July 10, 2019 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced that The Tale of Despereaux, a new musical, will join the 2019-20 season as its second special presentation solidifying the previously announced seven-show subscription season. Coming off a successful run at The Old Globe in San Diego, where it had its world premiere, The Tale of Despereaux, written and directed by PigPen Theatre Co. and co-directed by Marc Bruni, will begin previews at Berkeley Rep on Thursday, November 21, 2019 and run through Sunday, January 5, 2020. Tickets will go on sale in early August exclusively to Berkeley Rep’s 2019-20 season subscribers before being made available to the general public.

Prepare to be charmed during the 2019 holiday season when the acclaimed PigPen Theatre Co. brings their one-of-a-kind theatrical and musical inventiveness to Kate DiCamillo’s beloved, Newbery Medal-winning modern fable. Despereaux is a courageous mouse who dreams of becoming a knight. He sets off on a noble quest that will take him down into dungeons and up to the heights of a castle tower to rescue a beautiful human princess — but the dark-hearted rat Roscuro has other ideas. The Boston Herald proclaims, “PigPen Theatre Co. is already a phenomenon,” while The New Yorker says, “It’s like watching child geniuses at play!” Full of gorgeous music, stunning stage effects, witty performances, and a message of optimism and community, The Tale of Despereaux is an inspiring and beguiling story for all ages.

“I am thrilled to have PigPen Theatre Co. join the upcoming season at Berkeley Rep,” says incoming Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer. “They are known for their dynamic theatrical storytelling, and to have this beautifully staged interpretation of a great novel on our stage will be a treat for our audiences.”

Berkeley Rep is also delighted to announce two new additions to the impressive lineup of directors for its 2019-20 season: Obie Award winner Anne Kauffman (Artistic Director of Encores! Off-Center and director of Working at Encores, Our Lady of 121st Street at Signature, and The Lucky Ones at Ars Nova) will helm the world premiere of Tony-nominee Sarah Ruhl’s Becky Nurse of Salem; Brooklyn-based director Jaki Bradley (credits include Radio Island and Good Men Wanted at New York Stage and Film, Breeders at New Light Theater Project, and Playing Hot Gym at Judson/Ars Nova) will direct Suzan-Lori Parks’ White Noise. Both Bradley and Kauffman contribute to the wide range of artists, creative storytellers, and productions for incoming Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer’s inaugural season.

PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED SHOWS IN BERKELEY REP’S 2019-20 SUBSCRIPTION SEASON

In a Japanese coastal town in 1979, teenage sisters Hanako and Reiko run onto the beach during a tremendous storm on a dare. Hanako is tragically swept out to sea, while Reiko survives — but recalls seeing three mysterious men on the shoreline. The authorities determine that Hanako has drowned, but her mother insists that her missing daughter is still alive. Spanning over 20 years and the two vastly different countries of Japan and North Korea, The Great Wave by Francis Turnly is at once a riveting geopolitical thriller and a powerful story of the unshakable bonds between a mother, a daughter, and a sister who refuse to give up hope. Directed by Mark Wing-Davey, this American premiere starts September 2019.
Leo, Dawn, Ralph, and Misha are old friends. The two 30-something couples are educated, progressive, and cosmopolitan. But when a racially motivated incident with the police leaves Leo shaken, he makes a radical proposition to Ralph that forever alters the relationship between these four friends — and their view of the world. Brave, intelligent, and eviscerating, White Noise by Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks and directed by Jaki Bradley, is one of the most talked about new plays tackling our rapidly unraveling social contract. We’re proud to be the only regional theatre outside New York to present White Noise this year. West Coast premiere starts September 2019.

Out of work and out of love, Becky Nurse is an ordinary but strong-willed grandmother just trying to get by in post-Obama America. She’s also the great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Rebecca Nurse, who was infamously executed for witchcraft in 1692 — but things have changed for women since then, haven’t they? Desperate to raise her troubled teenaged granddaughter right, and also hook up with an old flame, Becky visits a local witch for help. But those spells and potions don’t work out exactly as planned. The latest play from the Tony-nominated Sarah Ruhl, and directed by Anne Kauffman, Becky Nurse of Salem speaks to the trials and triumphs of women today — and is also a comedic, warmhearted story about trying to do the right thing in a chaotic world. World premiere starts December 2019.

