



The University of Texas at Austin
Theatre and Dance
College of Fine Arts

For immediate release:

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE
PRESENTS

THE REGIONAL PREMIERE OF
BUILDING THE WALL

BY AWARD-WINNING PLAYWRIGHT ROBERT SCHENKKAN

AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 10, 2017

AT THE OSCAR G. BROCKETT THEATRE

“Urgent and powerful theater.”

- The Hollywood Reporter

From Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award®-winning playwright Robert Schenkkan (*All the Way*, *The Kentucky Cycle*, *Hacksaw Ridge*), comes the incendiary political thriller that is captivating audiences across the country. The University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance presents ***Building the Wall***, directed by Brant Pope, August 30-September 10, 2017 at the Oscar G. Brockett Theatre.

Written in “a white heat” fury following the November 2016 election, Schenkkan’s *Building the Wall* imagines a dystopia impacted by President Trump’s border and immigration policies. It’s the near future and millions of undocumented immigrants have been detained in overflowing prisons. Now, a writer interrogates the director of a private prison as he

awaits sentencing for carrying out the federal policy that has escalated into the unimaginable. This riveting and illuminating drama delivers a powerful warning and puts a human face on the inhuman, revealing how, when personal accountability is denied, what seems inconceivable becomes inevitable.

“A scorcher of a play with gripping storytelling!”

- *Variety*

Building the Wall first opened in March at Los Angeles' Fountain Theatre where it has been extended three times, with performances continuing to sell out nightly. “We are honored to present the regional premiere of our alumnus' work,” shares Brant Pope, the play's director and chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance. “This is a thrilling and terrifying play concerning people and the issues vitally important to Texas and the region.” The production features a professional cast, including Franchelle Stewart Dorn as “Gloria” and David Sitler as “Rick.”

The production of *Building the Wall* is the centerpiece for a series of panels taking place September 7, 2017, which bring together the public, playwrights, directors and arts critics in a dialogue about new play development and production.

ABOUT ROBERT SCHENKKAN

In 2014, *All The Way* won the Tony Award®, Drama Desk, Outer Critics, Drama League, Kennedy Prize and the TCA/Steinberg Awards for Best Play and broke two Broadway box office records. Schenkkan has since adapted *All The Way* as a feature film for HBO, produced by Steven Spielberg and starring Bryan Cranston. Schenkkan's other works on Broadway include the Pulitzer Prize-winning epic, *The Kentucky Cycle*, which also won the LA Drama Critics Award and was nominated for the Tony, Drama Desk and the Outer Critics' Circle Awards. Other plays include *Hanussen* (2017 Denver Summit Theater Festival), *Shadowplay*, *Lewis and Clark Reach the Euphrates*, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, *Handler*, *The Marriage of Miss Hollywood and King Neptune*, *Heaven on Earth*, *Tachinoki*, *Final Passages*, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, *The Dream Thief*, *A Single Shard* and *The Great Society*, part two of the LBJ Plays, anticipated in New York in 2018. His musical, *The Twelve*, received its world premiere in Denver in 2015 and won the Henry Award for Best New Play/Musical. Films: *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016, Nominated for six Academy Awards®); *The Quiet American*. Television: *The Pacific* (Nominated for two Emmys and received a WGA Award). Other television work includes: *The Andromeda Strain*, *Crazy Horse* and *Spartacus*.
robertschenkkan.com

ABOUT FRANCHELLE STEWART DORN

Franchelle Stewart Dorn (*Gloria*) has played dozens of roles over her career at the Shakespeare Theatre Company, Arena Stage, American Conservatory Theater, Yale Rep, Long Wharf, George Street Playhouse, Great Lakes Shakespeare, Cleveland Playhouse, Arizona State Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, Chautauqua Theatre Company, Guthrie

Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Contemporary American Theater Festival, off Broadway at Red Bull and at The State, ZACH Theatre and Austin Shakespeare.

She has been seen on *Law and Order* and as "Dr. Rita Madison," on NBC's *Another World* and films *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, *Chances Are* and *Raise the Titanic*. She can also be seen on one of PBS' longest-running series, *Literary Visions*. Dorn has been nominated for seven Helen Hayes Awards and has been the recipient of three. She has also won the Austin Critics' Table Award for her performances in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *The Edge of Peace* and *Medea*. She has more than 400 voice-over and on-camera appearances to her credit. Member, AEA.

