

ALLEY THEATRE

STATEMENTS FROM THE NATIONAL ARTS COMMUNITY

"Rob Melrose is one of the most original directors, deepest thinkers, and kindest men in the American theater. He is a cherished friend and colleague of mine, and a brilliant choice for the Alley. I can only hope this will make more possibilities for collaboration between the Alley and the Public!"

-Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director, The Public Theater

"I'm thrilled by Rob Melrose's appointment at the Alley. It's great news for Houston and the American theatre at large. Rob has a real vision of what a theatre institution can mean to a twenty-first century city, and he understands all the ways in which this beautiful art can serve the widest community. Rob has one of the finest minds in our field, and he will bring his considerable intellect to bear on the Alley's opportunities and challenges in equal measure, overcoming the challenges and exploiting the opportunities. Rob's artistry is at the highest level and his range is wide. He is equally adept at directing in traditional modes as well as in bold and vivid new forms. I've seen him attract and entertain audiences in theatres large and small, and with work that's always rigorous, thoughtful, and humane. He and his wonderful family will immerse themselves in the civic life of Houston and I know that the city will find him to be warm, approachable, and delightful. I'm certain that he will confer on the Alley a real national visibility and vitality even as he makes the company mean even more to its local constituencies. I can't wait to see what he does there, and I wish him well!"

-Barry Edelstein, Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director The Old Globe, San Diego

"The Alley has made a wonderful choice in selecting Rob Melrose as its next artistic director. Rob is formidably intelligent and has a powerfully articulated aesthetic. Combine these gifts with a genuine love and empathy for artists and community, a powerful leaning towards greater equity, diversity, and inclusion in the field, and the fact that he is simply a mature and splendid human being, and the Alley has made a choice that will benefit both the organization and the field for years to come."

-Joseph Haj, Artistic Director, Guthrie Theater

"Rob Melrose is one of the kindest and most thoughtful leaders in the American theatre. He passionately cares about building bridges between classics and contemporary society, about adventurous new work, and about reflecting all types of communities. He has rigorous and eclectic taste and a generous spirit. His work at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival was simultaneously fresh, bold, and accessible. I am so excited by Rob's appointment for the Houston region and for our national field."

-Bill Rauch, Artistic Director, Oregon Shakespeare Festival

"I had the honor of working with Rob Melrose when he was the Artistic Director of Cutting Ball Theater in San Francisco. He was a phenomenal producer on my play *And Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi*. His guidance, creative genius, and support was invaluable. I am elated to hear that he will be the new artistic director of The Alley Theater. Rob brings a wealth of experience, intelligence and pure joy for making theater wherever he goes. He has the unparalleled ability to challenge and inspire audiences with top-notch plays and casts."

-Marcus Gardley, Playwright

"Rob is such a righteous guy! He's committed to doing new work that's inspiring and inclusive! So glad he'll be the new Artistic Director!"

-Suzan-Lori Parks, playwright

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"Rob Melrose is a dream to work with. In our work together, his capacious love of language, risk, craft, and story in all its myriad forms gave me wings as a playwright. I felt free and inspired to push my own boundaries, investigate the questions that eat at me, and find the play/stage/living theater shape that would best express these stories -- and know that I would have a collaborator with whom I could create with serious play and rigor. Collaborating with Rob for a playwright is like being in the flying seat!"

-Eugenie Chan, Playwright

"Rob is absolutely ready to lead a company of the Alley's size and stature. He is a wonderful director, is well-read, knows world drama and at the same time he is down to earth and beloved by artists and staff alike. He leads naturally and has a knack for making people comfortable as he often challenges them to reach beyond their limits. I am a big fan and I have no doubt he will do a bang up job."

-Joe Dowling – Former Artistic Director of the Guthrie Theatre (20 years) and the Abbey Theatre, Ireland's National Theatre

"When working with Rob, you always get the sense that he can't wait hear what each person can bring to the project - there's deep curiosity and genuine commitment to having diverse voices around the table. As a collaborator you feel that your ideas are actually a part of shaping the narrative, and that design is at the core of how he approaches the play, not an afterthought. I found that Rob always came into the conversation having done an exhaustive amount of research on the source material and the world we were trying to create and expecting the same of his collaborators. He has a singular point of view, a deep interest in the possibilities of storytelling onstage, and great respect for the collaborative process."

