzer* and was a Presidential Scholar of the Arts. He received a BFA from University of Minnesota Actor Training Program and is a national reviewer for the YoungArts Organization in Miami, Florida.

**Leontyne Mbele-Mbong** (Anise)

Leontyne is making her Berkeley Rep debut. She has appeared at Aurora Theatre Company in *Temple and Breakfast with Mugabe*; the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival in *Hamlet*; African-American Shakespeare Company in *Antony and Cleopatra, Medea, Much Ado About Nothing, Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*; Stanford Rep in *Slaughter City*; Shotgun Players in *Top Girls*; Aluminois Collective in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*; Role Players Ensemble in *Good People*; Altarena Playhouse in *Fences* and *Sylvia*; Central Works in *Andromache*; Woman’s Will in *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Macbeth*; Solano College Theatre in *Intimate Apparel*; TheatreFirst in *World Music* and *Map of the World*; and Lamplighters Music Theater in *Show Boat* and *Candide*. Leontyne received a Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Performance Female Principal for *Medea*. She received a BA from Macalester College.

**Caitlin O’Connell** (Fanny Farrelly)

Caitlin is making her Berkeley Rep debut. She has appeared on Broadway in *The Crucible, Mothers and Sons, The Heiress*, and *33 Variations*. She has appeared at the Guthrie Theater in *Watch on the Rhine, Mrs. Warren’s Profession and Playboy of the Western World*. Her off-Broadway credits include *Ugly Lies the Bone* (Roundabout Theatre Company), *All’s Well That Ends Well* (New York Shakespeare Festival/the Public Theater), *The Killing of Sister George* (the Actors Theatre Company), *Stuff Happens* (the Public), *Third* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Boy* (Primary Stages), and *Baby Screams Miracle* (Clubbed Thumb). She has also appeared at Williamstown Theater Festival in *Pygmalion*; South Coast Repertory in *Habeus Corpus*; Shakespeare Theatre Company in *Much Ado About Nothing, Twelfth Night*, and *Merry Wives of Windsor*; Center Stage in *The Matchmaker, Winter’s Tale*, and *Othello*; the Old Globe in *Julius Caesar*; Denver Center Theatre Company in *Third, The Clean House, Dinner with Friends*, and *The Little Foxes*; and Actors Theatre of Louisville/Cincinnati Playhouse in *Doubt*. Her film and television credits include *Oppenheimer Strategies, The Automatic Hate, The Stepchild, Unforgettable, Whoopi*, and *Homicide*. Caitlin is a recipient of a Fox Foundation Grant.

**Silas Sellnow** (Joshua Muller)

Silas is making his Berkeley Rep debut. His theatre credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher* at Theater Latté Da; *Richard III, Comedy of Errors, As You Like It*, and *Julius Caesar* at Great River Shakespeare Festival; *While You Were Out* at Red Eye Theatre; and *The Snow Queen* at Park Square Theatre. Silas received a BFA from University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater Actor Training Program.
Jonathan Walker (Teck De Brancovis)
Jonathan is making his Berkeley Rep debut. He has appeared on Broadway in The Assembled Parties, 20th Century, After the Fall, and Rocky. His off-Broadway credits include world premieres by Richard Greenberg, Donald Margulies, Wendy MacLeod, Doug Wright, James Lapine, Peter Parnell, and Charles Busch at MCC Theater, the Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Primary Stages, Roundabout Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Cherry Lane Theatre, and the New Group. He appeared in the films The Chaperone, Bridge of Spies, It Had to Be You, Man on a Ledge, Michael Clayton, People I Know, Heights, and Far from Heaven. Jonathan’s television credits include Madam Secretary, Quantico, Person of Interest, Elementary, The Good Wife, The Big C, Sex and the City, Chappelle’s Show, Law & Order, Zero Hour, The Carrie Diaries, and Daredevil.

The creative team includes Neil Patel (scenic designer), Raquel Barreto (costume designer), Alexander V. Nichols (lighting designer), and Paul James Prendergast (sound designer/composer).

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 Jack and Betty Schafer, Michael and Sue Steinberg, and The Strauch Kulhanjian Family on board as a season sponsors. Watch on the Rhine is made possible thanks to the generous support of lead sponsor The Bernard Osher Foundation and executive sponsors Susan Chamberlin and John Dains.

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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

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