

ALLEY THEATRE

FOR RELEASE
September 17, 2015

MEDIA CONTACT:

Lauren Pelletier, Public Relations Associate, (lauren@alleytheatre.org)
Katie Jackman, Director of Marketing and Communications (katie@alleytheatre.org)
713.228.9341

Alley Theatre Announces First Annual Alley All New Festival

Featuring new work by Karen Hartman, Boo Killebrew, NSangou Njikam, and Lawrence Wright

HOUSTON – Artistic Director Gregory Boyd is pleased to announce the first annual Alley All New Festival, January 28 – February 7, 2016, featuring new plays by Karen Hartman, Boo Killebrew, NSangou Njikam (aka Glenn Gordon) and Lawrence Wright. All presentations are free and open to the public.

The Alley All New Festival will feature a combination of readings and workshops of six new plays. Playwrights will have the opportunity to work with a director and a company of actors to develop the play, while also offering audiences a first look at the work and insight into the playwriting process.

“It’s not just the building that is new this season. The Alley All New Festival kick-offs what’s to come as we deepen our commitment to playwrights and new writing” said Artistic Director Gregory Boyd. “I look forward to bringing our audiences into the play development process and to introducing Houston audiences to these fantastic writers during the festival.”

Cleo, by Pulitzer Prize-winner Lawrence Wright, is the story of the scandalous romance of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, set during the filming of the disastrous 1963 movie “Cleopatra”. This one day reading will feature actors performing the play at music stands. Acclaimed actor and director Bob Balaban will direct.

Workshop productions include: *Miller, Mississippi*, a new Southern Gothic tale by Boo Killebrew; *Roz and Ray*, an unconventional love story between the father of twin hemophiliac boys and the doctor who tries to save them, by Karen Hartman; and *Syncing Ink*, a semi-autobiographical hip-hop play by NSangou Njikam (aka Glenn Gordon). Each playwright will have 4-weeks to develop their plays with a focus on the creative process instead of the final product. Each workshop will culminate in fully-staged public performances featuring bare-bones design elements.

Additional opportunities for audiences to deepen their experience will include talkbacks with members of the artistic team following each performance, panel discussions, and multiple social opportunities for audiences, industry professionals and artists to engage.

The festival is one component of Alley All New, a major new work initiative that expands the Alley’s commitment to the playwright and to produce more world premieres. The theatre has a strong history in working with playwrights and premiering their work including Theresa Rebeck (*Foo!*), Kenneth Lin (*Intelligence-Slave*), Rajiv Joseph (*Gruesome Playground Injuries* and *Monster at the Door*) and Elizabeth Eglhoff (*Ether Dome*).

The Alley’s formalized commitment to new work began in May 2015 with the appointment of Elizabeth Frankel as the Director of New Work. Frankel previously worked as Literary Manager at The Public Theatre in New York where she ran the Literary Department and the Emerging Writers Group. “I am thrilled to launch the inaugural Alley All New Festival with these plays. Together they represent the breadth, seriousness of intent and joyful theatricality of what playwrights are writing today” said Frankel.

Two additional playwrights and the full festival schedule will be announced later this fall.

WORKSHOP PRODUCTIONS

Miller, Mississippi

By Boo Killebrew

Directed by Lee Sunday Evans

This new Southern Gothic tale begins with a ghost story told to the Miller children by their family's Black maid in 1960 and ends in 1982 after reality has proved far worse for this genteel Southern family in Jackson, Mississippi. Boo Killebrew tells a story set in her home state about the legacy of white male privilege that is as lurid as it is based in truth.

Roz and Ray

By Karen Hartman

San Diego, 1976. Ray, a newly single father of twin hemophiliac boys, meets Roz, a hematologist newly in possession of miracle drug Factor 8. Roz and her cure offer a normal life for Ray's sons, and a chance at life for Ray, too. Roz seems to be Ray's savior -- until the miracle goes bad. A fifteen-year tale of two adults growing up, *Roz and Ray* is a love story you've never heard before.

