BERKELEY REP ANNOUNCES FULL CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR
PigPen Theatre Co.’s The Tale of Despereaux: A New Musical

Award-winning creative team brings new musical to the stage

November 2, 2019 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre today announced the full cast and creative team for PigPen Theatre Co.’s The Tale of Despereaux: A New Musical. Coming off a successful run at The Old Globe in San Diego, where it had its world premiere, The Tale of Despereaux, with book, lyrics, and music by PigPen Theatre Co. and directed by Marc Bruni and PigPen Theatre Co., will begin previews at Berkeley Rep on Thursday, November 21, 2019 and run through Sunday, January 5, 2020. Press night will be on Monday, November 25, 2019. Tickets are on sale now at www.berkeleyrep.org or 510 647-2949.

A musical adventure awaits you this holiday season when the acclaimed PigPen Theatre Co. brings its inventive and imaginative retelling of the beloved, Newbery Medal-winning modern fable to Berkeley Rep. The courageous Despereaux, shunned by his community for his love of stories and humans, shows a forlorn kingdom that even the smallest voice can change the world — and that it only takes a little light to reveal the truth.

An indie folk band that creates dazzling works of theatre, PigPen infuses this tale of bravery, forgiveness, and redemption with their masterful music, stunning stage effects, and witty performances. PigPen’s The Tale of Despereaux is a spellbinding musical treat that resonates with adults and children alike.

Cast members include Ben Euphrat (Swing), Alex Falberg (Lester), Ben Ferguson (Furlough), Logan Foster (Swing), Curtis Gillen (Louise, Most High Head Mouse), Natasha Harris (Swing), Dorcas Leung (Despereaux), Ryan Melia (Librarian, Prisoner), Betsy Morgan (Miggery Sow, Antoinette, Queen Rosemary), Matt Nuernberger (Botticelli), John Rapson (Roscuro), Arya Shahi (King Phillip), Yasmeen Sulieman (Princess Pea, Merlot), and Dan Weschler (Stained-Glass Knight).

CAST BIOS

Ben Euphrat (Swing) Ben Euphrat is an actor, musician, and musical director. Recent credits include Once with 42nd Street Moon, The Siegel at City Lights, Shakespeare in Love at Marin Theatre Company, the SF and off-Broadway productions of Ideation with SF Playhouse, Project Ahab at Central Works (nominated for Outstanding Music Direction), Mirandolina at Center Rep, Twelfth Night at Shotgun Players, and HIR at the Magic Theatre. Ben has worked extensively in film and commercial, and has studied improv in LA with the Groundlings and IO West. His debut solo album a portrait of a girl is out now. beneuphrat.com

Alex Falberg (Lester) Originally from Kharkov, Ukraine, Alex is over the moon to have attended Bela Fleck’s second annual Blue Ridge Banjo Camp last summer. His credits include The Hunter and The Bear (Writers Theatre), The Tale of Despereaux and The Old Man and The Old Moon (The Old Globe), and Pericles (Theatre for a New Audience). His television credits include Dareddevil (Netflix) and The Men Who Built America (History). He is excited to be in development with Caroline Watt on an upcoming holiday show called Juanita and the Shepherd.
Ben Ferguson (Furlough) Ben was born and raised in Austin, Texas and received his BFA in Acting alongside the rest of PigPen at Carnegie Mellon University before moving to New York City. He has since created and performed shows with PigPen such as *The Nightmare Story*, *The Mountain Song*, *The Old Man and The Old Moon*, and *The Hunter and The Bear*. @benstagmerfusgon

Logan Foster (Swing) Logan is so excited to be a part of this wonderful production. Berkeley Rep debut! His favorite credits include *One Man, Two Guvnors* (Francis) and *All Shook Up* (Chad) both at Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts. BFA Elon ’19. Insta: lolo_1

Curtis Gillen (Louise, Most High Head Mouse) Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Curtis has appeared off Broadway in *The Old Man and The Old Moon* and in *Pericles* directed by Trevor Nunn. His other PigPen credits include *The Mountain Song*, *The Nightmare Story*, and most recently *The Hunter and The Bear* at Writers Theatre in Chicago. His film credits include *Ricki and the Flash* and *HairBrained*. He graduated with a BFA in Acting from Carnegie Mellon University, where he was destined to find these lifelong collaborators.

