

ALLEY THEATRE

FOR RELEASE

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Alley Theatre Announces 2017 Alley All New Festival Titles

The festival includes new work from playwrights Robert Askins, Bekah Brunstetter, Christina Gorman, Rajiv Joseph, Kenneth Lin, and a World Premiere production from NSangou Njikam

HOUSTON, TX – The Alley Theatre announced the line-up for the 2017 Alley All New Festival, February 2-12 at the Alley Theatre. The festival will feature a combination of readings and workshop performances of five new plays. Festival playwrights include Robert Askins, Bekah Brunstetter, Christina Gorman, Rajiv Joseph, and Kenneth Lin. The festival focuses on the creative process instead of the final product. Playwrights 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 play development process. Advance reservations are recommended and can be made starting December 1 at alleytheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at 713-220-5700. All workshop performances and readings are free and open to the public.

Additionally, playwright and performer NSangou Njikam returns to the theatre and Alley All New Festival with the World Premiere production of **Syncing Ink**, which audiences will remember from the inaugural festival in 2016. A piece of Hip-Hop theatre, **Syncing Ink** will be directed by Flea Theater Artistic Director Niegel Smith. The play centers on high school student Gordon and his journey to learn how to rhyme - which not only takes him deeper into Hip-Hop, but deeper into his legacy and his purpose. Festival attendees will receive a special discounted price for **Syncing Ink**.

Tony Award-nominated playwright Robert Askins, who recently presented his play **Hand to God** at the Alley, joins the festival with workshop performances of **The Carpenter**. **The Carpenter** is a full force new farce that follows a Texas couple's journey to the altar, with mistaken identities, family secrets, accidental partner swaps and many laughs along the way. The workshop performance will be directed by James Black.

Making her Alley debut, Christina Gorman will offer workshop performances of her play **Roan @ The Gates**. In this topical and thought-provoking new play, a long-time couple confronts questions about their marriage they never thought to ask as their personal relationship collides with issues of national security. The workshop performance will be directed by Brandon Weinbrenner.

A current co-producer on NBC's hit show *This is Us*, Bekah Brunstetter will present readings of her play **The Cake**. The play follows Jen and Macy as they travel to Jen's hometown in North Carolina to plan their nuptials, but the local baker, who is also the best friend of Jen's late mother, refuses to bake a cake for a gay wedding.

Pulitzer Prize finalist Rajiv Joseph (*Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *The Monster at the Door*) returns to the Alley with readings of **Describe the Night**. The play spans 1920 to 2010 and is set in various locations in Poland, Russia and East Germany. A work of fiction inspired by facts, **Describe the Night** centers on real-life writer Isaac Babel. The reading will be directed by Giovanna Sardelli.

Returning to the Alley and the festival is playwright Kenneth Lin, whose play **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** was featured in the last festival's Early Draft Preview Event. Lin (a writer on *House on Cards*) reworks Twain's original story, keeping the wild situations and larger-than-life characters you remember but focusing his lens on the relationship between Huck and his father Pap. The reading is directed by Gregory Boyd.

The festival is one component of Alley All New, a major new work initiative that expands the Alley's commitment to playwrights and to produce more world premieres. The theatre has a strong history of world premieres including *Fool* by Theresa Rebeck, *Intelligence-Slave* by Kenneth Lin, *Gruesome Playground Injuries* and *The Monster at the Door* by

Rajiv Joseph and *Ether Dome* by Elizabeth Egloff.

The first annual Alley All New Play Festival was held January 28 – February 7, 2016 and included 24 actors, eight writers and six directors, who presented 20 performances of six new plays. More than 700 festival attendees filled the newly renovated building. In addition to the Houston audiences, the Alley welcomed both regional and out-of-state industry guests.

All updates and schedules will be available at alleytheatre.org/allnew. The full creative teams and casting will be announced in 2017.

2017 ALLEY ALL NEW FESTIVAL

WORKSHOP PERFORMANCES

The Carpenter

by Robert Askins

Directed by James Black

Dan is a self-made man from blue collar Houston while his fiancé is from Dallas—Highland Park, to be exact—so she's got that money. As they arrive at her father's palatial mansion for their wedding, Dan starts to get cold feet. His college buddies are trying to get him drunk, his future father-in-law keeps shooting his rifle into the ceiling and his sassy sister can't put the pill bottle down. When the carpenter shows up to build the wedding gazebo, looking suspiciously like Dan, all hell breaks loose. There are mistaken identities. Family secrets. Accidental partner swaps and laughs. So many laughs. A full force new farce by the author of *Hand To God*.

