

FOR REVIEW

## UCROSS & THE ALLEY THEATRE ANNOUNCE “ALLEY AT UCROSS” COLLABORATION FIVE PLAYWRIGHTS SELECTED FOR FALL 2019 RESIDENCIES

*The prestigious Wyoming-based artist residency program & Tony Award-winning Texas theatre company will bring five playwrights together for an annual two-week residency*

**NEW YORK—September 18, 2019** — Ucross, a prestigious artist residency program and creative laboratory for the arts, and the Alley Theatre, one of America’s leading regional theatres, today announced an innovative new collaboration in support of theatre artists. Five playwrights annually will receive two-week residencies at Ucross.

Robert Askins, Vichet Chum, Arthur Jolly, Claire Kiechel, and Molly Beach Murphy will spend October 14–25 at Ucross in northeastern Wyoming where they will focus on creative work with the Alley Theatre in mind as the eventual performance venue. The *Alley at Ucross* partnership was launched this year to give playwrights the crucial gift of uninterrupted time for concentrated work. Some projects were commissioned by the Alley Theatre and others have already been slated for production in an upcoming season or further development in the annual Alley All New Festival.

“Ucross and the Alley share a common commitment to creative excellence,” said Ucross President Sharon Dynak. “This new partnership will reflect the diversity and energy of contemporary writers that make the American theatre such a vibrant art form. The retreat will also be an important opportunity for Ucross to provide support to an esteemed sister organization. It will allow the Alley’s artistic staff to deepen its relationship with writers it wants to continue to support, and to engage in a substantive way with writers it is working with for the first time.”

“Ucross welcomes this collaboration as a way to broaden its support to theatre artists and to honor its historic ties to the community of Houston, to the Alley Theatre, and to the legacy of its founder Raymond Plank,” Dynak added.

Dynak additionally noted that, in the past, Ucross has supported several acclaimed playwrights including Rajiv Joseph, Glen Berger, and Kenneth Lin, who came to the program through the Alley in order to focus on work that was then produced at the Theatre. The *Alley at Ucross* partnership marks a deepening of the relationship between the two organizations.

“*Alley at Ucross* is a thrilling addition to our growing Alley All New initiative,” said Alley Theatre Director of New Work Elizabeth Frankel. “Now, in addition to readings and workshops in Houston, we can provide writers with the space and time to write. While in Wyoming, they will benefit from the support that Ucross offers and the community of being with other Alley playwrights, as well as the artists in residence working in other mediums. We are delighted to send writers both to revise plays that they will present at the Alley soon, as well as begin first drafts of plays we may develop in the future.”

Alley Theatre Artistic Director Rob Melrose added, “I couldn’t be more excited about the *Alley at Ucross*. Elizabeth Frankel and I share a belief that playwrights should be supported at every stage of their process. *Alley at Ucross* will provide writers time to start new commissions, finish a first draft of a promising script, or polish a final draft that is ready for production at the Alley and everything in between. This ‘soup to nuts’ approach to new play development means that the Alley is there to support the playwrights throughout the entire process.”

The five playwrights represent a dynamic mix of theatrical experience and Texas ties. Arthur Jolly moved to Houston from Los Angeles a few years ago. Robert Askins grew up in Houston, and Vichet Chum and Molly Beach Murphy are originally from Texas.

Cypress, Texas-born Robert Askins is the author of the Tony-nominated and Obie Award-winning Broadway hit *Hand to God*, which enjoyed a run on London’s West End and was nominated for the Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. His comedy *Fish Display* was part of the 2012 Ojai Playwrights

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Conference, and his play *Permission*, also developed at OPC, had its world premiere off-Broadway at MCC Theater in spring 2015. His play *The Squirrels* appeared at La Jolla Playhouse in fall 2018. In January 2019, Rob returned to the Alley with *The Carpenter* after developing the play in the Alley All New Festival. Rob has also been a writer and producer on several television shows and feature films. He is the recipient of two EST/Sloan grants, the Helen Merrill Emerging Playwrights Award, and an Arch and Bruce Davis Award for Playwriting. Rob is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Vichet Chum is a Cambodian-American playwright and theater-maker originally from Dallas, Texas and now living in New York City. His plays have been workshopped at Steppenwolf Theatre, Fault Line Theatre, Second Generation Productions, Crowded Outlet, Weston Playhouse, Cleveland Public Theatre, All For One Theater, Amios, Florida State University, Merrimack Repertory Theatre and the New Harmony Project. He received the 2018-19 Princess Grace Award in Playwriting. He serves as an Associate Artist at Merrimack Repertory Theatre and a board member for the New Harmony Project. Vichet is currently a part of the 2019 Resident Working Farm Group at Space on Ryder Farm. He is a proud graduate of the University of Evansville (BFA) and Brown University/Trinity Repertory Company (MFA).