ABOUT DAVID SITLER

David Sitler (*Rick*) most recently appeared in *The Exonerated* at Florida Studio Theatre as "Gary Gauger." His career has seen him on Broadway with Rosemary Harris and Phil Bosco in *An Inspector Calls*, on national tour with Stacy Keach in *Frost/Nixon*, working with over 16 Off and Off-Off Broadway theatre companies in New York City and regionally from Maine to Utah in roles from "Atticus" to "Scrooge." Television credits include *Zero Hour* and *Law and Order - SVU* as well as the second season of *Plant* and the films *The Strange Ones*, *Tupelo Roar*, *Black Dog Red Dog* and *The Marvelous Fishman*. Member, AEA. davidstitler.com

Building the Wall
By Robert Schenkkan

Brant Pope – Director • Aaron Curry – Lighting Designer • Cait Graham – Costume Designer
• Bruno-Pierre Houle – Scenic Designer • Phillip Owen – Sound Designer • Rusty Cloyes – Stage Manager

For more information on *Building the Wall*, please visit JoinTheDrama.org

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

September 7, 2017

Panel: *Writing and Producing New Work in the American Theatre*

2:00 p.m. / Oscar G. Brockett Theatre

Respondents include:

Cal MacLean (Producing Artistic Director, Clarence Brown Theatre Company),
Vivienne Benesch (Producing Artistic Director, PlayMakers Repertory Company),
Marissa Wolf (Director of New Work, Kansas City Rep), **Robert Schenkkan**
(Playwright) and **Kirk Lynn** (Novelist/Playwright, *The Method Gun*, *Fixing King John*)

Panel: *The Role of the Critic and Scholar in Assessing New Work*

4:00 p.m. / Oscar G. Brockett Theatre

Respondents include:

Michael Barnes (Columnist, *Austin American-Statesman*), **Robert Faires** (Arts Editor, *The Austin Chronicle*), **Jay Handelman** (Arts Editor/Theatre Critic, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*), **Robert Schenkkan** (Playwright) and **Kirk Lynn** (Novelist/Playwright, *The Method Gun, Fixing King John*)

The panels are free and open to the public. Seating may be limited. Times, venue and respondents are subject to change.

Post-Performance Conversation with Robert Schenkkan and Brant Pope Following the 7:30 p.m. performance / Oscar G. Brockett Theatre

Patrons are invited to join in a conversation with Playwright Robert Schenkkan and Director Brant Pope regarding the play's development process, the role of the playwright and the play's themes. This event is open to ticket holders for the September 7 7:30 p.m. performance.

CALENDAR LISTING

August 30-September 10, 2017 – The University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance presents *Building the Wall* at Oscar G. Brockett Theatre (300 E. 23rd St.), located in the F. Loren Winship Drama Building. A map of the campus: theatredance.utexas.edu/about/location-directions-parking

Performance times are August 30 at 7:30 p.m. (Preview); August 31, September 1, 3, 5-8 at 7:30 p.m., September 2 at 8:00 p.m. and September 3, 10 at 2:00 p.m. Tickets for performances on August 31-September 10 (\$26 adult, \$21 UT faculty and staff, \$15 student) are on sale at authorized ticket outlets, which include the Bass Concert Hall Box Office and all Texas Box Office outlets, online JoinTheDrama.org, or by calling (512) 477-6060 or (800) 982-BEVO. Tickets for the preview performance on August 30 (\$10 adult, \$5 student) are available at the Bass Concert Hall Box Office and F. Loren Winship Building Box Office. Box Office locations and hours: theatredance.utexas.edu/ticketing

PRESS RESOURCES

For a sampling of feature articles and reviews on *Building The Wall*, please visit theatredance.utexas.edu/news-building-wall

ABOUT TEXAS THEATRE AND DANCE

The University of Texas at Austin Department of Theatre and Dance is a world-class educational environment that serves as the ultimate creative incubator for the next generation of artists, thinkers and leaders in theatre and performance.

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