



Artists Repertory Theatre

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## **ARTISTS REP ANNOUNCES ZI ALIKHAN AS THE INAUGURAL ARTISTIC DIRECTING FELLOW**

**During the two-year Fellowship he will serve as the Director of DNA: Oxygen,** a new initiative dedicated to the development and production of new work generated by, led by, and featuring BIPOC artists.

**PORTLAND, OREGON – February 22, 2020** New York-based director Zi Alikhan has been named Artists Rep’s Artistic Directing Fellow. This two-year fellowship (with the option to renew for a third year) is intended to prepare the recipient to lead an arts organization of comparable size to ART. The Artistic Directing Fellow will serve as a member of the artistic team, collaborating closely with Artistic Director, Dámaso Rodríguez, and will direct ART mainstage productions during the time of the fellowship. Alikhan was offered the position by a seven-member hiring committee of two ART staff, two board members, two resident artists, and a frequent guest artist following a three-round interview process that included over 150 candidates from around the country.

Alikhan’s work as a director includes a dynamic mix of new plays and musicals. Critics have described his productions as “gutsy and fresh,” “immersive and impactful.” His recent credits include directing and development at Ars Nova, The Playwrights Realm, Playmakers Rep, and Lincoln Center , along with several Broadway credits as Associate Director. In 2018, he served as Resident Director on the national tour of *Hamilton: An American Musical*, during which he made his first visit to Portland.

This new position will serve as the Director of the DNA: Oxygen program, a newly established initiative at ART with funding restricted to the development and production of new work generated by, led by, and featuring Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) artists. DNA:

Oxygen currently has an annual program budget of \$100k (secured through the 2023 fiscal year) with an endowment strategy in place. As the Director of the program, Alikhan will focus on building a lasting program while exploring new models for producing and collaborating. Responsibilities and opportunities will include participating in the fundraising efforts to inspire continued funding for the program, guiding the process of crafting the DNA: Oxygen mission statement, working with the ART staff to create a long-lasting mentor/mentee program, and the generation of new artistic projects. At the same time an affinity space and a creative hub, DNA: Oxygen promises to be an industry-leading initiative in the radical restructuring of power in the regional theatre landscape. By centering BIPOC artists as leaders, as thinkers, and as generators, DNA: Oxygen is setting out to serve these theatrically underserved stories and makers, ensuring a pipeline to production for artists of color that disrupts historic molds.

*“Thousands of theatre artists across the United States continue to innovate and persevere despite the hostility of an industry and a nation that tell us our lived experiences inherently have less currency, that the gates should be closed to us,” said Artistic Directing Fellow, Zi Alikhan.*

*“With the beginnings of DNA: Oxygen, my big experiment is to see what happens when we eradicate that hostility and replace it with centering these lived experiences, these voices, these histories, and these futures, to open those gates and see what perseverance without duress can look like for the generations currently at work and those to come.”*

*“I'm energized by the opportunity to welcome Zi Alikhan to Artists Rep,” said Artistic Director, Dámaso Rodríguez. “In our search for the inaugural Artistic Directing Fellowship recipient, we were seeking a visionary artist and arts administrator poised to lead an organization in the years ahead who could use this experience as a laboratory for their professional development. We were also looking for someone who could contribute immediately to ART's present and future. Zi stood out amongst a pool of over 150 talented candidates and inspired staff, board, and guest artists who participated in the three-round hiring process. I can't wait to collaborate with Zi as part of our artistic team and to support his vision for building ART's DNA: Oxygen Program. I'm also humbled to play my part as mentor and in doing so hope to honor those who supported me along my own professional journey.”*

## **ABOUT ZI ALIKHAN**

**DIRECTOR:** (Selected): Manik Choksi's *The Ramayan* (currently in development at Ars Nova), *Ragtime* (Playmakers Repertory Company), *The Flick* and *Red Speedo* (Juilliard), *House of Joy* (New York Stage and Film), *Shabash!* (LCT3), *Blood Special* (Playwrights Horizons Guest Curator Series), *Lady Apsara* (filmed for Prospect Theatre Company), *Tilda Swinton Betrayed Us* (Keen Company), *Lippa's Wild Party* (Yale), *Les Misérables* (Pace University), *Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill* (Soho Rep Lab), and *SUMMER & SMOKE* (ACCESS). **RESIDENT DIRECTOR:** *Hamilton: An*

*American Musical* (National Tour). **ASSOCIATE / ASSISTANT:** *The Band's Visit* (First National Tour) with David Cromer, *Six Degrees of Separation* (Broadway) and *The Rose Tattoo* (Williamstown and Broadway) with Trip Cullman, and *Ripcord* (Manhattan Theatre Club) and *It Shoulda Been You!* (Broadway) with David Hyde Pierce. **ALUM:** Drama League Directors Project, Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab (Year 18), Drama League Artist Residency Program, Manhattan Theatre Club Jonathan Alper Directing Fellowship, Williamstown Directing Corps, and Drama League Rough Draft. **GRADUATE:** NYU/Tisch.

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## ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE'S \(ART\)](#) mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for a diverse community of artists and audiences to take creative risks.

Artists Repertory Theatre recognizes that we are a predominately white organization and operate within systemic racism and oppression, and that silence and neutrality are actions of complicity. We recognize the critical role the arts play in our culture and national conversation, and accept our responsibility to make positive change through our work, our practices, and our policies. We commit ourselves to the work of becoming an anti-racism and anti-oppression organization, and will work with urgency to end racial inequities in our industry and our culture.