The missionaries of mayhem are back with their unique, badass brand of Chicano satire in Culture Clash (Still) in America! Born here in the Bay and Los Angeles-based, Culture Clash first brought their dangerous and subversive version of documentary theatre to Berkeley audiences with Culture Clash in AmeriCCA, gleefully skewering American culture through the lens of the Latino experience. In this powerful, pointed, and downright hilarious update directed by Lisa Peterson, they turn their razor-sharp wit to everything from pussy hats to MAGA caps, laying down outrageous, biting, and thought-provoking monologues and sketch comedy about the immigrant experience in America right now. Starts February 2020.

Paulina, the reigning queen bee at Ghana’s most exclusive boarding school, has her sights set on the Miss Universe pageant and the glamorous life that’s sure to follow. But her plans and even her very reputation are shaken up when Ericka, a new student who’s strikingly beautiful and talented, captures the attention of the pageant recruiter — and Paulina’s hive-minded friends. Winner of the 2018 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play and the Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award, School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play by Jocelyn Bioh is a biting comedy that tackles the universal issues of beauty and self-worth that face teenage girls across the globe. Directed by Awoye Timpo. Starts March 2020.

Academy Award® winner Dianne Wiest plays Winnie in Samuel Beckett’s masterpiece Happy Days, directed by James Bundy. With her husband Willie (Michael Rudko) increasingly out of reach and the earth itself threatening to swallow her whole, Winnie’s buoyant optimism shields her from the harsh glare of the inevitable in this absurdly funny and boundlessly compassionate portrait of the human spirit. The New York Times declares Wiest is “extraordinary,” capturing both the humor and the heartbreak of one of Beckett’s most popular plays in this stunning Yale Repertory Theatre production. Starts May 2020.

Multiple Grammy Award nominee The Avett Brothers, hailed as “America’s biggest roots band” by Rolling Stone, bring their signature blend of folk and rock ‘n’ roll attitude to the theatrical stage with Swept Away, a world premiere musical inspired by their 2004 album Mignonette and their vast body of music. The band joins forces with Tony Award-winning stage and screen writer John Logan (Red, Broadway’s Moulin Rouge!, Skyfall, Gladiator) and Tony Award-winning director Michael Mayer (American Idiot, Spring Awakening, Hedwig and the Angry Inch). It’s 1888, off the coast of New Bedford, MA. When a violent storm sinks their whaling ship, the four surviving souls — a young man in search of adventure, his older brother who has sworn to protect him, a captain at the end of a long career at sea, and a worldly first mate who has fallen from grace — each face a reckoning: How far will I go to stay alive? And can I live with the consequences? Starts June 2020.

Full creative teams and casting for all shows will be announced at a later date.

Subscribers to Berkeley Rep get the best seats for these shows at the consistently lowest prices. The 5-play Main Season package guarantees tickets to The Great Wave, White Noise, Becky Nurse of
Salem, Culture Clash (Still) in America, and School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play. Step up to the 7-play Full Season to include Swept Away and Dianne Wiest in Happy Days as part of your package. In addition to significant savings, subscribers receive valuable advantages such as the ability to reschedule performances for free, discounts when purchasing tickets for friends, and the opportunity to secure seats before the general public for special events.

Full (7-play) and Main (5-play) season ticket packages start as low as $170 (7-play Full Season packages range from $189 to $623; 5-play Main Season packages range from $170 to $445). Additional subscription discounts for senior citizens, pre-K–12 educators, and patrons under age 35 are available. “Choose your own” packages of three or more shows are also available with regular-priced subscriptions starting at $105.

For the 2019-20 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes BART, Peet's Coffee, and Wells Fargo, who have generously renewed their commitment as Berkeley Rep's official season sponsors. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to have Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer, Jack and Betty Schafer, Michael and Sue Steinberg, and The Strauch Kulhanjian Family on board as season sponsors.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP
Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its ambition, relevance, and excellence, as well as its adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. Over 5.5 million people have enjoyed nearly 500 shows at Berkeley Rep, which have gone on to win six Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, one Pulitzer Prize, and many other honors. Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. To formalize, enhance, and expand the processes by which Berkeley Rep makes theatre, The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work was launched in 2012. The Berkeley Rep School of Theatre engages and educates some 20,000 people a year and helps build the audiences of tomorrow with its nationally recognized teen programs. Berkeley Rep's bustling facilities—which also include the 400-seat Peet's Theatre, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, and a spacious campus in West Berkeley—are helping revitalize a renowned city. Be a Rep.

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