

ALLEY THEATRE

FOR RELEASE

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Lucas Hnath's *THE CHRISTIANS* Graces Alley Theatre Stage

Lucas Hnath makes his Alley debut with a new play that features Alley Company Members, Visiting Artists and a Live Choir

HOUSTON – Alley Theatre Artistic Director Gregory Boyd announces the cast and creative team for **The Christians**, a new play written by Lucas Hnath, which runs April 22 - May 15 in the Hubbard Theatre.

Lucas Hnath's **The Christians** centers on Pastor Paul, who started his church ten years ago in a modest storefront. Now it houses thousands, with a coffee shop in the lobby and a baptismal font as big as a swimming pool. But Paul is about to preach a sermon that will shake the foundation of his congregation's beliefs. Staged as a church service and backed by a live choir, **The Christians** is both epic and unexpectedly intimate, an unflinching look at values in America — and its power to unite or divide. Named a Top 10 Play by *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times* call it "Mesmerizing."

Hnath, described by the *New York Times* "as one of the brightest new voices of his generation," presents his new play, **The Christians**, which will be directed by Alley Artistic Director Gregory Boyd and features Alley Company Members Jeffrey Bean, Melissa Pritchett and Emily Trask, returning Alley artist Shawn Hamilton and visiting artists Richard Thieriot and Scott Anthony. In its first season in the newly renovated theatre, the Alley continues its commitment to present new playwrights and bring bold, imaginative productions to Houston audiences with **The Christians**.

"This is a remarkable piece of theatre, and takes issues of religion and faith seriously, and without any prejudice. We are thrilled to welcome Lucas Hnath's bold new play to the Alley," said Boyd.

The Christians cast features Alley Company Artist Jeffrey Bean as Jay, a Church Elder. Bean is in his 21st season at the Alley and currently appears as Detective Fix in **Around the World in 80 Days**. He has recently appeared in the Alley's *One Man Two Guvnors*, *The Foreigner*, *All My Sons* and *As You Like It*. Melissa Pritchett, an Alley Company Artist, takes on the role of Jenny, a church congregant. Pritchett recently appeared in *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *As You Like It*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Dracula*. Emily Trask portrays Elizabeth, the Pastor's wife. She is currently in **Around the World in 80 Days** as Aouda and her recent credits include *As You Like It*, *A Christmas Carol* and *One Man, Two Guvnors*.

The Christians cast also includes Richard Thieriot, who plays the role of Pastor Paul. He was last seen in the world premiere of *Luna Gale* by Rebecca Gilman and his credits also include *Clybourne Park*, *Roger and Tom*, *This is Not Jaws* and *Design for Living*. Shawn Hamilton, most recently appearing in **All the Way** as Martin Luther King Jr, returns to the Alley and takes on the role of Joshua, the Associate Pastor. The live choir, made up of 25 singers from the Houston community, will be led by music director Scott Anthony. He previously music directed **The Christians** at Mark Taper Forum and Actors Theatre of Louisville.

Playwright Lucas Hnath makes his Alley debut with **The Christians**. His other plays include *Red Speedo* (New York Theatre Workshop, Studio Theatre), *The Christians* (Humana Festival, Playwrights Horizons); *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney* (Soho Rep); *nightnight* (Humana Festival); *Isaac's Eye* (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 2013); *Death Tax* (Humana Festival, Royal Court Theatre). Hnath has been a resident playwright at New Dramatists since 2011, and is a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre.

The play features scenic design by James Youmans (*Ether Dome, The Cocktail Hour*) with costume design by Judith Dolan (Alley's *All My Sons* and *Communicating Doors*), lighting design by Alley Associate Director for Design Kevin Rigdon (Alley's *The Foreigner, As You Like It*) and sound design by John Gromada (Alley's *The Elephant Man, The Greeks*).

The Christians, by Lucas Hnath and directed by Gregory Boyd, begins preview performances at the Alley Theatre on April 22, opens April 27, and continues through May 15, 2016 in the Hubbard Theatre.

TICKETS

Tickets to *The Christians* are now on sale and start at \$26. Discounted tickets are available for any student, regardless of age, with a valid student ID for \$16 for designated performances in designated sections. Tickets can be ordered online (alleytheatre.org) or by phone (713.220.5700). Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more. Recommended for general audiences.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

The Alley Theatre will also present an Artist TalkBack following the April 30 (7:30 p.m.) and May 3 (2:30 p.m.) performances of *The Christians*. These discussions will feature cast and artistic staff. Artist TalkBacks are free and open to the public.

Following the May 7 and May 15 matinee performances of **The Christians**, the theatre will present Alley In Context, a post-show panel featuring civic leaders, distinguished academics, and area professional discussing the themes of the play and how they are reflected in our lives today.

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. The Alley produces up to 16 plays each year in our newly renovated theatre, ranging from the best current work, to re-invigorated classic plays, to new plays by contemporary writers. The Alley is home to a Resident Company of actors. In addition, the Alley engages theatre-artists of every discipline – actors, designers, composers, playwrights – who work on individual productions throughout each season as Visiting Artists.

The current renovation of the Hubbard Theatre at the Alley was completed in October 2015 – and created a new 770 seat state-of-the-art performance venue. Matched with our 299-seat Neuhaus Theatre, the Alley offers nearly 500 performances each season. The Company reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance and education programs. Our audience enrichment programs include pre-show and post-performance talks, events, and workshops for audience members of all ages.