

ALLEY THEATRE

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Alley Theatre Receives Bank of America ACTivate Award from Theatre Forward

The Theatre Forward Grant will accelerate Alley Theatre's effort to create a more equitable and inclusive environment

HOUSTON TX - The Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre is proud to be one of six recipients of the **Bank of America ACTivate Awards**. The Bank of America ACTivate Awards, a [Theatre Forward grants program](#), seeks to foster and accelerate theatres' efforts to become more equitable, diverse, and inclusive of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and groups.

Theatre Forward and Bank of America partnered to award the second round of \$300,000 to six national theatres that will receive grants of \$50,000 each toward projects that advance cutting-edge Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives. The program supports essential work within the theatre and/or projects that are outwardly focused to advance or deepen relationships with the BIPOC community. The theatres that have been awarded grants in 2022 are **Actors Theatre of Louisville** (Louisville, KY), **Alley Theatre** (Houston, TX), **Alliance Theatre** (Atlanta, GA), **Center Theatre Group** (Los Angeles, CA), **Long Wharf Theatre** (New Haven, CT), and **The Old Globe** (San Diego, CA).

"The purpose of a theatre is to speak to the heart and soul of a community," shared **Chief Education and Community Engagement Officer Mary Sutton**. "Alley Theatre's Language Justice initiative, funded by Theatre Forward, will allow us to embrace a multiplicity of languages and open the stories on our stages to folks who might feel more comfortable listening through a mix of languages. This work will move us one step closer to true inclusivity. We took our lead from an El Zòcalo committee members who told us, *'I am from Mexico and I speak English perfectly well, the fact you included Spanish captions and translations to shows during the epidemic warmed my heart. I felt welcomed like never before.'*"

"Our El Zòcalo committee has shown us the way to truly relevant work with our community." **Rob Melrose, Alley Theatre's Artistic Director**, exclaimed upon hearing the Alley Theatre won this-hard-to-receive-opportunity, "The fact that we are seeking language justice in our building and signage and for our diverse line-up of shows is unique in the American Theatre. It is a game changer. I have no doubt that other theatres will be following our lead once we have all the moving parts in place. I am so proud and excited for this work."

Alley Theatre launched its El Zòcalo (EZ) initiative in 2017 with the visiting touring production of *Misa Fronteriza* from Monterey, Mexico, and the establishment of the El Zòcalo Advisory Team. With the goal of nurturing long-term relationships with community members at multiple engagement levels, El Zòcalo 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."

With an aggressive Language Justice program, Alley Theatre has already begun creating “In-reach” – pulling the community into our spaces (rather than outreach) creating opportunities to connect with its community by:

- Increased Spanish language marketing and communications, including specialized campaigns with Spanish language media
- Creating a welcoming atmosphere through bilingual signage throughout the buildings, and Spanish-speaking Guest Services and Front of House staff

The Alley Theatre’s multifaceted Language Justice initiative includes:

- Translated scripts and Spanish language materials and events such as programs, resource guides, and talkbacks for targeted performances of for targeted shows, including *A Christmas Carol*, *What-A-Christmas*, Alley Transported’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Torera* as well as other Education and Community Engagement offerings.
- Scheduled captioned performances for *A Christmas Carol* on Sunday, November 20, Saturday, November 26, and Sunday, December 18, *What-A-Christmas* on Friday, December 2, Friday, December 9, Saturday, December 17, and for select performances of *Torera*.
- Offering simultaneous Spanish translations for Alley Transported’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* which will go out to select communities with primarily Spanish speakers.
- Eventually, in future seasons offering a fully Spanish language show, with simultaneous English translations, in the Alley’s season, coming full circle from how *Misa Fronteriza* was presented in the community in 2017.

The Bank of America ACTivate Awards are supported by Bank of America, along with the Schloss Family Foundation and The Patti and Rusty Rueff Foundation. The participating theatres were selected by a panel coordinated by consultant Fran Kumin and composed of Donna Walker-Kuhne, President of Walker International Communications Group; Emika Abe, Managing Director of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; Raymond Bobgan, Executive Artistic Director of Cleveland Public Theatre; Bill Rauch, Artistic Director of The Ronald O. Perelman Center for the Performing Arts; and Stephanie Ybarra, Artistic Director of Baltimore Center Stage.

The Bank of America ACTivate Awards are a key demonstration of Bank of America’s arts support worldwide. Through unique programs like these awards, as well as the Art Conservation Project, Museums on Us®, loaning exhibitions through the Art in Our Communities program, the Masterpiece Moment video series and sponsorships and grants, Bank of America supports a wide range of both local and world-class organizations. The company’s programs are designed to have a positive impact on economies and societies throughout the world and help create greater cultural understanding. Through steadfast and strategic support, Bank of America has become one of the world’s leading corporate supporters of the arts.

ABOUT ALLEY THEATRE:

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 Alley produces up to 11 plays and nearly 400 performances each season, ranging from the best current work and classic plays to new plays by contemporary writers. Home to a full-time resident company of actors and expert artisans in all theatre crafts, the Alley engages theatre artists of every discipline – actors,

directors, designers, composer, playwrights – who work on individual productions throughout each season as visiting artists.

Alley Theatre performs at the Meredith J. Long Theatre Center which 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.

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