

ALLEY THEATRE

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Alley Theatre Announces Updates to the 2020-21 Season *Resident Acting Company and an Innovative Set Play a Leading Role in the Reimagined Season*

HOUSTON, TX – The Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre and Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** are announcing updates to the Theatre’s 74th season. The 2020-21 season programming, the second season curated by Rob Melrose, will feature world premiere plays developed as a part of the Alley All New program, a twist on a holiday favorite, a major world classic, and plays by award-winning contemporary voices.

The Alley’s Leadership Team and Emergency Preparedness Committee, in compliance with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State of Texas, are working diligently to create practices and guidelines that ensure the safety of patrons, artists, and staff for when the Theatre reopens. The Alley is collaborating with other Theater District organizations to establish similar safety protocols for all Downtown Houston performing arts venues. All shows in the Alley’s 2020-21 season will be performed in the Hubbard Theatre to ensure that patrons can enjoy a show while social distancing.

The 2020-21 season will be centered around the Theatre’s Resident Acting Company. Director of Design **Michael Locher** has created an innovative season set. The flexible season set has multiple variations and will have elements changed for each show, which will make each show feel unique.

"Everyone at the Alley is eager to get back into the theatre to make plays and interact with audiences again. I’m proud of the Alley team for doing such an amazing job of being nimble and flexible and keeping everyone’s safety the top priority," said Artistic Director Rob Melrose. "Our 2020-21 season is small but mighty. It leans into the Alley’s strengths with our exceptionally talented Resident Acting Company as well as our many wonderful resident artists and artisans. While we are only presenting six plays, the season includes two world premieres, an exciting Pulitzer Prize-winning play in collaboration with The Ensemble Theatre, a 20th century

classic, and *A Christmas Carol* for the holidays. I can't wait to see all the patrons at the theatre again. I've missed each of them!"

After being a part of the Alley All New Reading Series in 2019, *Born with Teeth* by **Liz Duffy Adams** will have its world premiere at the Alley Theatre and will be directed by **Rob Melrose**. An aging authoritarian ruler, a violent police state, a restless polarized people seething with paranoia: it's a dangerous time for poets. Two of them—the great Kit Marlowe and the up-and-comer Will Shakespeare—meet in the back room of a pub to collaborate on a history play cycle, navigate the perils of art under a totalitarian regime, and flirt like young men with everything to lose. One of them may well be the death of the other. *Born with Teeth* will run **January 22 – February 14, 2021**.

Rob Melrose will direct **Samuel Beckett's** classic *Waiting for Godot* next, which will run **March 5 – March 28, 2021**. Considered the most significant play of the 20th century, *Waiting for Godot* is Samuel Beckett's masterpiece. In this wickedly funny, frequently moving existential play, two men, Vladimir and Estragon, meet near a tree to wait for the arrival of the mysterious Godot. They discuss their philosophies, debate their lots in life, question why they were put on earth and ultimately encounter three characters, Lucky, Pozzo, and a messenger boy, who engage in enlightening conversations about the human condition and hilarious physical comedy as they wait...and wait... and wait for Godot.

The off-the-wall comedy *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by MacArthur "Genius" **Sarah Ruhl** returns after being canceled in the previous season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The play will be directed by Associate Producer & Casting Director **Brandon Weinbrenner** and runs **April 16 – May 9, 2021**. The play follows the odyssey of a woman forced to confront her own assumptions about morality, redemption, and the need to connect in a technologically obsessed world.

Sweat, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play by **Lynn Nottage**, will be a part of the Alley's 2020-21 season. Produced in collaboration with Houston's **The Ensemble Theatre**, *Sweat* will be directed by Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** and Associate Directed by **Eileen J. Morris**, Artistic Director of **The Ensemble Theatre**. Filled with humor and tremendous heart, *Sweat* tells the story of three women who have spent their lives sharing drinks, secrets, and laughs while working together on the factory floor. But when layoffs and picket lines begin to chip away at their trust, they find themselves pitted against each other. *Sweat* will run **May 28 – June 20, 2021**.

High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest by Texan playwright **Vichet Chum** will have its world premiere at the Alley and runs from **July 9 – August 1, 2021**. The play was developed in the 2020 Alley All New Festival and will be directed by Houston native **Tiffany Nichole Greene**. *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* follows a group of high school seniors in Carrollton, Texas as their competitive theatre troupe is climbing back to the top from last year's unprecedented loss. Dara is trying to rally his teammates, while new kid Paul disrupts Dara's complete understanding of himself and his small-town suburban life. When coaches Dirkson and Blow make a bold choice for the one-act play competition and the community takes issue,

friends and rivals duke it out and find themselves in this uniquely Texan and thoroughly universal coming of age comedy.