Natasha Harris (Swing) Natasha is grateful to be working with PigPen Theatre Co. on this brand new production. Her regional credits include *The Cocoanuts*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Into the Woods* (Utah Shakespeare Festival); *Three Sisters*, *Peter Pan*, *Hairspray*, and *West Side Story* (Pacific Conservatory Theatre); *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (McCoy Rigby Entertainment); and *The All Night Strut!* (Oregon Cabaret Theatre). She received her BA in Drama at UC Irvine. natashaharris.com @lillnutsy

Dorcas Leung (Despereaux) Dorcas is making her Berkeley Rep debut. She was recently seen as Gigi Van Tranh in the Broadway revival of *Miss Saigon*. Soon after, she toured the country in the 1st National Tour of *Hamilton* as Schuyler Sister Standby performing Eliza, Angelica, and/or Peggy/Maria at select shows. Regional favorites include St. Louis MUNY (*Les Misérables*), Casa Mañana (Gigi in *Miss Saigon*), Dallas Theater Center (Cosette in *Les Misérables*, Christmas Present in *A Christmas Carol*), Goodspeed Opera House (Ursula in *Bye Bye Birdie*), Barrington Stage Company (Little Red in *Into the Woods*). TV/Film: *Bull*, *Madam Secretary*. @dorcas

Ryan Melia (Librarian, Prisoner) Ryan’s other shows created by PigPen include *The Old Man and The Old Moon*, *The Nightmare Story*, *The Mountain Song*, and *The Hunter and The Bear*. He also performed with PigPen in *Pericles* at Theatre for a New Audience, directed by Sir Trevor Nunn.

Betsy Morgan (Miggery Sow, Antoinette, Queen Rosemary) Betsy is returning to *The Tale of Despereaux* after appearing in the world premiere at The Old Globe. She earned a Lucille Lortel Award nomination for her portrayal of Pirelli and Beggar Woman in Barrow Street Theatre’s *Sweeney Todd*. Betsy was in the original Broadway companies of *The King and I* (revival), *Les Misérables* (revival), *A Little Night Music* (revival), *The Little Mermaid*, and *High Fidelity*, and the original off-Broadway companies of *First Daughter Suite* (The Public Theater), *Found* (Atlantic Theatre), *The Fantasticks* (revival), and *Bernarda Alba* (Lincoln Center). Regionally, she’s been seen in *The Who’s Tommy* (Denver Center), *Carousel* (Arena Stage), *Rain* (The Old Globe), and *Giant* (Signature Theatre). Betsy re-created the role of Fantine in the 25th anniversary tour of *Les Misérables*. She was seen on television in *Flight of the Conchords*.

Matt Nuernberger (Botticelli) Matt is a Chicago native, graduated from Carnegie Mellon University. His previous credits include *The Tale of Despereaux* (The Old Globe); *Pericles* directed by Trevor Nunn (Theatre for a New Audience); *A Little More Alive*, *Pocatello*, and *Tape* (Williamstown Theatre Festival); *The Old Man and The Old Moon* (The New Victory Theater, The Old Globe, Writers Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, ArtsEmerson, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, City Theatre, The Gym at Judson); and *The Hunter and The Bear* (Writers Theatre). His film credits include *Ricki and the Flash*, and his voiceover credits include commercial work for Raid.
John Rapson (Roscuro) John is thrilled to be making his Berkeley Rep debut with this extraordinary show and team. John was last seen in the Bay Area as the D’Ysquith Family in A Gentleman’s Guide to Love & Murder, a role he originated on the first national tour. Broadway/off-Broadway credits include Sweeney Todd (Beadle Bamberfod), Les Misérables (Grantaire/Bamatabois), and Nassim. Regional credits include Oklahoma! (Jud Fry, Sacramento Music Circus), The Play That Goes Wrong (Robert, regional premiere at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis), The Drowsy Chaperone (Aldolpho, Goodspeed Musicals), Disney on Classic (with the Orchestra Japan). John is a graduate of the University of Michigan.