ART gratefully acknowledges our theatre rests on the traditional lands of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

Led by Executive Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez, Executive Director J.S. May, and Managing Director, Kisha Jarrett, ART (est. 1982) is Portland's oldest professional theatre company and has become a significant presence in the U.S. regional theatre with a legacy of world, national, and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. In 2016, ART became the 72<sup>nd</sup> member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN). Plays developed by ART have subsequently been produced in New York, Chicago, London, and throughout the country. Recognition for ART commissioned plays includes the Dramatists Guild Foundation Award, the Edgerton New Play Award, NEA Funding, the Mellon Foundation National Playwright Residency Program, American Theatre Magazine's Most-Produced Plays, and coverage in the New Yorker and the New York Times.

[TABLE|ROOM|STAGE \(T|R|S\)](#), established in 2015, is Artists Rep's new play program. The T|R|S mission is to develop and produce new work that vividly expresses Artists Rep's [aesthetic values](#). Focused on work by BIPOC writers, women, LGBTQIA+ and gender nonconforming writers, and offer an environment where these playwrights can create provocative, intimate new theatre pieces that challenge, illuminate, and inspire.

T|R|S has produced the following commissions: *The Talented Ones* by Yussef El Guindi (April 2017), *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) (April 2018), the NNP Rolling World Premiere *Wolf Play* by Hansol Jung (March 2019), and the upcoming *Looking for Tiger Lily* by Anthony Hudson (Spring 2021).

T|R|S is home to Mellon Playwright-In-Residence and Steinberg Award Winner, E.M. Lewis, and Lacroute Playwright-In-Residence, Andrea Stolowitz. Playwrights under commission presently include Linda Alper, Anthony Hudson, Steve Rathje, Andrea Stolowitz, and E.M. Lewis, whose play *The Great Divide* is co-commissioned with ART and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. New projects are also being developed with Susannah Mars and Vin Shambry.

T|R|S *At the Apex* has a hand in shaping World Premieres and vital second productions by some of the nation's most exciting playwrights. *At the Apex* productions are: *La Ruta* by Isaac Gomez (November 2019), *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew (January 2019), *Magellanica* by E.M. Lewis (January 2018), and *Cuba Libre* by Carlos Lacámara (Book) and Jorge Gómez (Music & Lyrics).

Through T|R|S, Artists Rep is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN).

**RESIDENT ARTISTS** have an ongoing history of working on stage and behind-the-scenes of Artists Rep's mainstage productions. They collaborate with administrative staff on education, community engagement, new play development, and fundraising efforts. The Resident Artist title is offered by the Artistic Director in appreciation of each artist's achievements with ART and in the spirit of continued collaboration. These multidisciplinary theatre makers are deeply committed to ART's success, share organizational values, and participate in decision-making processes that impact the theatre's mission and its future. Through the Resident Artists program, a diverse community of Portland-based artists are at the center of the day-to-day life of the theatre and play a vital part in creating the culture at ART.

**EDUCATION** is dedicated to developing life-long learners at every ability, interest, and level of expertise. Opportunities focus on engaging with our community by offering professional-level classes, coaching, and workshops with our teaching artists. Programs like these serve artists and others seeking professional development, students seeking to engage in the transformative power of the arts, and life-long learners who can take classes in subjects such as dramaturgy, script-writing, and communication for non-actors. With the Student Ambassador Program, students learn about the inner-workings of a major nonprofit professional theatre, meet once per month, see shows for free, and participate in discussions with leading theatre artists and professionals. Access and enrichment are available for educators who enjoy ticket discounts, school programming, and workshops. Enhanced viewing experiences include post-show discussions with the cast, panel discussions with experts, and a dedicated conversation with production designers.

**ARTSHUB** is Artists Rep's resource sharing and community-building initiative supporting Portland theatre makers, arts and education nonprofits, and community groups. The mission of the ArtsHub is to create a cultural center by supporting Portland's rich artistic ecosystem. Programs and services include below market rates for rehearsal, performance, and meeting space; shared administrative work space for individuals and organizations; and production services such as set construction, scenic painting, and professional technical support from design through performance. We prioritize artists

and organizations that support ART's values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and seek to provide a home for artists and audiences to take creative risks.

While the program's origin seven years ago was in response to an opportunity to share underutilized performance space, we have found that the most vital and lasting impact of the ArtsHub is the bustling community that has been formed, and the myriad ways it has led to the empowerment of local artists and the accelerated growth of participating organizations. Our new facility is being designed so that the ARTSHUB can include even more organizations than it currently serves.

**[RISE](#): The Campaign for Artists Repertory Theatre** is the capital funding drive that will make possible the reinvention of ART's building at 1515 SW Morrison. Originally an Elks Lodge health club, the Artists Rep building has reached the end of its useful life. A major gift in 2018 paid off the outstanding mortgage on the entire downtown block catalyzing the 2019 sale of the north half of the building. ART received \$9 million in the sale, which is now the lead investment for the reimagining of the remaining building. The roof and two massive wood beams will rise to create a modern multiuse performing arts center with two theatres, four rehearsal halls, and collaborative spaces that will give space to the many new stories waiting to be shared.

Artists Repertory Theatre receives generous support from our community of patrons, including significant leadership gifts from: The Robert & Mercedes Eichholz Foundation; The James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation; Ronni Lacroute; The Oregon Legislature, The Oregon Cultural Trust and The Multnomah County Cultural Coalition; David & Christine Vernier; The Oregon Community Foundation; The Shubert Foundation; and the Regional Arts and Culture Council. Additional Corporate and Foundation support comes from The Kinsman Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; The Cowlitz Tribe Education and Arts Fund; Oregon Arts Commission; US Bank; The Jackson Foundation; PGE Foundation; Sheri and Les Biller Foundation; and Rafati's Catering.

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