

ALLEY THEATRE

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Artistic Director Rob Melrose Translates and Directs Three Classics to Launch the Alley Theatre's 2021 Digital Season

HOUSTON, TX – The Alley Theatre's **Artistic Director Rob Melrose** has translated three classic short plays and adapted them for the Alley@Home 2021 Digital Season. Two of the new translations are **August Strindberg** plays: *The Stronger* and *A Half Sheet of Paper*. The other new translation is **Luigi Pirandello's** *The Man with the Flower in His Mouth*. Melrose will direct all three newly translated classics. All plays will be available for free to all who register for tickets at alleytheatre.org. Registration is now open for all shows in the Alley's 2021 Digital Season.

"It is hard to imagine something more devastating to a theater than a global pandemic and indeed it has been extremely challenging for us at the Alley," said Artistic Director Rob Melrose. "That said, we have also found ways to make lemonade out of lemons and have used this moment to find new ways of engaging you, our audience, and a much wider variety of plays than we can normally offer on our Hubbard and Neuhaus stages."

"I couldn't be more excited about the level of artistry our Alley team has been able to achieve filming from our homes. I'm particularly eager to share three short masterpieces with you. August Strindberg has been a favorite playwright of mine for three decades," Melrose continued. "I've directed 10 productions of his plays and I am continually astounded by both his genius and his profound influence on the American theater, especially on Edward Albee, Tennessee Williams, and Eugene O'Neill. Each work of Strindberg's is a little experiment. In the case of *The Stronger*: his exploration was to write a play where one character speaks and the other is

silent and to have the power dynamic between them constantly shifting. With *A Half Sheet of Paper*: his genius was to try to encapsulate two years of life on a half sheet of paper. In both pieces, he is able to get to an emotional intensity and insight into the human condition with an ease and brilliance that is unique to him.”

“Luigi Pirandello is best known for meta-theatrical plays like *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Lesser known are his many stories and plays about life in Sicily. While these plays are more realistic than his more fantastical plays, they are equally magical in how they illuminate our existence here on earth. In *The Man with the Flower in His Mouth*, Pirandello is able to use a simple conversation between two men stuck at an all-night café in a train station to slow down time and make us really appreciate the little things in life, right down to their minutest detail. It is a wonderful piece of writing and I can’t wait for you to experience it,” Melrose concludes.

The Stronger by August Strindberg and translated by Rob Melrose runs **January 15 – February 7, 2021** and features Alley Resident Acting Company Members **Elizabeth Bunch** and **Melissa Pritchett**. Two rival actresses run into each other at a café on Christmas night. One seems to have everything: a husband, children, prosperity, and shopping bags laden with Christmas gifts. The other sits silently at her table not speaking a word. As events unfold, it becomes clear that things aren’t what they seem, and it is perhaps the silent one who has everything...has stolen everything.

The creative team for *The Stronger* includes Translator and Director **Rob Melrose**, Scenic Design by **Michael Locher**, Costume Design by **Erica Griese**, Lighting Design by **Kevin Rigdon**, Sound Design by **Pierre Dupree**, Editor **John Carrithers**, Assistant Directors **Emily Bohannon** and **Rachel Dooley-Harris**, Production Assistant **Rachel Piero**, and Dramaturg **Luke Evans**.

A Half Sheet of Paper by August Strindberg and translated by Rob Melrose runs **January 22 – February 14, 2021**. One of Strindberg’s best loved short stories is now available for English-speaking audiences to enjoy. A man is moving out of his apartment and makes one last check through the empty spaces to make sure nothing has been forgotten. By the telephone, he finds a small sheet of paper full of notes and scribbles that calls forth a flood of memories of the highs and lows of his two years living there. Perhaps no short story better encapsulates Tennyson’s maxim “’Tis better to have loved and lost / than never loved at all.” Alley Resident Acting Company Member **Chris Hutchison** beautifully guides us through this poignant experience.

The creative team for *A Half Sheet of Paper* includes Translator and Director **Rob Melrose**, Scenic Design by **Michael Locher**, Costume Design by **Erica Griese**, Lighting Design by **Kevin Rigdon**, Sound Design by **Pierre Dupree**, Director of Photography and Editor **John Carrithers**, Assistant Director **Rebecca R. D. Hamlin**, Production Assistant **Jordan Kruijs**, and Dramaturg **Luke Evans**.

The Man with the Flower in His Mouth by Luigi Pirandello and translated by Rob Melrose runs **February 12 – March 14, 2021**. Two strangers meet at a train station in the middle of the night.

At first, their concerns seem the petty worries of the everyday, but as the two men get to know each other better, the subject turns to life, death, and the meaning of existence. It is the play that inspired Edward Albee's masterpiece *The Zoo Story*. Luigi Pirandello won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1934 and is considered to be one of the most innovative dramatists who ever lived.

The cast of *The Man with the Flower in His Mouth* features Resident Acting Company Members **David Rainey** as An Easy-Going Customer and **Jay Sullivan** as The Man with the Flower in His Mouth. **Alicia Beard** will portray A Woman in Black. The play's creative team includes Translator and Director **Rob Melrose**, Scenic Design by **Michael Locher**, Costume Design by **Erica Griese**, Lighting Design by **Kevin Rigdon**, Sound Design by **Bradley Jay Gowers**, Editor **John Carrithers**, Assistant Directors **Emily Bohannan** and **Rachel Dooley-Harris**, Production Assistant **Jordan Kruis**, Dramaturg **Alison Christy**, and Directing Intern **Laura Moreno**.

PHOTOS:

[Click here for photos.](#)

ABOUT THE ALLEY THEATRE

The Alley Theatre, one of America's leading nonprofit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company led by Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden. The Alley is committed to developing and producing theatre that is as diverse as the Houston community. The Theatre produces up to 16 plays and nearly 500 performances each season, ranging from the best current work and re-invigorated classic plays to new plays by contemporary writers. Home to a full-time resident company of actors, the Alley engages theatre artists of every discipline—actors, directors, designers, composers, playwrights—who work on individual productions throughout each season as visiting artists.

The Alley is comprised of two state-of-the-art theatres: the 774-seat Hubbard Theatre and the 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre. The Alley reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance, education, and community engagement programs. Its audience enrichment programs include pre-show and post-performance talks, events, and workshops for audience members of all ages.

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