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**Alley Theatre's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season to Launch with  
Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize Winner *Sweat*  
*The production will be produced in collaboration with  
The Ensemble Theatre***

HOUSTON, TX – The Alley Theatre will reopen its doors on **October 1, 2021** after no live performances for 19 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The jubilant return to the Theatre coincides with the Alley's **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** and **The Ensemble's 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Seasons**. The first live production of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season will be **Lynn Nottage's** Pulitzer Prize-winning play ***Sweat***. *Sweat* will run **October 1 – 24, 2021** in the Hubbard Theatre.

Filled with humor and tremendous heart, *Sweat* tells the story of three women who have spent their lives sharing drinks, secrets, and laughs while working together on the factory floor. But when layoffs and picket lines begin to chip away at their trust, they find themselves pitted against each other in a heart-wrenching fight to stay afloat.

*Sweat* will be directed by the Alley Theatre's Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** and **The Ensemble Theatre's** Artistic Director **Eileen J. Morris** will be the Associate Director.

"I'm thrilled to produce and direct this Pulitzer Prize-winning play in collaboration with The Ensemble Theatre. What a triumphant return to live theatre and in celebration of two anniversary milestones for both Theatres," said Alley Theatre Artistic Director Rob Melrose. "I'm excited for Houston audiences to see this rich, theatrical drama with our Resident Acting Company and Houston artists at the center of the production. I have loved this play ever since I first saw it in its world premiere production at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. It was so clearly a major work right from the beginning. It has been exciting to watch it win the Pulitzer, go to Broadway, and tour the country. Now I'm thrilled to share it with our audience here in Houston. Eileen Morris is a wonderful partner, and I'm delighted to have her expertise on this production of *Sweat*."

“Celebrating The Ensemble’s 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Alley’s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary simultaneously is a wonderful way to bring back live theatre. I’m overjoyed to be collaborating alongside Rob and am so pleased our two theatres could come together to bring these unique stories of *Sweat* and *Respect: A Musical Journey of Women* to the stage,” said The Ensemble Theatre’s Artistic Director Eileen J. Morris. “*Sweat* boldly captures the story of a multi-cultural community that similarly reflects the diversity of Houston. I hope through this play, audiences come together and see the shared human experiences we all face today.”

The cast is comprised of six Resident Acting Company members: **Elizabeth Bunch** as Tracey, **Dylan Godwin** as Jason, **Shawn Hamilton** as Brucie, **Chris Hutchison** as Stan, **Melissa Pritchett** as Jessie, and **David Rainey** as Evan.

The Resident Acting Company will be joined by **Derrick J. Brent II** (The Ensemble Theatre’s *Fetch Clay, Make Man*) as Chris, **Michelle Elaine** (Alley Theatre’s *Quack, For Steve Wozniak on His 67<sup>th</sup> Birthday*; The Ensemble Theatre’s *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*) as Cynthia, and **Luis Quintero** (Alley All New Reading of *Wife of a Salesman*) as Oscar.

The creative team of *Sweat* includes Scenic Designer **Michael Locher**, Costume Designer **Erica Griese**, Lighting Designer **Kevin Rigdon**, Sound Designer **Kathy Ruvuna**, Fight Director and Intimacy Coordinator **Adam Noble**, Stage Manager **Kristen Larson**, and Assistant Stage Manager **Emily Bohannan**.

Performances of *Sweat* 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. *Sweat* is recommended for high school ages and up.

**COVID-19 POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS:** Following the guidance of the CDC and local health officials, Alley Theatre requires all guests wear a mask properly at all times while in the Theatre building, except while actively eating and drinking. Additionally, Alley Theatre recommends all guests be vaccinated to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These policies are subject to change closer to in-person performances, and we will update all ticket holders in advance of their ticketed performance if changes occur.

If guests feel ill, or test positive for COVID-19, please do not come to the theatre, and contact [boxoffice@alleytheatre.org](mailto:boxoffice@alleytheatre.org) to reschedule, move funds to on account for future use, or request a refund.

#### OTHER SAFETY UPDATES

- Contactless options will be available for transactions upon entry and for in-venue purchases.
- All auditorium ventilation systems have been upgraded to MERV 13 filters.
- EPA approved cleaning products are used along with rigorous cleaning and sanitation protocols.

#### GBAC Star

The Alley is a GBAC STAR™ accredited facility. The accreditation means that the facility has:

- Established and maintained a cleaning, disinfection, and infectious diseases prevention program to minimize risk associated with infectious agents like the novel coronavirus
- The proper cleaning protocols, disinfection techniques, and work practices in place to combat biohazards and infectious disease
- Highly skilled cleaning professionals who are trained for outbreak and infectious disease preparation and response
- Created a checks and balance system to ensure that all employees and artists are following PPE protocols and disinfecting procedures

**DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION:** From October 25 through November 7, a paid digital version of *Sweat*, filmed live at the Alley, will be available for viewing. Guests who have purchased an in-person ticket and do not feel comfortable attending in-person may transfer their ticket before the start of their ticketed performance to a digital ticket. Digital tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at [alleytheatre.org](http://alleytheatre.org). Limited digital tickets will be available for purchase beginning October 1.

**SPONSORS:** The Alley Theatre is supported by the 2021-22 Season sponsor United Airlines, the official airline of the Alley Theatre.

**TICKETS:** Tickets to *Sweat* are now on sale and start at \$28. Discounted tickets are available for military, seniors, and any student or educator, regardless of age, with a valid student ID for designated performances. Tickets can be ordered online ([alleytheatre.org](http://alleytheatre.org)) or by phone (713.220.5700).

**PHOTOS:**

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h5boofkhkpvb1qv/AAA\\_Cqy49GC6ZMirH0kRoIH3a?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h5boofkhkpvb1qv/AAA_Cqy49GC6ZMirH0kRoIH3a?dl=0)

**CONNECT WITH US:** #Alley75, @alleytheatre, #Ensemble45, @tet\_houston

**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.

**ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE THEATRE:**

The Ensemble Theatre was founded in 1976 by the late George Hawkins to preserve African American artistic expression and enlighten, entertain, and enrich a diverse community. Decades later, the theatre has evolved from a touring company operating from the trunk of Mr. Hawkins' car to being one of Houston's finest historical cultural institutions. The Ensemble Theatre is the oldest and largest professional African American theatre in the Southwest and holds the distinction of being one of the nation's largest African American theatres owning and operating its facility and producing in-house. The Ensemble Theatre has fulfilled and surpassed the vision of its founder and continues to expand and create innovative programs to bring African American theatre to a myriad of audiences.

The Ensemble produces a Mainstage Season of six contemporary and classical works devoted to the portrayal of the African American experience by local and national playwrights and artists. The Ensemble's Performing Arts Education program provides educational workshops, artist-in-residence experiences, and live performances for students both off-site and at the theatre, and the Young Performers Program offers intensive spring and summer training for youth ages 6 to 17 encompassing instruction in all disciplines of the theatre arts. Through its varied programs, The Ensemble reaches over 65,000 people annually. The programs and operations of The Ensemble Theatre benefit a multicultural audience that is diverse in age, income, ethnicity, and culture. <https://ensemblehouston.com/>

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