For the holidays, the Alley will produce **Doris Baizley**'s inventive adaptation of **Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol***, which will be directed by the Alley's Associate Producer & Casting Director **Brandon Weinbrenner** and runs **November 20 - December 27, 2020**. A resident company of actors assembles to perform a beautifully simplified production of the heart-warming Christmas story. With two actors missing and a tiny budget, creating a magical world of holiday make-believe is no easy feat. The company uses song, dance, fog, and magic to bring the holiday classic to imaginative new heights. It will be *A Christmas Carol* like no other.

While there will not be an Alley All New Festival this season, the Alley will continue to develop new work through the Theatre's [Alley All New](#) initiative. Details about public events, held either online or in person, will be announced at a later date.

The Alley's Education and Community Engagement department continues its **El Zócalo** programming. The El Zócalo initiative was created three seasons ago to celebrate, grow, and interact with Houston's diverse Latin culture and artistic community. Manager of Community Partnerships **Baldemar Rodriguez** has led the program since early 2020 and brought the program online this summer with ***Primer Borrador***. *Primer Borrador* is a hybrid of online video modules paired with synchronous, bi-weekly Zoom lessons that guide members of the community in developing, writing, and presenting stories that celebrate their heritage. More details about upcoming El Zócalo events will be released in the future.

All titles, dates, and artists in the Alley's 2020-21 season are subject to change.

Many plays originally planned for the 2020-21 season are being moved into future seasons. The Alley remains committed to the world premieres of *Noir* with music by Duncan Sheik and book and lyrics by Kyle Jarrow, *Amerikin* by Chisa Hutchinson, and *What-a-Christmas!* by Isaac Gómez.

The Full 2020-21 Season

World Premiere Play

BORN WITH TEETH

By Liz Duffy Adams

Directed by Rob Melrose

An aging authoritarian ruler, a violent police state, a restless polarized people seething with paranoia: it's a dangerous time for poets. Two of them—the great Kit Marlowe and the up-and-comer Will Shakespeare—meet in the back room of a pub to collaborate on a history play cycle, navigate the perils of art under a totalitarian regime, and flirt like young men with everything to lose. One of them may well be the death of the other. Developed in the Alley All New Reading Series.

Classic Theatre

WAITING FOR GODOT

By Samuel Beckett

Directed by Rob Melrose

Considered the most significant play of the 20th century, *Waiting for Godot* is Samuel Beckett's masterpiece. In this wickedly funny, frequently moving existential play, two men, Vladimir and Estragon, meet near a tree to wait for the arrival of the mysterious Godot. They discuss their philosophies, debate their lots in life, question why they were put on earth and ultimately encounter three characters, Lucky, Pozzo, and a messenger boy, who engage in enlightening conversations about the human condition and hilarious physical comedy as they wait...and wait...and wait for Godot.

Off-the-Wall Comedy

DEAD MAN'S CELL PHONE

By Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Brandon Weinbrenner

An incessantly ringing cell phone in a quiet café. A stranger at the next table who has had enough. And a dead man. So begins *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, a wildly imaginative comedy by MacArthur "Genius" Sarah Ruhl (*The Clean House*). An off-the-wall play about the odyssey of a woman forced to confront her own assumptions about morality, redemption, and the need to connect in a technologically obsessed world.

Pulitzer Prize Winner

SWEAT

By Lynn Nottage

Directed by Rob Melrose

Associate Directed by Eileen J. Morris

Produced in collaboration with The Ensemble Theatre

Filled with humor and tremendous heart, *Sweat* tells the story of three women who have spent their lives sharing drinks, secrets, and laughs while working together on the factory floor. But when layoffs and picket lines begin to chip away at their trust, they find themselves pitted against each other in a heart-wrenching fight to stay afloat.

World Premiere Comedy

HIGH SCHOOL PLAY: A NOSTALGIA FEST

By Vichet Chum

Directed by Tiffany Nichole Greene

It's senior year in Carrollton, Texas, and Riverside High School's competitive theatre troupe is climbing back to the top from last year's unprecedented loss. Dara is trying to rally his teammates, while new kid Paul disrupts Dara's complete understanding of himself and his small-

town suburban life. When coaches Dirkson and Blow make a bold choice for the one-act play competition and the community takes issue, friends and rivals duke it out and find themselves in this uniquely Texan and thoroughly universal coming of age comedy by Texan playwright Vichet Chum, directed by Houston native Tiffany Nichole Greene. Developed in the 2020 Alley All New Festival.

HOLIDAY

New to the Alley

Charles Dickens'

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Adapted by Doris Baizley

Directed by Brandon Weinbrenner

A highly inventive adaptation of the Dickens classic paired down to its essential elements. A resident company of actors assembles to perform the heart-warming Christmas story. With two actors missing and a tiny budget, creating a magical world of holiday make-believe is no easy feat. The company uses song, dance, fog, and magic to bring the holiday classic to imaginative new heights. It will be *A Christmas Carol* like no other.

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 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 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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