

# ALLEY THEATRE

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## Alley Theatre Announces Retirement of Managing Director Dean R. Gladden

HOUSTON, TX – Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre announces that after nearly two decades of visionary leadership, **Dean R. Gladden** will retire as Managing Director of Alley Theatre at the close of its fiscal year on June 30, 2025. His remarkable career spans 48 years of dedicated service to the national arts community, including 19 pivotal years at the Alley, where his impact will be felt for generations to come. A national search firm, Management Consultants for the Arts, has been engaged to identify Gladden's successor, with Craig Jarchow, President of the Board of Directors, leading the board search committee. The new Managing Director is expected to begin on July 1, 2025.

Gladden's tenure has been marked by unprecedented growth and resilience as the longest-serving Managing Director in Alley Theatre's 78-year history. Under his stewardship, the Alley has experienced a period of prosperity unlike any other in its history. Gladden's commitment to fiscal responsibility, paired with his deep belief in the theatre's artistic mission, has navigated the organization through the 2009 Great Recession, a comprehensive renovation of the theatre complex which necessitating a 14-month off-site relocation, \$26 million in damages from Hurricane Harvey, and the global COVID-19 shutdown.

Over the course of his career at the Alley, Gladden has produced more than 200 plays, attracting an audience of over 3 million people. He led the two largest capital campaigns in the theatre's history and oversaw the extensive renovation of the iconic Meredith J. Long Theatre Center. His contributions have not gone unrecognized—Gladden was twice named one of Houston's Most Admired CEOs by the *Houston Business Journal* and was inducted into the prestigious Cleveland Play House Hall of Fame, honoring his enduring legacy in the theatre world.

As Alley Theatre looks toward the future, Gladden leaves behind a legacy of innovation, resilience, and artistic excellence.

"I feel so lucky to have worked in partnership with Dean Gladden these past six years," shares Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. "Dean retires as a true legend in the American Theatre, having expertly guided the Alley through some of the most challenging times imaginable including a hurricane and a global pandemic. As his partner, I have benefited greatly from his unwavering support of the art, his commitment to fiscal responsibility, his passion for pushing himself and his teammates to new heights, his tireless fundraising, as well as his strategic mind. He deeply cares about the Alley, and I know that even after his retirement, he will continue to be the Alley's lifelong friend and greatest advocate. Congratulations Dean!"

"Dean Gladden has set the standard for impactful management and leadership of arts organizations," adds Alley Board President **Craig M. Jarchow**. "He has guided Alley Theatre over nearly 20 years through numerous challenges, including the flooding and rebuilding of the theatre twice, and the complete evaporation of audiences during COVID followed by a quick and robust restoration of these audiences when no one thought it was possible. Dean leaves the Alley in great shape relative to every metric that matters. He will be greatly missed."

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“It has been the greatest honor of my career to serve as Managing Director of Alley Theatre,” shares **Dean R. Gladden**. “The Alley stands as one of America’s premier theatre companies, recognized for its artistic excellence, Resident Acting Company, and forward-thinking innovations. This success would not have been possible without the unwavering leadership and support of our extraordinary Board of Directors, whose commitment is unmatched. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the volunteer Presidents who served during my tenure—Dan Tutchter, Roger Plank, Rob Reedy, Jesse Marion, Butch Mach, Ken Kades, and Craig Jarchow—for their guidance and partnership.”

“I also want to offer a special acknowledgment to the late Meredith J. Long, our Chairman Emeritus, whose tireless advocacy was a cornerstone of the Alley’s continued success,” **Gladden** continues. “At the heart of the Alley’s success is its artistic product, which is a testament to the incredible talents of our staff. From actors, designers, and directors to technicians, artisans, craftspeople, and administrators, the Alley’s team is among the finest in the country. It has been an extraordinary pleasure to work alongside them, producing theatre of the highest quality for the Houston community.”

## ALLEY THEATRE’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS UNDER MANAGING DIRECTOR DEAN R. GLADDEN:

- When Dean Gladden joined Alley Theatre in 2006, the organization faced an \$800,000 deficit. Through 19 years of balanced budgets, surpluses, and fundraising efforts, the Alley now boasts financial reserves exceeding \$5 million.
- Upon the completion of the current \$80 million *Vision for the Future* Campaign, the Alley will have increased its endowment from \$12 million in 2009 to \$62 million—a 500% growth, making it one of the largest endowments of any theatre company in the U.S.
- Under Dean’s leadership, the total operating budget has doubled. He takes pride in ensuring the financial resources needed to bring the Artistic visions to life, providing Houston with national and international-caliber productions.
- During his tenure, Alley Theatre productions have toured to 15 cities throughout the U.S., including Broadway and off-Broadway. He is currently in negotiations for the Alley to produce the first-ever American international theatre exchange with the Mexican National Theatre.
- Dean transformed the Alley’s *Summer Chills* murder mystery series into a major revenue generator, increasing its annual revenue by 370% from 2007 to 2024.
- He spearheaded and managed the two largest capital and endowment campaigns in the Theatre’s history: the 2015 campaign that raised \$56.5 million for artistic initiatives and the renovation of the Meredith J. Long Theatre Center, and the ongoing \$80 million campaign for endowment, artistic initiatives, Hurricane Harvey damage recovery, and capital/operating reserves.
- Dean oversaw the 2014-2015 \$46.5 million renovation of Alley Theatre, completing it on time and on budget, with 100% of the project funded. Even 10 years after the renovation, the theatre remains one of the most technically advanced in the country.
- He led the Alley through the devastating impact of Hurricane Harvey in August 2017, when the theatre suffered \$26 million in damages after five million gallons of water flooded the building, destroying the Neuhaus Theatre, lobby, dressing rooms, and 81,000 props. Thanks to an aggressive restoration plan, the theatre was fully restored in just 2.5 months, allowing *A Christmas Carol* to open on Thanksgiving weekend 2017.
- Dean guided the Alley through the national shutdown due to COVID-19 from 2020 to 2022. He ensured that the Alley retained as many employees as possible, despite having no earned

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income. Remarkably, the Alley employed more people during the pandemic than any other theatre in the U.S., including its Resident Acting Company, who were the only Actors Equity members to maintain year-round employment at any regional or Broadway theater in America during COVID.