Syncing Ink

By NSangou Njikam (aka Glenn Gordon)

Directed by Niegel Smith

"When I'm alone in my room/sometimes I stare at the wall/and in the back of my mind I hear my conscience call telling me I have a hidden gift I need to tap/could it be...this suburban teen is destined to rap?" Nsangou Njikam stars in his semi-autobiographical hip-hop play directed by Niegel Smith, newly appointed Artistic Director of New York's Flea Theater.

READING

Cleo

By Lawrence Wright

Directed by Bob Balaban

Set during the filming of the disastrous 1963 movie "Cleopatra," *Cleo* is the story of the scandalous romance of Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Their relationship brought condemnation from the Vatican and the US Congress, and it opened the age of paparazzi and tabloid celebrity, ensuring that the names Burton and Taylor would always be associated with the greatest sex scandal in ancient history, that of Antony and Cleopatra. A new play by the Pulitzer Prize-winning, Texas-based author Lawrence Wright directed by the acclaimed director and actor Bob Balaban.

ABOUT THE CREATIVE TEAM

Bob Balaban (Director, *Cleo*) directed and produced the off-Broadway production of *The Exonerated*, which won a Drama Desk Award, an Outer Critics Circle Award, a Lortel Award and *New York Times* Play of The Year. Other theater directing includes the world premiere of Lucy Boyle's *The Blue Deep* starring Blythe Danner (WTF), Paul Grellong's *Manuscript* (DR2), Sherry Glaser's *Family Secrets* (37 Arts), and Arthur Kopit's *Y2K* (MTC). He produced and co-starred in the film *Gosford Park* which won an Academy Award, Golden Globe nominations and SAG and BAFTA Awards. He received Golden Globe, DGA, PGA and Emmy nominations for directing and producing the HBO film *Bernard and Doris* as well as DGA and Emmy nominations for directing *Georgia O'Keeffe*. He directed the movies *The Last Good Time* and *Parents* and the TV series *Alpha House*, *Nurse Jackie*, and *Oz*. As an actor, Bob has appeared in nearly a hundred films including *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Capote*, *Waiting for Guffman*, *Absence of Malice*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Catch-22*, *Midnight Cowboy*, and, most recently, George Clooney's *The Monuments Men*, Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and David Simon's HBO miniseries *Show Me a Hero*.

Lee Sunday Evans (Director, *Miller, Mississippi*) is a director and choreographer. Credits include *D Deb Debbie*

Deborah by Jerry Lieblch, *A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes* by Kate Benson which won an OBIE Award, *The Play About My Dad* by Boo Killebrew, *God's Ear* by Jenny Schwartz, *All Girls* by Anna Greenfield, *The Deepest Play Ever* by Geoffrey Decas O'Donnell, *The Momentum*, and *Family Play (1979 to Present)* by CollaborationTown and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht with original music by Nicholas C. Williams. Her work has been presented and developed at Clubbed Thumb, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Sundance Theater Lab, Brooklyn Arts Exchange, CATCH, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, The New Ohio, Dixon Place, Emerging America Festival/Huntington Theater, The Juilliard School, New Victory and Coatesville VA Medical Center. She is currently in development with Matthew Paul Olmos' *So Go the Ghosts of Mexico, Part II*, CollaborationTown's *The Rise + Fall of the Trilobite Kingdom* with original music by Nicholas C. Williams, *[Porto]* by Kate Benson, *Miller, Mississippi* by Boo Killebrew and *Don't You Fucking Say a Word* by Andy Bragen among others. She holds a BFA from Boston University.

