

ALLEY THEATRE

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Briana J. Resa Will Star in Isaac Gómez's *What-A-Christmas!* *The Adult Holiday comedy follows a Texan Scrooge who's flippin' burgers, flingin' fries, and seein' spirits.*

HOUSTON TX - The Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre announces the cast and creative team of **Isaac Gómez's world premiere *What-A-Christmas!*** The play is directed by **KJ Sanchez** (*Quixote Nuevo*) and runs December 2 – December 24, 2022 in the Neuhaus Theatre. An Alley All New commission, *What-A-Christmas!* now makes its world premiere this holiday season.

The Christmas Eve overnight shift is Margot's personal tradition — even if that means spending the holiday dealing with grumpy drive-thru customers and an equally grumpy robotic Santa. But when her dead best friend Jackie Marley drops by to warn her of impending late-night visits by spirits, Margot has no choice but to roll with the punches and confront the very Scrooge she's become. It's a Christmas Eve like none other in this brand-new holiday show filled with humor and heart set right here in Htown by Texan playwright **Isaac Gómez**.

"This year at the Alley, we are creating two all-new Christmas Carol plays, one spectacular production for the family closely based on Dicken's classic and one for adults that is a modern reimagining with a Houston flair created by Isaac Gómez," said Alley Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. "Isaac's *What-A-Christmas!* is fresh, hilarious, inventive, surprising, and at the end of the day, quite moving. I am especially excited for Briana to star in this one-woman tour-de-force. She was riveting in our 2020-21 digital production of Isaac's *El Chuco Town Forever*. Come twice to the Alley during this holiday season and meet both Scrooges!"

"*What-a-Christmas!* is my warm holiday gift to my Texas upbringing, the working class, and to Scrooge himself," shares playwright **Isaac Gómez**. "I am excited about the opportunity to show Houstonians a modern-day version of a classic story that will hopefully last a lifetime -- one they can see themselves in."

"I am pleased to have been part of the Alley Theatre's development process for *What-A-Christmas!* and am looking forward to continuing that work with fearless collaborators, Isaac, KJ and Laura," shares **Briana J. Resa**. "We will be cooking up something special for Houston audiences."

Briana J. Resa will star as Margot in this one-woman show with **Laura Moreno** as her understudy and assistant director.

The creative team of *What-A-Christmas!* includes Scenic Designer Kevin Rigdon, Costume Designer Samantha C. Jones, Lighting Designer Dan Jones, Sound Designer Kathy Ruvuna, and Stage Manager Debs Ramser.

PRESS NIGHT: Wednesday, December 7 at 7:30pm. Invitations will be sent at a later date.

SPANISH LANGUAGE CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES: Friday, December 2 and December 9 and Saturday, December 17 at 7:00pm.

BIOS:

BRIANA J. RESA (*Margot*) appeared on the Alley Theatre's stage last season in *Sense and Sensibility* and the world premiere of *72 miles to go. . .* Other Alley appearances: *Alley@Home* production of *El Chuco Town Forever* and Michael's Wilson's *A Christmas Carol - A Ghost Story of Christmas*. She is the recipient of the 2020 Houston Press Theatre Award for Best Solo Show and finalist for Best Actress. Favorite credits: *Between Riverside and Crazy* (4th Wall Theatre Company); *The Secretary and Native Gardens* (Main Street Theater); *R.U.R.* (Classical Theatre Company); one woman show *Empanada Loca* (Obsidian Theater); *Alma En Venta* (Stages Repertory Theatre); *The Hunchback of Seville*, *The Moors* (Mildred's Umbrella), *A Wonderful Life* and *Dreamgirls* (TUTS). BFA, Sam Houston State University. Instagram: @brianaresa.

