

# ALLEY THEATRE

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## **Alley Theatre Pivots to Produce a FREE Digital Season and Cancels Live 2020-21 Season Performances**

*The Digital Season Reintroduces Houstonians to Classics with Translations by Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Celebrates Alley All New Alumni and Houston Writers*

HOUSTON, TX – The Alley Theatre is saddened to announce the cancellation of all in-person performances of the 2020-21 season. The following shows are affected by the cancellation: *Born with Teeth* by Liz Duffy Adams (January 22 – February 14, 2021), *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (March 5 – 28, 2021), *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by Sarah Ruhl (April 16 – May 9, 2021), *Sweat* by Lynn Nottage (May 28 – June 20, 2021), and *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* by Vichet Chum (July 9 – August 1, 2021). The cancellation is due to health and safety concerns in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Alley Theatre values the health and safety of its staff, artists, and patrons and believes that the season cancellation is necessary to protect everyone from COVID-19. The Alley Theatre remains committed to producing the canceled works in future seasons.

The new digital 2020-21 season will be available for free to all who register for tickets at [alleytheatre.org](http://alleytheatre.org). Registration opens **December 21, 2020**. The digital season is a part of the Theatre's Alley@Home content and will be centered around the Alley's Resident Acting Company.

"Like so many of you, I too am disappointed to have to cancel our on-stage season. I can't wait to gather in the Hubbard and the Neuhaus to experience live theatre with you again. At the same time, I am delighted about all the work we are creating on Alley@Home and I am excited to

share a robust digital season of new plays and classics featuring the Alley's Resident Acting Company," said **Artistic Director Rob Melrose**.

"When we started Alley@Home in March, shortly after COVID-19 hit the U.S., our goal was to create something that would stay with us even after the pandemic was long behind us. The digital medium affords us the opportunity to grow our audience for work we normally put on our stages and to explore a wider range of plays than we can offer live and in-person," Melrose continued.

"In the first category is our production *1984* which was seen in 48 states plus D.C. and nine countries and was favorably reviewed in the *Wall Street Journal*. Our digital *A Christmas Carol* now has over 175,000 registrations and counting. In the second category, we can offer short works (plays under 20 minutes long) that are perfect size for the digital world but aren't normally part of our onstage subscription season. I'm so excited to offer brilliant short works by Alley All New alumni like Chisa Hutchinson (*Amerikin*), Jiehae Park (*The Aves*), Don X. Nguyen (*The Supreme Leader*), and Isaac Gómez (Alley All New Commission *What-a-Christmas!*). I am also delighted that we will be able to continue the Alley All New Reading Series, though online this season, with a reading of a new play-in-progress by Houston author ShaWanna Renee Rivon."

Then, Melrose elaborated, "We can also offer short classics by Strindberg and Pirandello and full-length plays by Euripides and Ibsen. At one time, Ibsen, Strindberg, Euripides, and Nobel Prize-winning author Luigi Pirandello were regulars on regional theatre stages. Their plays are some of the best writing ever for the stage and I'm thrilled to reconnect the Alley to their work. I'm also committed to creating an artistic home for our Alley All New playwrights so that audiences get a chance to experience their writing across many seasons and platforms. An additional perk is to introduce living translators into the Alley process as a way of connecting to works in the original language. I've translated plays from Swedish and Italian this season and favorite translator colleagues of mine Paul Walsh and Mary-Kay Gamel have translated works from Norwegian and Ancient Greek, respectively. Our digital production of *A Christmas Carol* and our entire digital season is *free* to the public; this is an excellent time to introduce friends and family near and far to the excellent artistry of the Alley."

The Alley Theatre's digital Spring 2021 season can be found below:

*Short Play – New Translation of a Classic*

### **THE STRONGER**

By August Strindberg

Translated and Directed by Rob Melrose

January 15 – February 7, 2021

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. Alley Resident Acting Company members Elizabeth Bunch and Melissa Pritchett duel it out to determine which of them is *The Stronger*.

*Short Play – New Translation of a Classic*

**A HALF-SHEET OF PAPER**

By August Strindberg

Translated and Directed by Rob Melrose

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.

*Short Play – New Translation of a Classic*

**THE MAN WITH THE FLOWER IN HIS MOUTH**

By Luigi Pirandello

Translated and Directed by Rob Melrose

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.

*Full Length Classic*

**Euripides' MEDEA**

Translated by Mary-Kay Gamel

Directed by Rob Melrose

March 5 – April 4, 2021

Sexual jealousy, betrayal, revenge, and murder! One of the first plays ever written remains one of the most gripping. Medea has sacrificed everything for her marriage to Jason. Now he has his eye on a younger potential bride. Watch as Medea makes him pay dearly for his infidelity.

