

ALLEY THEATRE

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Alley Theatre Announces 2019-20 Season with New Artistic Director Rob Melrose

The new season includes a world premiere play and three productions directed by Rob Melrose

HOUSTON, TX – Rob Melrose, new Artistic Director of the Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre, announces the Alley's 2019-20 Season, which includes a world premiere play, three productions directed by Melrose, a co-production, an expanded student matinee program, and dates for the fifth Alley All New Festival. Subscriptions for the 2019-20 Alley Season will be on sale May 15 and can be purchased at alleytheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at 713.220.5700.

"I am excited to continue the artistic legacy of the Alley and turn the page to a new chapter at the Theatre," said Melrose. "This season, my first as Alley Artistic Director, I drew inspiration from the community I now call home. Infused with the vibrant cultures that exist in Houston and showcasing the incredibly talented Resident Acting Company, the season includes references to the literary world with adaptations of Jane Austen, George Orwell and Miguel de Cervantes alongside new works by acclaimed Texas author Lawrence Wright and playwright Chisa Hutchinson. Additionally, we're highlighting fascinating stories like *Vietgone*, *Quixote Nuevo* directed by Austin, Texas-based KJ Sanchez, and the world premiere of *Amerikin*. I can't wait to begin my first season and I am thrilled to bring these titles to such an amazing stage."

"I'm also pleased to expand upon the rich legacy of the Alley's student matinee program," Melrose continued. "Next season will go beyond our annual offering of *A Christmas Carol* student matinees and include some of the more historically rich and complex stories for area schools."

Watch a video of Rob Melrose announcing the 2019-20 season [HERE](#).

Melrose will direct three productions in his premiere season, the Alley's 73rd season. Melrose's inaugural production will be a plot twist masterpiece for the popular ExxonMobil Summer Chills series, Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* adapted by Ken Ludwig. He will then direct the season opener Shakespeare's romantic classic *The Winter's Tale*. The whimsical story will be set in Texas and seen through the imaginative eyes of a child from Houston. Melrose will also direct Michael Gene Sullivan's adaptation of George Orwell's futuristic novel *1984*.

Amerikin by Chisa Hutchinson will have its world premiere during the season. The play was developed at the 2019 Alley All New Festival and will be directed by James Black, Alley's Interim Artistic Director, who previously directed the reading at the Festival.

The Alley will also welcome The Public Theater's Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis to direct Lawrence Wright's *Camp David* about the history-making peace accord between Egypt and Israel during Jimmy Carter's presidency. Wright's hit play *Cleo* premiered at the Alley last season.

Quixote Nuevo by Octavio Solis and directed by Austin, Texas-based KJ Sanchez, will star Emilio Delgado of “Sesame Street” fame. This modern adaptation of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* is a tale of lost love and imagination, all set in a Texas border town. The play is a co-production with Hartford Stage and Huntington Theater Company.

Rounding out the season is the aforementioned **Vietgone** by Qui Nguyen and directed by Desdemona Chiang, Sarah Ruhl’s offbeat comedy **Dead Man’s Cell Phone**, Kate Hamill’s adaptation of the Jane Austen classic **Sense and Sensibility**, and holiday add-ons **A Christmas Carol** and **Fully Committed**.

Student matinees will be offered for the following productions: **Vietgone**, **Quixote Nuevo**, **The Winter’s Tale**, **A Christmas Carol**, **Camp David, 1984**, and **Dead Man’s Cell Phone**. Dates and booking information for student matinees can be found at alleytheatre.org.

Alley Theatre’s 2019-20 Season

Full steam ahead classic thriller

AGATHA CHRISTIE’S MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

Adapted by Ken Ludwig

Directed by Rob Melrose

Hubbard Theatre

Previews Begin July 19, Opens July 24, Closes August 25, 2019

Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* is a plot-twist masterpiece that has thrilled mystery lovers from television, radio, and film. Playwright Ken Ludwig (*The Three Musketeers*) adapts the classic thriller that features renowned detective Hercule Poirot and a cast of characters sure to have audiences guessing just who did it.

