



Artists Repertory Theatre

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ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE BEGINS THE NEXT CHAPTER

The exciting and long-awaited construction begins on the Morrison Avenue building

[Video Link](#)

PORTLAND, OREGON – April 17, 2023 The long wait is over! Artists Repertory Theatre (ART) is thrilled to begin the next phase of construction on the 1515 SW Morrison Avenue location on April 17, 2023. Since 2018, ART has been in a capital campaign to revitalize its home. Upon completion of the building's outer shell and roof, the newly-built lobby will serve as the initial performance space with seating for about 150.

The road to reimagining the Artists Rep theatre space started with a major gift in 2018 to pay off the mortgage. That gift led to the sale of the north half of the downtown block in July of 2019. Since then, the project has been devised into a multi-phase project with phase one complete – moving utilities, making seismic upgrades, demolition, abatement, and Lever Architecture's design of the project.

Phase two currently includes raising the roof to accommodate a higher theatrical space, completing the outer core, shell, lobby, and finishing the seismic upgrades. Subsequent phases will see the construction of two additional theatres; the Mainstage with 178 seats and the Studio with 99 seats, plus rehearsal, backstage and collaborative spaces. Some areas will offer flexible configurations, allowing the building to be activated for a full night of entertainment. Pedestrians and train commuters will be drawn to the large glass windows giving them a peek into a warm, welcoming lobby serving as a cabaret performance space. Patrons will be thrilled with the two floors of parking below with access by elevator and the commissioned mural that will add beauty to the characteristic outer red walls.

Since its founding in 1982, ART has risen to be a significant presence in American theatre with a history of producing acclaimed regional, national, and world premieres. Since 2015, ART has

become an important generator of new works, commissioning twelve (12) plays by diverse playwrights, including Larissa FastHorse's *The Thanksgiving Play* (Broadway debut this April at Second Stage's Hayes Theater in New York City directed by Tony Award-winner Rachel Chavkin, with ART's Artistic Director Jeanette Harrison as Associate Director), Hansol Jung's *Wolf Play* (Off Broadway debut last year), and Kareem Fahmy's *American Fast* (ART premiere in January 2023 and in the midst of a three-theatre Rolling World Premiere). Additionally, through the Mercury Project, ART supported the development of over 55 new works during the pandemic. **Executive Director J.S. May** explains, "Throughout its history, ART has produced groundbreaking works that have shaped the theatrical landscape. It is long overdue for our theatrical home to mirror this level of quality, providing our audience with good sightlines and comfortable seats, accessible entrances and bathrooms, and heating and air conditioning that works."

Moving into our space means that ART will continue to pave the way for American theatre and serve as a catalyst for producing bold new work from underrepresented voices. **Larissa FastHorse** expressed, "I'm so grateful to have had the support of Artists Rep in developing [*The Thanksgiving Play*]. The finishing commission they gave me came at the perfect time to get this script into performance shape." ART's **Artistic Director Jeanette Harrison** and Associate Director of *The Thanksgiving Play*, currently working alongside FastHorse and Chavkin on Broadway, shares "It's so crucial for writers to have the opportunity to develop their work and fine tune their craft with companies like Artists Rep in order to have a wider reach with their words. And that's especially true for writers whose stories have been traditionally marginalized by the American theatre. I'm so proud that Artists Rep has a history of supporting writers, especially BIPOC women writers, at critical moments in their careers, from Larissa FastHorse to Hansol Jung. I'm looking forward to helping catapult more writers to the next stage of their careers."

Harrison continues, "The newly renovated building enables Artists Rep to expand on our history as Portland's first professional theater company, and the first company to produce some of the most exciting new plays in the American theatre today." With a goal of housing a vibrant collective of arts companies, the re-imagined space will be built upon ART's ArtsHub. In the last year of operation at the Morrison space, the ArtsHub welcomed over 1500 gatherings, 380 public events, 462 rehearsals, 500 performances, 50 nonprofits served, and 422 classes. ART plans to continue offering affordable performance and rehearsal space for a number of nonprofits all across the area. ART is reaching out to the community, asking what they need, and answering that call.

ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE'S \(Artists Rep or ART\)](#) mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for a diverse community of artists and audiences to take creative risks. Artists Rep (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 72nd 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 developed 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. In 2021, the Oregon Media Production Association (OMPA) honored Artists Rep with the Creative Innovation Award for the company's pivot to digital mediums in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. ART 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 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. To learn more about our organization and programs, please visit <https://artistsrep.org/about/>

[ABOUT 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 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 massive wood beams will rise to create a modern multiuse performing arts center with two theatres, a cabaret performance space, rehearsal hall, and collaborative spaces that will give space to the many new stories waiting to be shared.

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Artists Rep is excited to share a community fundraising event and 2023/24 season announcement party.

Let's Get Loud: A Community Celebration | Thursday, May 18, 2023 | 6 - 9 pm | FREE

Artists Rep welcomes everyone in our community to raise their voices with us at a free, in-person celebration at Oakshire Beer Hall in NE Portland. Featuring a musical performance by award-winning rapper **Scott Kalama** aka Blue Flamez, a raffle and silent auction featuring items from local businesses, and an official 2023-24 Season Announcement, Let's Get Loud will celebrate all of the voices that make our work possible.