Karen Hartman (Playwright, *Roz and Ray*) held the Playwright Center's 2014-15 McKnight Residency and Commission for a nationally recognized playwright. Current and upcoming work includes *Roz and Ray* (developed at Playwrights Center, Seattle Rep, Hedgebrook), *The Book of Joseph* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Project Dawn*, in workshop at People's Light & Theater Company, and a Yale Repertory Theater commission about the landmark Supreme Court case *Ricci vs DeStefano*. Her new dialogue for Mozart's *The Magic Flute* appeared in Pacific Music Works' production at the Meany Center in Seattle, 2015. Hartman's *Goldie, Max, and Milk* premiered at Florida Stage and the Phoenix Theater, nominated for the Steinberg and Carbonell Awards. Other works: *Goliath* (Dorothy Silver New Play Prize), *Gum, Leah's Train, Going Gone* (N.E.A. New Play Grant); *Girl Under Grain* (Best Drama in NY Fringe); *Wild Kate, ALICE: Tales of a Curious Girl* (Music by Gina Leishman, AT&T Onstage Award); *Troy Women; Donna Wants; Sea Change*, score by AnnMarie Milazzo; and *MotherBone*, score by Graham Reynolds (Frederick Loewe Award). New York: Women's Project, National Asian American Theatre Company, P73, the New York Fringe (Best Drama), and Summer Play Festival. Regional: Center Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse, Dallas Theater Center, the Magic, and elsewhere. Publications: Theater Communications Group, Dramatists Play Service, Playscripts, Backstage Books, and NoPassport Press. Awards: Sustainable Arts Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation at Bellagio, the N.E.A., the Helen Merrill Foundation, Daryl Roth "Creative Spirit" Award, Hodder Fellowship, Jerome Fellowship, Fulbright Scholarship. An alumna of New Dramatists and longtime Brooklynite, Karen is now Senior Artist in Residence at the University of Washington. Her prose is published in the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Boo Killebrew (Playwright, *Miller, Mississippi*) is a playwright, actress and co-founder of CollaborationTown Theatre Company. Boo is a Lila Acheson Playwriting Fellow at The Juilliard School, a member of the Primary Stages Writers Group, an alumni of the 2013 Emerging Writers Group at The Public, a recipient of the 2013 NYFA Fellowship, an alumni of TerraNova's Groundbreakers, and an Affiliated Artist and Kitchen Cabinet Member with New Georges. She is a writer for *Longmire* (A & E, Netflix) and *Aim High* (Sundance, pilot). Her plays include *Miller, Mississippi* which was a recipient of the 2015 Leah Ryan Prize; *Romance Novels For Dummies; Days Like Diamonds; The Play About My Dad; and The Momentum* which won a NYC Fringe Festival Excellence Award for Overall Production of a Play and was a GLAAD Media Award Nominee. Her work has been presented at The Roundabout Theatre, The Public Theater, Williamstown Theater Festival, The Atlantic, New York Theater Workshop, New Georges, Clubbed Thumb, The Huntington Theatre Co., 59e59 Theatres, The New Ohio, The Labyrinth, and Boston Playwright's Theatre. Boo was an Edward F. Albee Foundation Fellow, an Artist in Residence at NYFA, Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, The New York Theater Workshop, The MacDowell Colony, Williamstown Theater Festival, JAW at Portland Center Stage, New York Stage and Film, Perry Mansfield, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and a member of The Working Farm (Space at Ryder Farm). Boo has received two New York Innovative Theater Awards for acting and has been nominated multiple times for both playwriting and acting. She is the recipient of The Leah Ryan Prize, two Fringe Excellence Awards and The Bette Davis Foundation Award. Boo is a teaching artist with The Roundabout Theatre Company.

NSangou Njikam (Playwright, *Syncing Ink*) is originally from Baltimore, MD. NSangou (formerly known as Glenn Gordon) is an actor and playwright, and a member of the 2015 Emerging Writers Group at The Public Theater. As an actor, his credits include *Waiting For Godot* at Classical Theatre of Harlem, *Hands Up* at National Black Theater, *Game On* at the Kennedy Center, *Deep Azure* at Congo Square Theatre Company, *Hieroglyphic Graffiti* at PS 122 and *Re:Definition* at LaMama. He is the author of *Re:Definition, Syncing Ink, When We Left*, and one of the six playwrights for *Hands Up* which received a Barrymore Award nomination for Outstanding New Play. His play *I.D.*, commissioned by Penn State University, premiered at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South

Africa, and he is the first African American male playwright to receive a Penn State commission. NSangou is co-founder of The Continuum Project, Inc., an organization utilizing African Ancestry DNA testing and the Arts to promote healing and empowerment for people of African descent. He received the name NSangou from Sultan MBombo Njoya, 19th king of the Bamoun Kingdom, after having traced his own ancestry to the Tikar people in Cameroon. NSangou received his BFA in acting from Howard University.