Shakespeare’s romantic dramedy

THE WINTER’S TALE

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Rob Melrose

Hubbard Theatre

Previews Begin September 13, Opens September 18, Closes October 13, 2019

Shakespeare’s whimsical tale of romance, tragedy, and comedy will take center stage in familiar places for Alley audiences. Set in Texas, this magical tale will be seen through the imaginative eyes of a child from Houston. This play is a sweeping story of wrath and redemption and of lost and then found love. Together, the Resident Acting Company will tell Shakespeare’s beloved fable of hard-won joy and the promise of renewal.

A raucous comedy of two very new Americans

VIETGONE

By Qui Nguyen

Original Music by Shane Rettig

Directed by Desdemona Chiang

Neuhaus Theatre

Previews Begin October 4, Opens October 9, Closes November 3, 2019

It’s 1975. Saigon has fallen. He lost his wife. She lost her fiancé. But now in America, a strange new land of cowboys, hippies, and bikers, these two Vietnamese refugees just might find each other. Remixing history and culture into a funny and energetic fantasia, playwright Qui Nguyen creates a contemporary twist on the boy meets girl story that *The New York Times* hails as “a raucous, immensely moving comedy.” Using his irreverent, infectious style, Nguyen takes audiences on a hilariously rip-roaring ride across 1970s America with a hot soundtrack that serves up hip-hop, sass, and revolution.

Family holiday tradition

A CHRISTMAS CAROL – A GHOST STORY OF CHRISTMAS

By Charles Dickens

Adapted and Originally Directed by Michael Wilson

Directed by James Black

Hubbard Theatre

Previews Begin November 15, Opens November 17, Closes December 29, 2019

A Christmas Carol - A Ghost Story of Christmas is a family-friendly re-telling of Charles Dickens' classic story, which follows Ebenezer Scrooge's journey with the three ghostly spirits who visit him on Christmas Eve. *A Christmas Carol* instills a powerful message about redemption and the spirit of the holiday season.

One-man holiday comedy

FULLY COMMITTED

By Becky Mode

Directed by Brandon Weinbrenner

Neuhaus Theatre

Previews Begin November 26, Opens December 1, Closes December 29, 2019

Becky Mode's hilarious and delicious comedy, featuring over 40 characters, comes to life in the hands of one man. Meet Sam. He works the reservation line at one of New York's hottest restaurants, where the best food inspires the worst behavior. Coercion, threats, and bribes from a cast of desperate callers, all brought to life by one man, prove they will stop at nothing to land a prime reservation or the right table. While juggling scheming socialites, name-dropping wannabes, fickle celebrities, and egomaniacal bosses, can he still manage to get home for the holidays?

Modern retelling

QUIXOTE NUEVO

By Octavio Solis

Adapted from *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes

Directed by KJ Sanchez

Hubbard Theatre

Previews Begin January 17, Opens January 22, Closes February 9, 2020

Directed by Texas-native KJ Sanchez and starring "Sesame Street's" Emilio Delgado, *Quixote Nuevo* by celebrated playwright Octavio Solis is an inspiring reimagining of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Set in a fictional modern-day Texas border town, Quixote and his recruited sidekick embark on an adventure in search of long-lost love. Infused with imagination, Tejano music, and true Texas soul, *Quixote Nuevo* shows the challenges of living in this modern world all the while in pursuit of a lost dream. The play is a co-production with Hartford Stage and Huntington Theater Company.

Power and politics

CAMP DAVID

By Lawrence Wright

Directed by Oskar Eustis

Neuhaus Theatre

Previews Begin February 14, Opens February 20, Closes March 15, 2020

From the Texas playwright of the world premiere Alley hit *Cleo*. Pulitzer Prize-winner Lawrence Wright, author of *God Save Texas* and *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, offers a behind-the-scenes look at a historical moment whose legacy continues to resonate 41 years later. In the tumultuous 1970s, Middle East peace seemed nearly as impossible as it does today. Yet during 13 days in 1978,

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, with the powerful help of U.S. President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter, hammered out an agreement that inspired the entire world. Wright's play delivers a tremendously human look at both the hope and the cost of that historic moment.