Roan @ The Gates

by Christina Gorman

Directed by Brandon Weinbrenner

Would you buy a sofa without consulting your partner? How about a car? Change your job? Could you commit a crime and say nothing? And could you still love your partner if she followed her conscience but kept you in the dark? Nat is an outspoken civil rights attorney. Roan, the quiet one, is an NSA Analyst who isn't even allowed to tell her wife the location of her next business trip. In this topical and thought-provoking new play, a long-time couple confronts questions about their marriage they never thought to ask as their personal relationship collides with national security.

READINGS

The Cake

by Bekah Brunstetter

Jen lives in New York but has always dreamed of getting married in her native North Carolina. With the wedding six months away, she heads down South to ask Della, her late mother's best friend who owns a bakery there, to do the honors of making her wedding cake. Della's cakes are the best—she's going to compete on the Great American Baking show, nobigdeal. Della is overjoyed to make Jen's cake—until she realizes that there isn't just one bride, but two. She can't really bake a cake for such a wedding, can she? Moral quandaries, reality TV and loads and loads of butter form this play about two women trying to reach out across a divide that just keeps growing.

Describe the Night

by Rajiv Joseph

Directed by Giovanna Sardelli

In 1920, the Russian writer Isaac Babel wanders the Polish countryside with the Red Cavalry. Seventy years later, a mysterious KGB agent spies on a woman in Dresden and falls in love. In 2010, an aircraft carrying most of the Polish government crashes in the Russian city of Smolensk. Rajiv Joseph (*Gruesome Playground Injuries*, *The Monster at the Door*) returns to the Alley with his epic new play **Describe the Night** which traces the stories of men and women connected by history, myth and conspiracy theories.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

by Kenneth Lin

Adapted from the novel by Mark Twain

Directed by Gregory Boyd

Kenneth Lin (*Intelligence-Slave, Warrior Class*) returns to the Alley with a new adaptation of Mark Twain's great American novel about the travels of Huck Finn, an adventure-loving boy and his unlikely companion Jim, an escaped slave who dreams of buying his family. As the pair travels by raft along the Mississippi River they encounter rapids in the fog, an epic family feud, and a conman who just might be the King of France. Lin (a writer on *House of Cards*) reimagines Twain's original story, keeping the wild situations and larger-than-life characters you remember but focusing his lens on the relationship between Huck and his father Pap.

**Dates subject to change. Check alleytheatre.org for updates and the current schedule.*

WORLD PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Syncing Ink

by NSangou Njikam

Directed by Niegel Smith

"Now what you hear is not a test/I'm rapping to the beat!" Gordon wants to learn how to rap, thinking it will gain him respect, admiration, and the attention of a beautiful woman. What he doesn't know is that his journey to learn how to rhyme will take him not just deeper into Hip Hop, but deeper into his legacy and his purpose.

RESERVATIONS:

Alley All New Festival presentations, workshop performances and readings are free and open to the public. Advance reservations are required and will be available December 1 at alleytheatre.org/allnew, by phone at 713-220-5700 or in person at the Alley Theatre Box Office, 615 Texas Avenue.

WEEKEND PACKAGES

A Weekend Package for February 10-12 including reserved seating at all presentations, exclusive artist access and meals between performances will be on sale December 1st.

PRESS

All workshop performances and readings at the Alley All New Festival are works in progress and not available for review.

Press photos from last season's Alley All New Festival can be found at

<https://www.alleytheatre.org/press/alley-all-new-rehearsal-photos->

ALLEY ALL NEW

Alley All New is comprised of a variety of public and in-house programs designed to support playwrights and cater to the needs of each new project. Through this initiative, the Alley plans to produce more world premieres, commission new plays, and engage and support playwrights year round. The Alley All New Festival made its debut this past winter and will be back again with more workshop performances and play readings, as well as the World Premiere production of **Syncing Ink**. The dates for the 2017 Alley All New Festival are February 2 - 12, with special events and final festival presentations February 10-12. Join the Alley Insider Group by emailing alleyinsider@alleytheatre.org and learn more about new work in development and be the first to hear about Alley All New events. More information and updates can be found on alleytheatre.org/allnew, on Facebook and #AlleyAllNew.

ABOUT THE ALLEY THEATRE

The Alley Theatre, one of America's leading not-for-profit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company led by Artistic Director Gregory Boyd and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden. The Alley produces up to 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 renovation of the Hubbard Theatre at the Alley was completed in October 2015 – and created a new 774 seat state-of-the-art performance venue. Matched with the 310-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. Its audience enrichment programs include pre-show and post-performance talks, events, and workshops for audience members of all ages.

The Alley Theatre is supported by the 2016-2017 season sponsor United Airlines, the official airline of the Alley Theatre.