

ALLEY THEATRE

Texas Playwright Robert Askins Returns to the Alley Theatre with the World Premiere of **THE CARPENTER**

The Houston vs. Dallas comedy, based on Askins' own family discovery, was developed in the 2017 Alley All New Festival. The play runs January 18-February 10, 2019 in the Hubbard Theatre

HOUSTON –The Alley Theatre and Interim Artistic Director, James Black, announce the cast and crew of the world premiere of ***The Carpenter*** by Robert Askins and directed by Will Davis. Developed during the 2017 Alley All New Festival, this world premiere comedy comes from the author of the Alley's hit *Hand to God*, a Tony-nominated and Obie Award-winning play. *The Carpenter* runs January 18-February 10, 2019, in the Hubbard Theatre. Tickets are available at alleytheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at 713.220.5700.

In *The Carpenter*, Dan is a self-made man from blue collar Houston while his fiancé is from Dallas — Highland Park, to be exact. As they arrive at her father's palatial mansion for their wedding, Dan receives a startling revelation about his family, his father, and the secret everybody has been trying to keep. All this while his college buddies are trying to get him drunk, his future father-in-law is shooting his rifle into the ceiling, and Google is trying to take over his business. When the carpenter shows up to build the wedding gazebo, all hell breaks loose. There are mistaken identities, accidental partner swaps, an angry stripper, and laughs.

Askins returns to the Alley after the 2016 production of *Hand to God* and the 2017 Alley All New Festival, where he held workshop performances of *The Carpenter*. Askins spoke with festival audiences and shared that the play was based on his own experiences, including how he discovered shocking family news through a Facebook message.

Askins was born in Cypress, Texas and attended HSPVA and Cy-Fair High School and Baylor University. His Tony-nominated, Obie Award-winning play *Hand to God* recently ran on London's West End (Olivier nominated for Best New Comedy) after it opened on Broadway in April 2015, following two critically-acclaimed runs at Ensemble Studio Theatre and MCC Theater, where it was named a *New York Times* Critics' Pick and called "the most entertaining show of 2014." Last June, La Jolla Playhouse presented the World Premiere of Askin's play *Squirrels*. His play *Permission*, made its world premiere off-Broadway in spring 2015 at MCC Theater. His play *Fish Display* was part of the 2012 Ojai Playwrights Conference, while *Permission* was part of the 2014 conference. Rob has received two EST/Sloan grants, the Helen Merrill Emerging Playwrights Award, and an Arch and Bruce Davis Award for Playwriting.

Director Will Davis, known for physically adventurous new works, is making his Alley Theatre directorial debut and is the first trans-identifying director in the Theatre's history. Recent projects include *India Pale Ale* by Jaclyn Backhaus for MTC; *Bobbie Clearly* by Alex Lubischer for Roundabout Underground; *CHARM* by Philip Dawkins for MCC; *Men on Boats* by Jaclyn Backhaus for Clubbed Thumb's Summerworks and a remounted version of that production for Playwrights Horizons. Additional credits include two productions of *Colossal* by Andrew Hinderaker for Mixed Blood Theater and the Olney Theatre Center, for which he won a Helen Hayes award for outstanding direction. Upcoming projects include *A Doll's House, Part II* for Long Wharf Theatre. He has developed, directed, and performed his work with New York Theatre Workshop, the New Museum, the Alliance Theatre, the Playwright's Realm, the Fusebox Festival, New Harmony Project, the Orchard Project, the Ground Floor Residency at Berkeley Rep, Performance Studies International at Stanford University, and the Kennedy Center. He holds a BFA from DePaul University and an MFA from the University of Texas-Austin.

The Carpenter cast includes Wade McCollum (Broadway's *Wicked*, Off Broadway's *TRIASSIC PARQ*) as Gene, Ken Wulf Clark (Broadway's *Natasha, Pierre... Comet of 1812*, Netflix's "House of Cards") as Dan, Buddy Haardt (Orlando Shakespeare Theatre: *The Great Gatsby*, The Acting Co: *As You Like It*) as Steve, Valeri Mudek (Guthrie Theater: *Uncle Vanya*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) as Terry, Jessica Savage (Manhattan Theater Club: *By The Water*, Contemporary American Theater Festival: *Thirst*) as Claire, Cass Morgan (Broadway: *The Bridges of Madison County*, Encores!: *The Big River*) as Cheryl, Molly Carden (Signature Theatre: *Emotional Creature*, Clurman Theatre: *Pressing Matters*) as Jesse, T. Ryder Smith (Broadway's *Oslo*, *War Horse*) as Kip, and Brooke Wilson (Alley's *All the Way*, *A Christmas Carol*) as Venus (who reprises her role from *The Carpenter* workshop).

The Carpenter is directed by Will Davis and includes scenic design by Arnulfo Moldonado, costume design by Melissa Ng, lighting design by Barbara Samuels, and sound design by Miles Polaski. Luke Fedell serves as Fight Director, Hethyr Verhoef is the Stage Manager, and New York casting is by Binder Casting.

Performances of *The Carpenter* are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Friday at 8:00 p.m., Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. *The Carpenter* is recommended for 18 years of age and up due to strong language.

SPONSORS: The world premiere of *The Carpenter* is generously sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. 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.

TICKETS: Tickets to *The Carpenter* are now on sale and start at \$26. Discounted tickets are available for military, seniors, and any student, regardless of age, with a valid student ID for designated performances. Tickets can be ordered online (alleytheatre.org) or by phone (713.220.5700).

ALLEY IN CONTEXT: The Alley Theatre will present a post-show discussion following the Saturday, January 26 (2:30 p.m.) performance, which will feature civic leaders, distinguished academics, and area professionals discussing the themes of the play and how they are reflected in our lives today. *The Carpenter* cast will be featured during a post-show discussion following the Tuesday, January 29 (7:30 p.m.) performance.

DESIGNER TALK: An hour before the Sunday, January 20 matinee preview performance (2:30 p.m.), a member of the artistic staff will lead a discussion with the production's creative team to give audiences a behind-the-scenes look at the design process. These pre-show talks will offer audiences an exclusive opportunity to ask questions about the designer's work and learn how they brought the script to life. Designer Talks will take place in the Texas Room.

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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 for 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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