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Alley Theatre Announces Full Cast of 2023 Pulitzer Prize Winner *English*

Experience the heartwarming, humorous tale of language, identity, and unexpected friendship

HOUSTON, TX—Tony Award-winning Alley Theatre and Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** announce the cast and creative team of *English*. Directed by **Evren Odcikin**, **Sanaz Toossi**'s heartwarming comedy follows five Iranians, each with a personal reason for learning English, as they discover what gets lost and found in translation.

"I've spent more hours than I'd like to admit in a classroom struggling to learn a new language," said **Melrose**. "Sanaz Toossi's innovative play does such a brilliant job capturing the experience of learning a language as well as highlighting the hopes and dreams of the students as they navigate their various futures. I'm delighted to welcome director Evren Odcikin, whose work I've admired in the Bay Area and at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival as well as scenic designer Afsaneh Aayani, who has been doing beautiful work all over Houston since graduating from the MFA program at University of Houston, including designing the puppets in our production of *A Christmas Carol*."

Nationally celebrated and critically acclaimed director **Evren Odcikin** shared his insights on the production, "Sanaz Toossi's moving and hilarious *English* might be the most accurate theatrical depiction I've seen of what it feels like to bridge two languages and cultures. As an immigrant artist, I've been waiting for a chance to direct this beautiful play for years, and it's been a gift to build this production with the artistic and cultural care that the Alley has provided. I cannot wait to share the work of our brilliant cast and creative team with the Houston community."

The cast includes **Vaneh Assadourian** as Goli, **Pantea Ommi** as Roya, **Nima Rakhshanifar** as Omid, **Jaime Rezanour** (Agatha Christie's *The Mirror Crack'd*) as Marjan, and **Shadee Vossoughi** as Elham.

The creative team includes Scenic Designer **Afsaneh Aayani**, Costume Designer **Shahrazad Mazaheri**, Lighting Designer **Sherrice Mojgani**, Sound Designer **James Ard**, Dialect Coach & Cultural Dramaturg **Ana Bayat**, Fight Director & Intimacy Specialist **Adam Noble**, Stage Manager **Kaylee Sarton McCray**, and Assistant Stage Manager **Meagan Rachelle Smallwood**.

SPONSORS: *English* is generously supported by Joelle and Jeff Berlat, and Connie and Roger Plank (Associate Producers). Alley Theatre is supported by the 2025-26 Season sponsor United Airlines, the official airline of Alley Theatre, and Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites Downtown Houston, the official

hotels of Alley Theatre.

ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCES: Captioned Performance on Sunday, February 22 at 2:00 PM, Audio Described Performance on Sunday, February 22 at 7:00 PM, ASL Interpreted Performance on Wednesday, March 4 at 7:30 PM, and Simultaneous Spanish Translation Performances on Friday, February 20 at 8:00 PM, and Sunday, March 1 at 2:00 PM.

TICKETS: Performances run **Friday, February 13** to **Sunday, March 8** in the Neuhaus Theatre. Tickets are on now sale, starting at \$45. Discounted tickets are available for military, seniors, educators and any student, regardless of age, with a valid ID for designated performances in designated sections. Tickets can be ordered online (alleytheatre.org) or by phone (713.220.5700).

PRESS NIGHT: Wednesday, February 18 at 7:30 p.m. Invitations to be sent at a later date.

CONNECT WITH US: @alleytheatre, #AlleyEnglish

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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