Arya Shahi (King Phillip) Arya was raised in Tucson, Arizona. He is a member of the #bars Workshop at The Public Theater in New York, and he co-created the poetry visual-art project @inboxart on Instagram. Alongside his dearest friends, he co-created PigPen’s The Hunter and The Bear, The Old Man and The Old Moon, The Mountain Song, and The Nightmare Story. His additional credits include the film Ricki and the Flash directed by Jonathan Demme, off Broadway’s Pericles directed by Sir Trevor Nunn, off Broadway’s Exile directed by Lisa Peterson, and the video game 1979 Revolution directed by Navid Khonsari. He received his BFA in Acting from Carnegie Mellon University. aryashahi.com, @aryashah


Dan Weschler (Stained-Glass Knight) Dan grew up in Hershey, Pennsylvania before studying acting at Carnegie Mellon University. After receiving his BFA, he moved to New York. His theatre credits include The Hunter and The Bear (Writers Theatre), The Old Man and The Old Moon (Williamstown Theatre Festival, The New Victory Theater, Writers Theatre, The Gym at Judson), The Mountain Song and The Nightmare Story (PigPen Theatre Co.), Pericles (Theatre for a New Audience), and American Realism (The Invisible Dog, San Diego Museum of Art).

Creative team includes PigPen Theatre Co. (Book, Music, Lyrics, Co-Directors), Marc Bruni (Co-Director), Jennifer Jancuska (Choreographer), Jason Sherwood (Scenic Designer), Anita Yavich (Costume Designer), Donald Holder (Lighting Designer), Christopher Jahnke (Music Director and Additional Arrangements), Nevin Steinberg (Sound Designer), Lydia Fine (Shadow Sequences and Puppetry Co-Designer), Nick Lehane (Shadow Sequences and Puppetry Co-Designer), Tara Rubin Casting (Casting), and Universal Theatrical Group.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

PigPen Theatre Co. (Book, Music, Lyrics, Co-Directors) PigPen Theatre Co. began creating their unique brand of theatre, music, and film as freshmen at Carnegie Mellon University’s School of Drama in 2007. They have since produced their original plays in New York City and toured the country, earning them Critic’s Picks from The New York Times, Time Out New York, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, The Boston Globe, and many more, ranking them in the top 10 theatrical events of 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2016. They were the first group to win the New York International Fringe Festival’s top honor for a play two years in a row (2010 and 2011), and they have since gone on to win IRNE (2012, 2015) and Joseph Jefferson Awards (2014) for their theatrical productions. In 2016, Sir Trevor Nunn invited PigPen to be a part of his first American acting company for a production of Shakespeare’s Pericles. PigPen’s debut album, Bremen, was named No. 10 album of the year in The Huffington Post’s 2012 Grammy Awards preview, sending PigPen on tour playing to sold-out crowds across the country. American Songwriter premiered their follow-up EP, The Way I’m Running, in 2013 while the band was playing a series of concerts that became one of the most popular residencies of the past decade at the legendary Schubas Tavern in Chicago. In 2015, PigPen released their sophomore album, Whole Sun; performed at Mumford & Sons’s return to the Gentlemen of the Road festival; and made their feature film debut in Jonathan Demme’s Ricki and the Flash starring Meryl Streep. In addition to The Tale of Despereaux, they are creating a musical based on Sara Gruen’s beloved novel Water for Elephants (in collaboration with Rick Elice). In 2020, they will premiere their first interactive theatrical experience, The Phantom Folktales, for Richard Branson’s groundbreaking cruise line Virgin Voyages.
Marc Bruni (Co-Director) Marc is the director of the Tony, Olivier, and Grammy Award–winning Beautiful: The Carole King Musical. He won the Helpmann Award for Best Direction of a Musical for its Australian production, and the show has played Broadway, the West End, U.S. and UK tours, and Japan. His other credits include Paint Your Wagon, Pipe Dream, Fanny, and Hey, Look Me Over! (City Center Encores!), The Music Man and How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying (The Kennedy Center), Old Jews Telling Jokes (New York and Chicago; Joseph Jefferson Award nomination), Roman Holiday (Golden Gate Theatre), Trevor (Writers Theatre; Jeff Award nomination), The Explorers Club (Manhattan Theatre Club), The Sound of Music (Lyric Opera of Chicago), Other People’s Money (Long Wharf Theatre; Connecticut Critics Circle Award nomination), and Ordinary Days (Roundabout Theatre Company). He has directed nine musicals for The Muny in St. Louis, most recently My Fair Lady and Singin’ in the Rain, and he has twice been nominated for Kevin Kline Awards. He is a proud member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and a graduate of Dartmouth College.