*Short Play – Alley All New Alumni*

**EL CHUCO TOWN FOREVER**

By Isaac Gómez

Directed by Laura Moreno

April 2 – May 2, 2021

Janie and Miguel are long-time assistant managers at a big box store in El Paso right by the Zaragoza Bridge to Juárez, Mexico. The memorial service is tonight. It didn't happen at their store, but it could have. Should they go? Will they go? Written by Texas playwright Isaac Gómez (commissioned author of the upcoming *What-a-Christmas!* at the Alley).

*Short Play – Alley All New Alumni*

**CHOOSING LOVE**

By Chisa Hutchinson

April 2 – May 2, 2021

A man escapes the rain by walking into a psychic's shop. She has a towel waiting. He accepts a reading. It may, or may not, change his life. A short play by the author of *Amerikin* (Alley All New Festival 2019 and on track for production in a future season).

*Short Play – Alley All New Alumni*

**MAN. KIND.**

By Don X. Nguyen

Directed by Brandon Weinbrenner

April 9 – May 9, 2021

A cave man on a plateau. He invents fire. A cavewoman arrives. She invented fire yesterday. She wants his help. But he knows bad things happen when people start to band together. This short play reunites playwright Don X. Nguyen and director Brandon Weinbrenner following the reading of *The Supreme Leader* (Alley All New Festival 2019).

*Short Play – Alley All New Alumni*

**FOR STEVE WOZNIAK, ON HIS 67TH BIRTHDAY**

By Jiehae Park

April 9 – May 9, 2021

Meet Steve. And Steve. And Steve. One turns 67 today. One is dead. Two are famous. A play for three women from the singular mind of Jiehae Park, author of *The Aves* (Alley All New Festival 2020).

*Full Length Play – Alley All New Reading*

**OLD BLACK & WHITE HOLLYWOOD**

By ShaWanna Renee Rivon

April 16 - May 16, 2021

Hollywood, 1954. Black comedienne Doris Jean is performing at an after-hours club and catches the eye of producer Samuel Stahr. His T.V. show featuring a former radio star is floundering; Doris Jean may be just what *The Eva Rose Show* needs. Doris refuses to play a maid and is cast as one anyway. But the two women connect and make a delightful comedy duo. Still, how high can a talented Black woman rise in old black and white Hollywood? A new play by Houston author and former LA actor ShaWanna Renee Rivon.

*Full Length Classic*

**AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE**

By Henrik Ibsen

Translated from the Norwegian by Paul Walsh

Directed by Rob Melrose

April 30 – May 30, 2021

What does it mean to be a Public Enemy? Dr. Stockman wants to keep his community safe by shutting down the town's economy while making the necessary changes in the poisoned water supply to make sure it is safe. His brother, the mayor, fights with all his might to keep the economy open despite the health risks. According to him, the time and money to make the water supply safe would ruin the economy and bankrupt the town. Does this sound familiar? Join us for Ibsen's particularly timely classic.

*Short Play – New Translation of a Classic*

**PARIAH**

By August Strindberg

Translated and Directed by Rob Melrose

June 4 – July 4, 2021

Two archeologists marvel over a chest of gold artifacts one of them has found. Moral questions about what to do with this gold rise to the surface as troubling questions about the men's criminal pasts are probed to their very depths. Strindberg was highly influenced by the work of Edgar Allen Poe while writing this play, especially Poe's mesmerizing story *The Cask of Amontillado* (beautifully read by David Rainey in our [Chills and Thrills Series](#)).

Additional directors and casting for the remainder of the Alley Theatre's 2020-21 digital season will be announced at a later date.

Past Alley@Home digital projects from the Alley's 2020-21 season can be found at [alleytheatre.org/alley-at-home](http://alleytheatre.org/alley-at-home). Patrons can enjoy the Resident Acting Company's creative take on Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*, listen to their rendition of a famous speech from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, or be entranced by thrilling classics from our **Chills and Thrills** series. Discover more about the Alley's Resident Acting Company with *Inside the Resident Acting Company Studio*,

which features Associate Producer & Casting Director Brandon Weinbrenner individually interviewing each member about their lives and careers.

The Alley will feature the Alley All New Early Draft Preview of Shawn Hamilton's Arnett Cobb Project from **February 1 – 28, 2021**. Via a grant from the Fox Foundation, Alley Resident Acting Company member Shawn Hamilton is writing his first play. His subject is Arnett Cobb, the internationally acclaimed “wild man of the tenor sax,” a jazz musician who grew up in Houston and lived in the city for much of his career. View an excerpt and listen to a discussion on Cobb and his legacy with Shawn Hamilton; Cobb's daughter, [Lizette Cobb](#); and [Tierney Malone](#) of the Jazz Church of Houston and Houston Jazz Spotlight on KPFT.

The Alley Theatre plans to resume in-person performances for the 2021-22 season, which is the Alley's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season. The Alley's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season will be announced in Spring 2021.

## **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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