

ALLEY THEATRE

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Alley Theatre Announces Jennifer Bielstein as New Managing Director

HOUSTON, TX – Tony Award-winning Alley Theatre announces **Jennifer Bielstein** as its new Managing Director, effective October 20, 2025. Texas native and Houston high school graduate Bielstein brings over two decades of leadership in regional theatre, most recently as the Executive Director at American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) in San Francisco. Bielstein previously held leadership positions at Guthrie Theater, Actors Theater of Louisville, and Steppenwolf Theatre Company. She also served as the Board President of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). She currently resides on the board of Theatre Communications Group (TCG).

Bielstein shares, “To return home and serve the city’s flagship nonprofit theatre is truly an honor. I am grateful to Dean Gladden for his generous collaboration during this leadership transition, to the Managing Director Search Committee under the guidance of Board President Craig Jarchow, and to Artistic Director Rob Melrose, whose vision I am eager to support in partnership. I look forward to working alongside the Alley’s exceptional Board, staff, crew, and artists, and to engaging fully with the Houston community as we build an exciting future together.”

“I’m so grateful to the Alley Board for doing the impossible: finding a new managing director to replace the irreplaceable Dean Gladden,” shares Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. “It is hard to imagine a better choice than Jennifer Bielstein. Jennifer is already a legend in her own right with successful tenures at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Guthrie Theater, and American Conservatory Theater. I also feel that Jennifer’s warmth, kindness, and collaborative spirit are just what we need as we chart our way to Alley Theatre’s next era of success. I’m delighted to welcome Jennifer back to Houston and to create a successful partnership together.”

“Jennifer is a natural leader with decades of executive experience and a love for the theatre,” adds Alley Board President **Craig M. Jarchow**. “She is a perfect fit for the Alley, and we can’t wait for her to join us in October.”

Bielstein succeeds Dean Gladden, who will retire after 19 years as Managing Director. During his tenure, Gladden navigated the organization through the 2009 Great Recession, a comprehensive renovation of the theatre complex, which necessitated a 14-month off-site relocation, \$26 million in damages from Hurricane Harvey, and the global COVID-19 shutdown.

This leadership transition marks a pivotal moment for the Alley as it builds toward its 80th anniversary in 2026 and continues to produce groundbreaking theatre with national impact.

PHOTOS: [Click Here](#)

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ABOUT JENNIFER BIELSTEIN:

Jennifer Bielstein joins the Alley Theatre from American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.) in San Francisco, where she served as Executive Director for seven years. She is a nationally recognized arts leader and currently serves on the boards of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), where she is a past president and has held multiple leadership roles including vice president, secretary, chair of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, and as a member of multiple union negotiating teams. Bielstein is a member of the International Women's Forum and is a recent graduate of the American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley. In San Francisco she has served on the leadership team of the San Francisco Arts Alliance, San Francisco Mayor London Breed's Economic Recovery Task Force and on an Advance SF Advisory Panel. Her prior leadership roles include serving as Managing Director of the Guthrie Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Writers Theatre. She also held positions with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, About Face Theatre, Northlight Theatre, and the Lincoln Park Zoo, and has served on the boards of the League of Chicago Theatres, the Arts and Cultural Attractions Council, and multiple civic organizations. Bielstein's achievements have been recognized with the Center for Nonprofit Excellence's Pyramid Award of Excellence in Leadership, as one of the 25 Most Influential San Franciscans of 2020 by *San Francisco Magazine* (alongside A.C.T. Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon) and one of the Most Influential Women in Bay Area Business by the *San Francisco Business Times* in 2021. She was named one of *Louisville Business First's* "40 Under 40," recognized by *Twin Cities Business* as a "Person to Know," and selected as one of *Minnesota Business Magazine's* "Real Power 50." She holds a B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an MBA from Bellarmine University (where she received the MBA Faculty Merit Award and was inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma), and completed Stanford Graduate School of Business's Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders in the Arts. In 2021, she was honored as a Distinguished Alumna of Bellarmine University.

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, composers, 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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