Jennifer Jancuska (Choreographer) Jennifer is a choreographer and founding artistic director of the Brooklyn-based company The BringAbout, whose development work has been engaged by award-winning writers, directors, and producers and seen on stages from New York to California. Jennifer is known for producing BC BEAT, described by The New York Times as a platform to “reimagine the possibilities for dance in musical theater.” Jennifer is currently working on Broadway as resident choreographer/dance supervisor of Hamilton. As choreographer, she is thrilled to be developing three new musicals with upcoming productions. They include Hood (Asolo Rep), Anne of Green Gables (Goodspeed), Johnny and the Devil’s Box (Goodspeed), and Despereaux. Cornell University graduate. Member of SDC. JenniferJancuska.com

Jason Sherwood (Scenic Designer) Jason is a Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award, and Henry Hewes Design Award nominee. He recently designed Rent: Live (for which he won an Emmy Award); Sam Smith’s arena world tour and campaign television appearances (including The Grammy Awards, Saturday Night Live, and Ellen: The Ellen DeGeneres Show); the Spice Girls world tour; and The People’s Choice Awards on E! He has also designed for New York Theatre Workshop, The Playwright’s Realm, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, American Repertory Theater, and Guthrie Theater, among many others. @JasonSherwoodDesign

Anita Yavich (Costume Designer) Anita returns to Berkeley Rep having designed Brian Freeman’s Civil Sex, The Oresteia, Tiny Kushner, Dael Orlandersmith’s Black N Blue Boys/Broken Men, and Chinglish. Anita designed the Broadway productions of Fool for Love, Venus in Fur, Chinglish, and Anna in the Tropics. Her other New York credits include The Mother (Atlantic Theater Company); Apologia (Roundabout Theatre Company); Soft Power and Oedipus El Rey (The Public Theater’s New York Shakespeare Festival); The View Upstairs (Lynn Redgrave Theater); The Legend of Georgia McBride, Coraline, and The Wooden Breeks (MCC Theater); Nathan the Wise, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Orlando, New Jerusalem, and Texts for Nothing (Classic Stage Company); Thorn Pain (based on nothing), Big Love, Kung Fu, Golden Child, and Iphigenia 2.0 (Signature Theatre Company); The Oldest Boy (Lincoln Center Theater); The Moors (The Playwrights Realm); The Explorers Club (Manhattan Theatre Club); and Macbeth, Coriolanus, and Švejk (Theatre for a New Audience). Her opera credits include Aida (San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, Seattle Opera), Cyrano de Bergerac (La Scala, The Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House), and Les Troyens (The Met). Anita was also the puppet and costume designer for The Sound of Music (Salzburger Marionettentheater). She has received Obie, Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk, and Ovation Awards. Upcoming she will design Der Ring des Nibelungen for Opera Australia in Brisbane.

Donald Holder (Lighting Designer) Donald previously designed Zora Neale Hurston’s Spunk, Maurice Sendak’s Brundibar, and the world premieres of Paradise Square and Monsoon Wedding at Berkeley Rep. His recent work on Broadway includes Anastasia, Oslo, In Transit, She Loves Me, Fiddler on the Roof, The Father, The King and I, On the Twentieth Century, The Bridges of Madison County, Golden Boy, Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark, Ragtime, Movin’ Out, The Boy from Oz, Thoroughly Modern Millie, and many others. He has designed over 50 Broadway productions, received two Tony Awards (The Lion King and South Pacific) and 13 Tony nominations. Opera credits include Samson et Delilah, Otello, Two
Off Broadway credits include County S Musical, Aladdin, A Bronx Tale The Musical, The Life and Times of The Temptations, Tara Rubin Casting

Mellon University.

and movement direction for Pedro Islamic Solidarity Games Opening Ceremonies (Baku, Azerbaijan), Doug Fitch’s Center, international tour), puppet work has shown at St. Ann’s Warehouse, Puppet BloK at Dixon Place, The Jim Henson Carriage Theatre Co. as the puppet designer for Nick Lehane

Creating worlds and launched Virgin Voyages. On Broadway, Christopher also served as conductor for Aida and music supervisor for Escape to Margaritaville and Memphis. He was apprentice and assistant to orchestrator William David Brohn on Sweet Smell of Success, Ragtime, The Secret Garden, The Three Musketeers, The Witches of Eastwick, Mary Poppins, and Wicked.