Powerful Drama

1984

By George Orwell

Adapted by Michael Gene Sullivan

Directed by Rob Melrose

Hubbard Theatre

Preview Begin March 6, Opens March 11, Closes March 29, 2020

Based on George Orwell's futuristic novel, *1984* brings us the story of Winston Smith and a stark vision of a world in which freedom of action, word, and thought are controlled by Big Brother. As the story of Winston's fight for individual identity unfolds, the vision grows increasingly terrifying as the world it depicts grows uncomfortably familiar. How far are we from realizing Orwell's nightmare? Are we already there? Can there be more than one truth, more than one set of facts? A ferocious and provocative adaptation of one of the most prescient works of literature of the last century.

Off the wall comedy

DEAD MAN'S CELL PHONE

By Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Brandon Weinbrenner

Hubbard Theatre

Previews Begin April 17, Opens April 22, Closes May 10, 2020

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 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.

World Premiere

AMERIKIN

By Chisa Hutchinson

Directed by James Black

Neuhaus Theatre

Previews Begin May 8, Opens May 14, Closes June 7, 2020

Developed as part of the 2019 Alley All New Festival. Jeff Browning, a new father desperate for community, casually follows his buddy's advice and tries to join a white supremacist group...but the results of his ancestry test prove surprising. *Amerikin* follows Jeff as serious consequences come knocking and the line between "us" and "them" gets incredibly blurry.

Classic romantic favorite

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

By Kate Hamill

Based on the novel by Jane Austen

Directed by Adriana Baer

Hubbard Theatre

Previews Begin June 5, Opens June 10, Closes July 5, 2020

A playful new adaptation of Jane Austen's beloved novel follows the fortunes (and misfortunes) of the Dashwood sisters—sensible Elinor and hypersensitive Marianne—after their father's sudden death leaves them financially destitute and socially vulnerable. Set in gossipy late 18th-century England, with a fresh female voice, the play is full of humor, emotional depth, and bold theatricality. *Sense and Sensibility*

examines our reactions, both reasonable and ridiculous, to societal pressures. When reputation is everything, how do you follow your heart?

ALLEY ALL NEW FESTIVAL

January 17 – 26, 2020

The fifth annual Alley All New Festival features new plays from some of the most exciting voices in contemporary theatre. All Alley All New workshop performances and readings are free and open to the public. Festival packages featuring prime seating, parties with festival artists and meals between performances, will be available for purchase in May.

TICKET AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Subscriptions can be ordered online (alleytheatre.org) or by phone (713.220.5700). Subscribers can purchase a 5-play package containing *The Winter's Tale*, *Quixote Nuevo, 1984*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone* and *Sense and Sensibility*; prices range from \$130-\$475. An 8-play package is also available containing all the plays in the 5-play package plus *Vietgone*, *Camp David* and *Amerikin*, with prices from \$214-\$669. Subscribers may purchase priority tickets for Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Fully Committed* and *A Christmas Carol* before going on sale to the general public. Groups of 10 or more may reserve discounted tickets now by calling 713.315.3346.

Single tickets for Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* go on sale May 20 and can be purchased either online (alleytheatre.org) or by phone (713.220.5700). Holiday shows will go on sale July 1. The remaining productions for the 2019-20 Season will go on sale on July 22. Discounted tickets are available for any student, regardless of age, with a valid student ID for \$16 for designated performances in designated sections. Military and senior discounts are available. Visit alleytheatre.org/discounts for more information.

FLEX SUBSCRIPTION PASSES: The Flex Subscription is 6 or 10 vouchers to use for any Alley subscription show (excludes holiday add-ons and Summer Chills) in the 2019–20 Season and includes all subscriber benefits. Passes are valid September 2019 – July 2020 and good for any seat in the house. Prices range from \$420-\$600. For more information visit <https://www.alleytheatre.org/season>

SPONSORS: The Alley Theatre's 2019-20 Season sponsors are United Airlines, the official airline of the Alley Theatre; Four Seasons Hotel Houston, the official hotel of the Alley Theatre; and Lynn Wyatt.

PRESS MATERIALS: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qujeqh5b680ic16/AAAOzz4uovH5Y-8RuwwgXTKa?dl=0>

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 at least 16 plays each year in its 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 2015 renovation of the Alley's Hubbard Theatre created a new 774-seat state-of-the-art performance venue. Matched with the newly rebuilt 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre, the Alley offers nearly 500 performances each season. The Alley Theatre reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance and education programs. Its audience enrichment programs include pre-show and post-performance talks, events, and workshops for audience members of all ages