For Immediate Release

TONY-NOMINATED PLAYWRIGHT SARAH RUHL RETURNS TO BERKELEY REP
FOR THE SIXTH TIME WITH
WORLD PREMIERE, BECKY NURSE OF SALEM
New play stars Obie Award-winning actress Pamela Reed

October 25, 2019 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced final casting for the world premiere of Becky Nurse of Salem. The play, written by Tony-nominated playwright Sarah Ruhl and directed by Anne Kaufman, marks Sarah’s sixth production at Berkeley Rep. Previews begin on Thursday, December 12, 2019 and the show runs through Sunday, January 26, 2020. Individual tickets begin at $30 ($15 if you’re under 35) and can be purchased online at berkeleyrep.org or by phone at 510 647-2949. Press night for this production will be on Thursday, December 19, 2019.

A dark comedy about the legacy of the Salem witch trials

A world premiere by MacArthur “Genius” Grant winner Sarah Ruhl (In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play); Eurydice), Becky Nurse of Salem is an offbeat dark comedy that follows a woman coming to terms with her family’s legacy and finding her voice in our “lock her up” era.

Becky Nurse is an outspoken, sharp-witted tour guide at the Salem Museum of Witchcraft who’s just trying to get by in post-Obama America. She’s also the descendant of Rebecca Nurse, who was infamously executed for witchcraft in 1692 – but things have changed for women since then…haven’t they? After losing her job for calling out The Crucible in front of schoolkids, Becky visits a local witch for help. One spell leads to another, and then everything really goes off the rails.

“I have known Sarah for many years and I am constantly thrilled by the sheer scale of her theatrical imagination,” says Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer. “She has the ability to radically shift our relationship to a story we think we know and turn it upside down. I’m so proud that her newest play, Becky Nurse of Salem, full of lust and witches and her signature heartbreaking humor, will have its world premiere at Berkeley Rep.”

Becky Nurse of Salem was commissioned by Berkeley Rep and developed in The Ground Floor: Berkeley Rep’s Center for the Creation and Development of New Work.

Developed with the support of New York Stage and Film & Vassar’s Powerhouse Season, Summer 2019.

Cast members include Owen Campbell (Stan), Rod Gnapp (Shapeshifter), Naian González Norvind (Gail), Ruibo Qian (Witch), Pamela Reed (Becky Nurse), Adrian Roberts (Bob), and Elissa Beth Stebbins (Shelby).

Creative team includes Louisa Thompson (Scenic Designer), Meg Neville (Costume Designer), Russell H. Champa (Lighting Designer), and Mikaal Sulaiman (Sound Designer).

Sarah Ruhl (Playwright)
Becky Nurse of Salem marks Sarah’s sixth production at Berkeley Rep; previous productions at Berkeley Rep include For Peter Pan on her 70th birthday, the West Coast premiere of Eurydice, the world premiere of In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play), an adaptation of Chekhov’s Three Sisters, and the West
Coast premiere of *Dear Elizabeth. In the Next Room* went on to Broadway, playing at Lyceum Theatre. Sarah’s other plays include *The Oldest Boy*, *The Clean House*, *Passion Play*, *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*, *Melancholy Play*, *Orlando, Late: a cowboy song*, and *Stage Kiss*. Her plays have been seen off Broadway at Women’s Project Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage Theatre, and Lincoln Center’s Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater. Her select regional credits include Yale Repertory Theatre and the Goodman Theatre. Sarah received the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the Whiting Award, the Lilly Award, a PEN Award, and the MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Award. She has been a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and a Tony Award nominee. Her book of essays, *100 Essays I Don’t Have Time to Write*, was a *New York Times* notable book of the year. She teaches at Yale school of drama and lives in Brooklyn with her family.

**Anne Kauffman** (Director)

Anne has directed at many major New York nonprofit and regional theatres. She is the artistic director of NY City Center Encores! Off-Center. Her recent credits include *Fire in my mouth* (New York Philharmonic), *The Lucky Ones* (Ars Nova), *Hundred Days* (New York Theatre Workshop and The Public Theater’s Under the Radar Festival), *Mary Jane* (New York Theatre Workshop & Yale Rep), and *Marvin’s Room* (Roundabout Theatre Company). She is a Sundance Program Associate, a Usual Suspect at New York Theatre Workshop, an alumna of the Soho Rep Writers and Directors Lab, a current member of Soho Rep’s Artistic Council, Lincoln Center Directors Lab, The Drama League of New York, a founding member of The Civilians, an associate artist with Clubbed Thumb, and co-creator of the CT Directing Fellowship, and member of New Georges Kitchen Cabinet.

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**, **Michael and Sue Steinberg**, **Jack and Betty Schafer**, and **The Strauch Kulhanjian Family** on board as season sponsors. This production has been supported in part by the Mosse Artistic Development Fund.

**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.

**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 startups or a top-notch R&D facility for artists. For more information on each project, and for future announcements or opportunities to interact, visit berkeleyrep.org/groundfloor.

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SARAH RUHL DISCUSSES CREATION OF BECKY NURSE OF SALEM AT BERKELEY REP
Conversation with acclaimed playwright at Page to Stage event

October 25, 2019 - Berkeley Rep today announced that Tony-nominated playwright Sarah Ruhl will be in conversation with a free public event to discuss the creation of the world premiere, Becky Nurse of Salem. Audiences eager for the new play can get a sneak peek behind the scenes at Page to Stage on Monday, November 11 at 7pm. Page to Stage is free and open to the public. No need to RSVP, just show up.

Every season, Berkeley Rep hosts Page to Stage, a series of free discussions with eminent theatre artists, designed to give audiences additional insight into the plays and playwrights produced at Berkeley Rep. Past programs have featured theatre luminaries such as Tony Kushner, Mary Zimmerman, Emma Rice, and Mira Nair.

- Monday, November 11, 2019
  Resident Dramaturg Madeleine Oldham leads a conversation with award-winning playwright Sarah Ruhl about her new play Becky Nurse of Salem in the Peet’s Theatre

Page to Stage starts at 7pm and runs about 60 minutes. No tickets are necessary, but seating is limited. The lobby opens at 6:15pm, and doors to the Theatre open at 6:30pm for general admission seating. Berkeley Rep donors at the Contributor level or higher ($150+) enjoy reserved seating. For more information about Page to Stage or how to become a donor, please email give@berkeleyrep.org.

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