Christopher Jahnke (Music Director and Additional Arrangements) Christopher orchestrated the Broadway and/or London productions of King Kong, Legally Blonde, Cry-Baby, Grease (2007 revival), Dessa Rose, A Man of No Importance, Dear Evan Hansen (additional orchestrations, with Alex Lacamoire), Stiles and Drewes’s The Wind in the Willows, The Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess (Tony Award nomination for Best Orchestrations), and Les Misérables (new orchestrations, performed worldwide since 2006). His other orchestrations include Do You Hear the People Sing?, a symphonic tour of Boubil and Schönberg’s work; Stiles and Leigh’s Tom Jones; Stiles and Drewes’s Just So; Bartram and Hill’s Not Wanted on the Voyage; Lady Gaga’s tribute to The Sound of Music at the 2015 Oscars (with Stephen Oremus); The Wiz Live!; Radio City Music Hall’s New York Spectacular and Christmas Spectacular; and work with Rufus Wainwright, Emily Bear, Adam Schlesinger, and Jägermeister Blaskapelle. On Broadway, Christopher also served as conductor for Aida and music supervisor for Escape to Margaritaville and Memphis. He was apprentice and assistant to orchestrator William David Brohn on Sweet Smell of Success, Ragtime, The Secret Garden, The Three Musketeers, The Witches of Eastwick, Mary Poppins, and Wicked.

Nevin Steinberg (Sound Designer) Nevin’s Broadway credits include Hamilton, Dear Evan Hansen, Hadestown (Tony Award), The Cher Show, Bandstand, Bright Star, It Shoulda Been You, Mothers and Sons, Rodgers + Hammerstein’s Cinderella (Tony nomination), The Performers, and Magic/ Bird. His off-Broadway credits include Dear Evan Hansen, Hamilton, The Landing, and Far from Heaven. He designed over 30 Broadway productions with Acme Sound Partners, receiving five additional Tony nominations, for The Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess, Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo, Fences, Hair, and In the Heights.

Lydia Fine (Shadow Sequences and Puppetry Co-Designer) Lydia is a Brooklyn–based designer and award-winning creative director. She has been working with PigPen Theatre Co. since their days together at Carnegie Mellon University. Her past productions with them include the critically acclaimed The Old Man and The Old Moon, The Nightmare Story, and The Hunter and The Bear. She is also the creative director for The Phantom Folktales, a unique theatrical experience taking place on the soon to be launched Virgin Voyages. When she is not playing with shadow puppets, she is working in various media, creating worlds and characters for films, music videos, photo shoots, and immersive events. lydiafine.com

Nick Lehane (Shadow Sequences and Puppetry Co-Designer) Nick worked previously with PigPen Theatre Co. as the puppet designer for The Phantom Folktales and the understudy for The Old Man and The Old Moon. His puppet play Chimpanzee premiered earlier this year at HERE Arts Center. His original puppet work has shown at St. Ann’s Warehouse, Puppet BloK at Dixon Place, The Jim Henson Carriage House, Special Effects Festival at wild project, and Pillsbury House Theatre. Nick’s select puppet performance credits include Robin Frohardt’s The Plastic Bag Store and The Pigeon (HERE Arts Center, international tour), Petrushka (Giants Are Small, New York Philharmonic, Barbican Centre), Islamic Solidarity Games Opening Ceremonies (Baku, Azerbaijan), Doug Fitch’s El Retablo de Maese Pedro (American Symphony Orchestra, Bard SummerScape), James Ortiz’s The Little Mermaid (Glass Bandits Theater Company, Strangemen Theatre Company), and Lore (Amazon). He also provided puppet and movement direction for SeaWife (Naked Angels). Nick received his BFA in Drama from Carnegie Mellon University.

Here Lies Love; and Love, Loss, and What I Wore. They have also cast regionally for McCarter Theatre Center, Yale Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Paper Mill Playhouse, The Old Globe, and more.

Universal Theatrical Group Universal Theatrical Group is the live-theatre division of the world-famous motion picture studio. Universal’s record-breaking phenomenon Wicked is currently celebrating its 17th hit year on Broadway. With a national tour and multiple international productions, Wicked has been seen by over 60 million people worldwide, making it one of the most successful theatrical ventures of all time. Additional credits include Billy Elliot the Musical; Bring It On: The Musical; and Irving Berlin’s Holiday Inn with Roundabout Theatre Company. Upcoming under UTG’s DreamWorks Theatricals banner is the West End premiere of The Prince of Egypt, opening in February 2020.

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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