

ALLEY THEATRE

Alley Theatre Announces Continued Latinx Community Enrichment Programs

The Alley Theatre expands its reach into Houston's rich Latinx community through two new projects and the appointment of Benito Vasquez to Manager of Community Partnerships

HOUSTON –The Alley Theatre's Education and Engagement Department (ECE) announces the continuation of El Zócalo with the hiring of its first full-time Manager of Community Partnerships, Benito Vasquez. This full-time position is a permanent and integral member of the Alley's ECE team. It has been a vision of the department, and the Alley as a whole, to create a position that can delve wholeheartedly into Latinx initiatives with a mission to enrich our community by bringing resources to local, regional, national, and even international, artists to serve Houston's growing Latinx community. The El Zócalo initiative was launched city-wide last year with a touring production and a comprehensive array of engagement activities.

"I am thrilled to join the Alley Theatre family as the Manager of Community Partnerships. In my first couple of weeks, I've had the chance to review the great work the Alley, its community partnerships, and advisors created during the launch of El Zócalo," said Vasquez, "I plan to build upon that success by exploring El Zócalo's full potential to engage and impact our Houston communities, especially our Latinx communities. I cannot do this alone, and so I will rely on every single one of you and your organizations to support this unifying goal. I am confident that by working together, we can create projects that are mutually beneficial to all of us and the communities we serve. I look forward to meeting those of you I have not met and reconnecting with those I've had the pleasure of meeting before."

Vasquez's first endeavor will be two projects celebrating Houston's rich Latinx community – a special student matinee of the Alley All New Festival play **72 Miles To Go...** by Hilary Bettis and **72 Miles | 72 Stories**, a Latinx community celebration.

The student matinee will kick-off the projects. Students will attend a performance of *72 Miles to Go...* by Hilary Bettis, a Latinx writer on the Emmy award-winning show "The Americans." *72 Miles* is the distance between Tucson, Arizona and Nogales, Mexico and the distance between deported immigrant Anita and her American-born husband and children. *72 Miles to Go...* follows one family over a decade as they come of age, fall in love, fight in wars, and fight for each other, against the backdrop of deportation, DACA, and changing immigration laws. Students will witness a part of the new play development process and engage in a dialogue about vital contemporary issues facing the country today. Following the matinee performances, there will be a discussion between the cast, director, playwright, and students. Additional activities accompanying the play will include pre-show classroom visits with the artistic team, access to the working script, the online Alley Re-Sourced guide, and First Draft residencies delivered by Alley Teaching Artists.

Following the student matinee of *72 Miles To Go...*, the program continues through April with the community storytelling project, **72 Miles | 72 Stories**. The Alley will provide schools, community centers, and other interested groups the opportunity to tell their story through 10-12 week residencies of the Alley's First Draft Personal Narrative curriculum. From the beginning to the end, students will write, revise, and perform a detailed and compelling personal story. During the inaugural year of the El Zócalo initiative, students and community members marveled at how simple theatre games and writing prompts could inspire their writing, and how sharing stories created engagement with classmates and community members they never really connected with before.

The 72 Miles | 72 Stories residencies will culminate with the El Zócalo community celebration in the Alley's Neuhaus Theatre at 7:30 p.m. on **April 11, 12, and 13**, as part of Houston's Spring of Latino Arts. The event will be a curated, city-wide story event where students, families, and organizations will present their First Draft stories along with selected artistic participants.

Submissions for 72 Miles | 72 Stories are welcome in all forms and may include monologues, poems, short plays, dance pieces, musical performances, visual or multimedia artwork, or other formats. Featured artists will perform side-by-side with students and community members who have created First Draft personal narratives through Alley Theatre residencies.

ANNOUNCING OPPORTUNITY FOR HOUSTON ARTISTS

Alley Theatre is seeking stories for its upcoming **El Zócalo Community Celebration, 72 Miles | 72 Stories**, being presented as part of **Houston's Spring of Latino Arts**. Submissions are welcome in all forms, and may include monologues, poems, short plays, dance pieces, musical performances, visual or multimedia artwork, or other formats. Featured artists will perform side-by-side with students and community members who have created First Draft personal narratives through Alley Theatre residencies.

Taking place in the Alley's Neuhaus Theatre at **7:30PM on April 11, 12, and 13, 2019**, each evening of this free event will have 5-10 slots for local artists of all media to share 5-15 minute pieces, as well as display opportunities for visual artwork.

For more information on how to submit your proposal please click on the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=gB8ekCtnAkmB80m59F4kAH8Uz-VTJCZGs4qEFZgKRddUMExwT08wMzdTMVZKNUVDMTVSRENaSTJOUy4u>

ABOUT EL ZÓCALO

Inspired by the traditional meeting places found all over Latin America, Alley Theatre's metaphoric "El Zócalo" is a place-making initiative that celebrates, expands, and engages Houston's diverse, Latinx culture and artistic community. The Alley Theatre is proud to partner with established cultural and social organizations and Houston-area schools to foster community and reinforce Houston's presence as a diverse arts center that serves every neighborhood in its community. For more information, visit <https://www.alleytheatre.org/elzocalo>

BENITO VASQUEZ BIO

Mr. Vasquez was born and raised in Houston, Texas. He holds a BS in Applied Mathematics from the University of Houston-Downtown and an MFA in Performance and Pedagogy from Texas Tech University. Prior to his arrival to the Alley, Mr. Vasquez was working for the University of Houston-Clear Lake as Director of the Hispanic Serving Institution STEM Grant Program. He spent the last year and a half building this program, which helps Latinx students achieve their educational and career goals in the STEM fields. Mr. Vasquez has also served as Manager of Mexican Programs for City University of Seattle, where he managed international double-degree programs with university partnerships in Mexico, such as the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico and, CETYS Universidad in Baja California, Mexico. Mr. Vasquez is also co-founder and Artistic Director of TEATRX, a Latinx theatre company established to advance Latinx Performance Arts as a vital and prominent part of the artistic identity of Houston by representing and supporting the Latinx community, its artists, and its stories. And, most recently, Mr. Vasquez has volunteered to be part of the steering committee for the Houston Alliance of Latinx Arts (HALA): A grassroots coalition of artists and art administrators working towards finding solutions to the inequities in funding of Latinx arts in Houston.

PHOTOS: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ghofwyoohuirk3c/AAAKP_lgQlflHxSgoHZtSnv-a?dl=0

SPONSORS: The Alley Theatre is supported by the 2018-19 Season sponsor United Airlines, the official airline of the Alley Theatre; Four Seasons Hotel Houston, the official hotel of the Alley Theatre; and Lynn Wyatt.

ABOUT THE ALLEY THEATRE

The Alley Theatre, one of America's leading nonprofit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company led by Interim Artistic Director, James Black and Managing Director, Dean R. Gladden. Rob Melrose will serve as the Alley's Artistic Director beginning with the 2019-20 Season. 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 recent 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 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.

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