Arthur M. Jolly, screenwriter of *Where We Disappear*, was recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences with a Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting and in 2017 won the Hammond House International Literary Prize for a Screenplay for *Eight Ball*. As a playwright, Jolly is a three-time Joining Sword and Pen winner, Todd McNerney National Playwriting Award winner, and finalist for the Woodward/Newman Drama Award. He has penned over 60 produced plays, which include *A Gulag Mouse*, *The Christmas Princess*, *Trash*, *Past Curfew*, *The Ithaca Ladies Read Medea*, *Long Joan Silver*, and two short play collections *Thin Lines* and *Guilty Moments*. Jolly is a member of the WGA caucus, The Alliance of Los Angeles Playwrights, and The Dramatists Guild.

Claire Kiechel is a New York-based theater maker and sometimes LA-based film and TV writer. Her plays include *Paul Swan is Dead & Gone* (The Civilians at Torn Page), *Sophia* (Alley Theatre Alley All New Festival 2019); *the haunted* (City Theatre's Momentum Festival, additional development at Seattle Rep); *Pilgrims* (The Gift Theatre; Alley All New Reading Series; The Lark's Playwrights' Week 2016; The Kilroys' The List 2016); *Lulu Is Hungry* with composer Avi Amon at Ars Nova's ANT Fest 2016; and *Some Dark Places of the Earth* at The New School for Drama. She has received commissions from Actors Theatre of Louisville, South Coast Rep, and the Alley Theatre, and has a BA from Amherst College and an MFA from the New School for Drama. She was a writer for Netflix's second season of THE OA and was also on the upcoming HBO series WATCHMEN. She is developing a pilot for Hulu with Annapurna & EOne, as well as a film for Disney with Secret Machine.

Molly Beach Murphy is a playwright and director from Galveston, Texas. Plays and musicals include: *Ike* (2019 Drama League Beatrice Terry Resident), *Molly Murphy & Neil deGrasse Tyson On Our Last Day On Earth* (Ars Nova's ANTFest, NYMF, Incubator Arts Project), *Big Bend in the Red Dirt Desert* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). With core collaborators Annie Tippe and Jeanna Phillips, Molly has created *Cowboy Bob* (New York Stage & Film Musical Workshop; Village Theatre Festival of New Musicals; University of the Arts' Polyphone; Yale Institute of Music Theater; Ars Nova Project Residency) as well as two new musicals in early development. Molly's work has been developed at Page 73 Productions' Interstate 73 Writer's Group, Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Civilians' R&D Group, The Orchard Project, and New York Theatre Workshop's Adelphi Residency. She is a New Georges Affiliated Artist and has published works in The Hairpin and Santa Ana River Review. Murphy was also a semi-finalist for the Page 73 Playwriting Fellowship.

Alley Theatre Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Director of New Work Elizabeth Frankel will be present throughout the residency to be in conversation with the playwrights about their work.

Funding the project will be Jesse Marion, who serves on the Ucross board and is currently Chairman of the Board of the Alley Theatre in Houston, Texas. Two Ucross composer studios, Jesse's Hideouts One and Two, are named in his honor, in recognition of his generosity to Ucross. Jesse and his wife Cathy have created the Marion International Fellowship for the Visual and Performing Arts, which connects their philanthropic interests, including Ucross, the Alley Theatre, the Alberta College of Art & Design, Chautauqua Institution, and SUNY Fredonia.

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## **About Ucross**

Located in northeast Wyoming in the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains, Ucross fosters the creative spirit of deeply committed artists and groups by providing uninterrupted time, studio space, living accommodations, and the experience of the majestic High Plains, while serving as a responsible steward of its 20,000-acre ranch. Residencies are awarded to one hundred artists each year. Ten artists are in residence at one time, typically a mix of four visual artists, four writers, and two composers.

Since its establishment in 1981, Ucross has provided more than 2,100 residencies to writers, visual artists, and composers, including such distinguished fellows as Annie Proulx, Terry Tempest Williams, Colson Whitehead, Elizabeth Gilbert, Ann Patchett, Ricky Ian Gordon, Bill Morrison, Theaster Gates, Anthony Hernandez, Academy Award and Tony winners Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, recent National Book Award winner Sigrid Nunez, and current United States Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. National partners of Ucross include the Sundance Institute Theatre Program, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, the Whiting Foundation, the Alliance of Artist Communities, and the PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Novel. The Ucross Foundation Art Gallery is a significant cultural resource for surrounding communities and beyond. For further information, visit [ucross.org](http://ucross.org).

## **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 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 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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