- Education has been a key focus for Dean throughout his career. Under his leadership, the budget for the Education and Community Engagement department increased by 400%, allowing its programs to now reach up to 60,000 students in 592 Texas public schools annually.

PHOTOS: [Click Here](#)

## **ABOUT DEAN R. GLADDEN:**

Before joining Alley Theatre, Dean R. Gladden had an illustrious career at the Cleveland Play House, where he began in 1985 as Associate Managing Director and was quickly promoted to Managing Director in 1987, a role he held until 2006. During his tenure, he oversaw operations at the Play House's impressive four-theatre, 310,000 square-foot complex designed by renowned architect Philip Johnson. The complex, situated on 13 acres, housed the Cleveland Play House Club—the only private dining club in the U.S. supporting a regional theatre—and the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland.

Gladden successfully spearheaded the fundraising and construction of this iconic theatre complex and raised over \$70 million in contributions for operational, capital, and endowment needs. His leadership saw the production of 167 plays, including 12 that transferred to Broadway or Off-Broadway. He also negotiated future royalties and continuing Play House rights for 60 North American premieres.

In addition to his success in artistic production, Gladden achieved record-breaking box office sales and dramatically expanded audience diversity, increasing minority attendance from just 1% to over 22%. His international efforts were equally groundbreaking, establishing theatre exchanges with the Hungarian National Theatre, Czech National Theatre, Slovak National Theatre, and the New Experimental Theatre of Volgograd, Russia. Under his guidance, the Cleveland Play House became the first American theatre company to perform on the stages of these prestigious national theatres.

Before his time at the Cleveland Play House, Gladden held several prominent roles in the arts. From 1982 to 1985, he was Director of Development and Administration for the Great Lakes Theater Festival in Cleveland. Simultaneously, he served as Director of the Graduate Arts Management Program at the University of Akron from 1983 to 1985. Earlier, Gladden was the Executive Director of the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo (1980-1982) and the Executive Director of the Council for the Arts of Greater Lima, Ohio (1977-1980).

Gladden holds an MS in Urban Arts Administration and a bachelor's degree in music education from Miami University. He is also a graduate of the Harvard Business School Executive Education Program in Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management.

His extensive leadership extends beyond the arts. He is a past Chair of the Board for the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau and a former President of the Rotary Club of Cleveland. Gladden has served on the Executive Committee of the League of Resident Theatres, the Greater Houston Partnership, and was Vice President of the National Corporate Theatre Fund. He has also been an officer on the Board of the Houston Theater District.

Throughout his career, Gladden has contributed to arts advocacy by serving on panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, Ohio Arts Council, Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, among others. He has lectured for prestigious organizations like the Theatre Communications Group, Association of Performing Arts Professionals, and the American Council for the

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Arts. Internationally, Gladden has shared his expertise at the Santiago a Mil Festival in Chile and led arts management workshops in Budapest, Hungary, under the sponsorship of the U.S. Information Agency. He has also served on the Pedagogical Advisory Board for the Master of Management in International Arts Management program, a collaboration between HEC Montreal, Southern Methodist University, and SDA Bocconi in Milan, Italy.

## **ABOUT ALLEY THEATRE:**

Alley Theatre, one of the largest nonprofit professional theatres in the U.S. outside New York City, has been a cornerstone of artistic innovation since its founding in 1947 by Nina Vance, a trailblazer of the regional theatre movement. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden, the Alley continues to set the standard for American theatre.

A recipient of prestigious honors including the Tony Award® for Outstanding Regional Theatre, a Pulitzer Prize for one of its premieres, and the Texas Medal of Arts Award, the Alley's influence extends far beyond Houston. Its productions have been showcased on Broadway, Off-Broadway, at major European festivals, and in more than 40 cities across the United States.

What sets the Alley apart from other regional theatres is its commitment to a full-time Resident Acting Company—a rarity in today's theatre landscape. Nationally acclaimed directors, actors, playwrights, and designers collaborate with the Resident Company in the Alley's state-of-the-art 75,000 square-foot Center for Theatre Production, where every element of each production, from sets to costumes, is meticulously crafted in-house.

Each year, the Alley engages over 200,000 audience members across the Greater Houston area through a dynamic lineup of reimagined classics, world premieres, and an extensive array of education and community programs. These performances take place in the Theatre's 774-seat Hubbard Theatre, its intimate 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre, and in community spaces throughout the region.

The Alley's national profile continues to rise with its Alley All New Festival, a premier showcase for new plays that has cemented the Theatre as a leader in the development of fresh voices and innovative works. Many of the world premieres debuted at the festival have gone on to be produced by theatres across the country, from New York to Los Angeles.

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