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BERKELEY REP’S VIRTUAL GALA TO PREMIERE ONLINE
Gala to honor Anna Deavere Smith and launch theatre’s Resilience Campaign

April 3, 2020 – Due to the ongoing situation with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the statewide shelter in place mandate, Berkeley Repertory Theatre is moving its annual OVATION gala online. The OVATION gala premieres today at https://app.mobilecause.com/e/LYFpiQ?vid=6myzh

“In any year our gala would have been important because it generates so much of our annual income, but this year it’s more important than ever,” said Managing Director Susie Medak. “We want to make sure that on the other side of this pandemic we will still be able to produce great theatre for our audiences. We still want to be able to do the important work we do in the School of Theatre and nurture the next generation of theatremakers.”

As originally planned the gala will honor celebrated actress, playwright, teacher, and author Anna Deavere Smith. Smith appeared at Berkeley Rep in Let Me Down Easy, Fires in the Mirror, and Twilight: Los Angeles 1992, and in 2015, she presented her most recent play, Notes from the Field, which looked at the vulnerability of youth, inequality, the criminal justice system, and contemporary activism. The play went on to great acclaim, with The New York Times heralding the play among The Best Theater of 2016 and TIME magazine naming it one of the Top 10 Plays of the year. HBO premiered the film version in February 2018.

“We are so proud to be Anna’s West Coast home,” says Artistic Director Johanna Pfaelzer. “She is one of the most important artists working today, and much like a Berkeley Rep audience member she is intellectual, and insightful, and her pieces always combine the political with the profoundly human. I am honored to have the chance to celebrate Anna’s work and her decades-long relationship with Berkeley Rep, whose audiences have been transformed and inspired by her vision time and time again.”

In an effort to weather this moment of uncertainty, Berkeley Rep has launched the Resilience Campaign, a chance for the community to sustain the Theatre and support the staff and artists behind the work onstage. Berkeley Rep typically employs 450 artists and collaborators each season. With both theatres and School of Theatre closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Berkeley Rep faces significant financial consequences. Every effort is being made to keep artists, technicians, artisans, and staff employed and their health benefits in place as they navigate these unprecedented challenges. The Theatre is calling on their community of subscribers, donors, and patrons, to help share in the joy of live theatre once again.

Trustees, OVATION committee members, and volunteers have formed teams to fundraise and are inviting their friends to raise a glass from home while lifting their paddles to support Berkeley Rep. The OVATION team has built individual fundraising pages for each of the table hosts and ticket buyers on the virtual gala site, and guests can customize their page so it reflects their personality and speaks directly to their friends. In addition, special videos have been created by various artists to entertain attendees and show their support of Berkeley Rep, including Culture Clash, cast members from the world premiere musical Kiss My Aztec! (2019), Daniel Handler aka Lemony Snicket, Sarah Ruhl, and more.
OVATION aims to raise $900,000 by Saturday, April 18. This year there is no minimum ticket price to attend, anyone can participate. All contributors will be invited to a live online private event with Anna Deavere Smith, Susie Medak, Johanna Pfaelzer, and others.

OVATION is made possible by the generosity of Platinum sponsors Robin and Rich Edwards, Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer, Richard Grand Foundation, Sudha Pennathur and Ed Messerly, The Strauch Kulhanjian Family, and Gail and Arne Wagner.

The planning committee for the event is led by co-chairs Jill Fugaro and Laura Severino and includes Deborah Barrera, Ronnie Caplane, Narsai David, Rich Edwards, Robin Edwards, Sandra Eggers, Scott Haber, Sandra McCandless, Sudha Pennathur, Margaret Rothschild, Audrey Rose Sockolov, Jean Strunsky, Gail Wagner, and Susan Wolin.

For more information, contact Nina Feliciano at (510) 647-2901 or concierge@berkeleyrep.org

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. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org

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