LAURA MORENO (*Understudy, Assistant Director*) is excited to be returning to the Alley Theatre. She's had the pleasure of working on a number of Alley projects which include directing *Alley@Home's El Chuco Town Forever*, assistant director of *Born With Teeth*, and the director of the upcoming digital work *The Odyssey of Professor Blume*. Laura is a multi-faceted theatre artist and arts leader, known for her work as a producer, film & stage director, arts admin, and costume designer. She received her MFA in Theatre, MA in Arts Leadership, and BFA in Acting from the University of Houston. She is an Ambassador for the Parent Artist Advocacy League (PAAL) and a founding member of the Houston PAAL Chapter, as well as member of the El Zocalo Advisory Committee. Other projects include: Co-founder of Beans & Rice Media Arts, ¡Que Onda! LatinX Theatre Collective, and Co-fellow for DiverseWorks Project Freeway Fellowship.

ISAAC GÓMEZ (*Playwright*) (she/they/he) is an award-winning Chicago and Los Angeles based playwright and screenwriter originally from El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. They identify as na'wi – the third gender marker of the Rarámuri, a Mexican indigenous community in northern Chihuahua, of which she is a direct descendent. He is currently under commission with LCT3, Steppenwolf Theater Company, South Coast Repertory, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and IAMA Theatre Company. Their plays have been produced and/or developed by Audible Theater, Steppenwolf Theater Company, Primary Stages, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Goodman Theatre, the Alley Theatre, and many others. She is the recipient of the 2018 Dramatists Guild Lanford Wilson Award, the 2017 Jeffrey Melnick New Playwright Award at Primary Stages, and an inaugural 3Arts "Make A Wave" grantee. His television credits include the Netflix Original Series 'Narcos: Mexico', the upcoming Apple TV+ Limited Series 'The Last Thing He Told Me' starring Jennifer Garner, and the second season of the crime-drama 'Joe Pickett' for Paramount TV+. They currently have a series in development with Stacey Sher and FX. On the feature film side, she is currently under development with a full-length feature at Focus Features. They enjoy good bowls of menudo on Sundays (con bolillos not tortillas, porfis) and can slay a game of millennial loteria. He is represented by The Gersh Agency, ReDefine Entertainment, and Granderson Des Rochers, LLP.

KJ SANCHEZ (*Director*) is the founder and CEO of American Records, making theatre that chronicles our time and serves as a bridge between people. KJ has directed across the country, including Off-Broadway at Urban Stages, The Gene Frankel Theatre and HERE Arts Center. Regionally, she has directed at (select list) Chicago's The Goodman Theatre, Studio Theatre in DC, The Huntington in Boston, Hartford Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Baltimore's Center Stage, Round House Theatre in Bethesda and Milwaukee Rep. As a playwright, KJ has been produced across the country and internationally. She is the voice of many characters on the cartoons *Dora the Explorer* and *Go Diego Go*. KJ is a Fox Fellow, Douglass Wallop Fellow, MacDowell Fellow, and a recipient of the 2014 Rella Lossy Playwright Award. She is an Associate Professor and Head of the MFA Playwriting/Directing programs at the University of Texas at Austin.

SPONSORS: Alley Theatre is supported by the 2022-23 Season sponsors United Airlines, the official airline of Alley Theatre, and Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites Downtown Houston, the official hotel of Alley Theatre. Spanish Language Captioned Performances are sponsored by Bank of America ACTivate Award from Theatre Forward.

TICKETS: Tickets to *What-A-Christmas!* 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) or by phone (713.220.5700).
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ABOUT ALLEY ALL NEW:

Alley All New is comprised of a variety of public and in-house programs designed to support playwrights and cater to the needs of each new project. Through this initiative, the Alley produces world premieres, commissions new plays, and supports playwrights year-round.

ABOUT ALLEY THEATRE EL ZÓCALO:

Alley Theatre launched its El Zócalo (EZ) initiative in 2017 with the visiting touring production of *Misa Fronteriza* from Monterey, Mexico, and the establishment of the El Zócalo Advisory Team. With the goal of nurturing long-term relationships with community members at multiple engagement levels, El Zócalo creates opportunities for Latinx artists and community members to share their stories, explore their heritage, and form meaningful connections that bridge the class and cultural divide that often exists between separate “neighborhoods.”

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.

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