-Raquel Barreto, Costume Designer

"It was my great pleasure to work with Rob Melrose a few years ago on a Mobile Unit production of Shakespeare's *Pericles* for the Public Theater. Little did I know the treasure that awaited me! Rob's distinct joy, generous spirit of collaboration and infectious curiosity made the process of creating that show one of my most valued and unforgettable theatrical experiences. Down-to-earth, open-hearted and truly invested in his artists and the stories he tells, Rob gives 100% of himself to each person in the room. I knew that my voice was heard and respected in rehearsal, and therefore felt complete ownership of and responsibility to the beautiful story we were sharing. To have him now as Artistic Director of the Alley Theatre is very exciting, for I am confident of the care, integrity and glee which will fill the halls and hearts of the theatre."

-Flor De Liz Perez, Actor

"Every time I work with Rob, I feel as if I've come home to a TRULY artistic safe space; a place where I know I'm going to be given space and care to take my bravest artistic leaps. Rob fosters artistic rooms that are just as curious about the quality of the process as the ultimate product. From the first time Rob directed me at The Public Theatre, I felt incredibly seen, heard, valued, and that both my strong woman's voice and my messy playful ideas were totally respected. He is a director who unequivocally sees everyone he works with as artistic equals in the room. I will always run to dance in Rob's laugh-filled magical round."

-Tiffany Rachelle Stewart, Actor

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“What you need to know about Rob Melrose:
is that he cares
he cares deeply
he has a BIG mind, too
he has unending inventiveness

and when these are all mixed together
you can not only make magic
but you can move mountains

inside the theatre walls
in styles of creation
in the scope of possibilities

in ways that build bridges (from one space to the next)
that bring together communities (plural, multiple communities)
and that makes this all come alive at the theatre

i can testify
because i stand as witness
one who has sat in many different theatres to experiences these shows
i have been in the forums where ideas are shared
i have been blessed to collaborate where dreams come true

you, gente of the Alley
are getting a leader
who believes
and can bring many worlds together
cuz he cares and cuz he can create
in ways that makes our minds come alive
and our spirits light up

it starts with his smile
sincere and soulful
and merges to how hard his mind motors
and melds to his creative engine- that is alive always
and returns to the actual human being, rob
who is unusually interested in bringing people together

rob
is a friend
a collaborator
a gatherer
and a creator

in our Bay Area, in San Francisco specifically,
rob created a family of creators and collaborators
-- i saw it from the beginning-
like a magic trick
they took what appeared to be not a whole lot
and turned it into almost Everything
from designs to space to outreach to audiences
to the imagination

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from the very beginning - they invested and invented a style of design
that not only belied the small budgets
but too, transformed space and extended the trajectory of our imaginations
they believed in and build community
inside the theatre
and too, in the process
and then within their neighborhoods
they made so called "classic" text as vivid and fresh as the life on the streets
and at the same time nurtured and developed
actual new voices and new writings and new collaborations
and they did this all - for the majority of these two decades
in one of our City's most under attacked neighborhoods
they reminded us- theatre is FOR the people
and stood true to this

Houston is getting alot of gifts coming to it
behold and welcome Rob Melrose
fan, collaborator, and there from the beginning”

-Sean San José

program director- Campo Santo, a new performances group focused on people of color since 1996

San Francisco, California

“Rob Melrose’s gift as a human being is also one of the things that makes him a thrilling artist: he finds kinship and connection in people wherever he goes. There’s a reason why people in so many circles regard him as a trusted collaborator, an ally, and a friend. Rob has an incredible gift for making art, but it’s rivaled by his humanity.”

-Michael Locher, Set Designer

“For someone with such an intellect and so much knowledge, Rob Melrose chooses to lead first with his heart. He was the kindest of directors with me on a journey that might have been fraught. Instead it was joyous, full of mutual respect. The rehearsal process allowed me to own my performance. Every step of the way I felt listened to. It takes someone who is very secure to wear their power so gently. Lucky actors that get to work with him.”

-Sally Wingert, Actor