Niegel Smith (Director, *Syncing Ink*) is a theater director and performance artist. He is the Artistic Director of NYC's Obie-Award winning theater, The Flea; Associate Artistic Director of Elastic City; and ringleader of Willing Participant, an artistic activist organization that whips up urgent poetic responses to crazy shit that happens. His theater work has been produced by Classical Theatre of Harlem, HERE Arts Center, Hip Hop Theatre Festival, The Invisible Dog, Luna Stage, Magic Theatre, Mixed Blood, New York Fringe Festival, New York Live Arts, Phoenix Theatre Ensemble, The Public Theater, Summer Play Festival, Todd Theatre and Under the Radar, and his participatory performances have been produced by Abrons Arts Center, American Realness, Dartmouth College, Elastic City, The Invisible Dog, Jack, The New Museum, Prelude Festival, PS 122, the Van Alen Institute and Visual AIDS. He often collaborates with playwright/performer Taylor Mac and with artist Todd Shalom. Smith was the associate director of the Tony Award winning musical *FELA!*, restaging that production in London, Lagos and its world tour, assistant directed the Off-Broadway production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and both the Broadway and Off-Broadway productions of Tony Kushner's *Caroline, or Change*. He has worked on the artistic staffs of The Public Theater, Trinity Repertory Company and Providence Black Rep. He is Associate Artistic Director and board member of participatory walks organization, Elastic City. A graduate of Dartmouth College, Smith has received residencies, grants and/or fellowships from Brooklyn Arts Council, Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Sundance Theatre Lab, Theater Communications Group, Tucker Foundation, Van Lier Fund and VoxFest. Before surviving high school in Detroit, he grew up in the North Carolina piedmont, fishing with his dad, shopping with his mom and inventing tall-tale fantasies with his two younger brothers. niegelsmith.com

Lawrence Wright (Playwright, *Cleo*) is an author, screenwriter, playwright, and staff writer at *The New Yorker*, where he has received two National Magazine Awards. His 2006 history of Al Qaeda, *The Looming Tower*, won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction. His book about Scientology, *Going Clear*, was made into an HBO documentary by the director Alex Gibney and earned seven Emmy nominations. His most recent book, *Thirteen Days in September*, began as a play, *Camp David*, which premiered at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., last spring, and will be restaged at the Old Globe in San Diego in May, 2016. He lives in Austin and is the keyboard player in the blues band WhoDo.

TICKET AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Alley All New Festival presentations, workshops and readings, are free and open to the public. Advance reservations are required and will be available in October 2015 by phone and online. Single tickets for the Alley Theatre's 2015 – 2016 season are available online at alleytheatre.org, by phone at 713.220.5700 or in person at the Alley Theatre Box Office, 615 Texas Avenue. Subscriptions are currently on sale for all productions and range in price from \$129 - \$614. Discounted ticket for groups of 10 or more can be purchased by calling 713.315.3346.

ABOUT THE ALLEY THEATRE

The Alley Theatre, one of America's leading not-for-profit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company lead by Artistic Director Gregory Boyd and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden. Home to a Resident Company of actors, the Alley creates a wide-ranging repertoire and innovative productions of classics, neglected modern plays, and premieres. Alley All New, the initiative to commission and develop new work year round, features the Alley All New Festival each season presenting workshops and readings of new plays and musicals in process. A recipient of the Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, the Alley has brought productions to Broadway, 40 American cities including New York's Lincoln Center and internationally to Berlin, Paris, and St. Petersburg throughout its 69 year history.

The Alley Theatre underwent a \$46.5 million building renovation in 2014-2015 season, the first major improvements since the building opened in 1968. With more than 500 performances in 2015-2016, the Alley will produce more performances than all other performing arts organizations in the Houston Theater District combined.

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