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Interview: Casey Stangl on Directing **ALABASTER** at Fountain Theatre

Opens February 16, 2025

By: Shari Barrett



Here's my interview with director Casey Stangl on her vision for **Alabaster**, a darkly comic Southern drama by Audrey Cefaly about two women dealing with physical and emotional scars that was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, opening at the Fountain Theater on February 16.

Thanks for taking time to speak with me today, Casey. First of all, how did you start your career in LA theatre?

My first show in L.A. was *Barbra's Wedding*, written by and starring Daniel Stern, at the Falcon Theater (now Garry Marshall Theater)

Please describe the story in Alabaster.

June is the only surviving member of her family from a devastating tornado three years before the play begins. She was left with scars all over her body. Alice is a famous NY photographer (think Annie Leibovitz) who has past trauma of her own and is currently doing a series of photographs of women with scars. The play begins on the day Alice is photographing June. They develop a kinship which leads to a deeper relationship. There are also goats on the farm, Weezy and her mother Bib, who look and act like people. Weezy and June have a special connection.

Have you seen the play performed elsewhere?

No.

What first attracted you to direct it?

I love the theme of the healing power of art and the ability of women to nurture each other. I love the tone that skillfully blends comedy into a tragic story.



Erin Pineda and Virginia Newcomb
Photo by Nathan James

Can you give me an example of how that is reflected in the play?

Weezy is a funny character, but she absorbs June's pain.

Why is the play called Alabaster?

It is set in Alabaster, Alabama. Also the alabaster stone is both hard and vulnerable

What's the easiest and most difficult thing about directing a play with only 4 female characters?

Women go deep with each other, easily and quickly.

Please describe the characters and actors portraying them.

Virginia Newcomb (who grew up in Alabaster, AL!) who is smart, deep and quirky, plays June, who is and ferocious, yet vulnerable

Erin Pineda, accomplished, open, and real, plays Alice: sophisticated, wary/weary trying to work through her trauma by working

Carolyn Messina, who originated the role in the world premiere production at Florida Repertory Theatre, has easy access to her emotions, and is generous, deeply connected to the play and the role Weezy.

Laura Gardner – when I told other people in the theater community that I had cast Laura, everyone said “she’s amazing.” And she is. Hard working, dedicated, playing Bib, who is old and sick – her death is also a release

What is the importance of the goats?

Weezy serves as narrator and guide – she is described in the play as “a sort of wise Yoda, gouda kind of thing.”

Are the characters related? Friends? Strangers?

Bib and Weezy are mother and daughter and have been on the farm with June for years. Alice is a stranger.

Have you worked with any of these actors previously?

No

Have you directed shows about Southern women before?

I did a production of *Steel Magnolias* at Everyman Theater in Baltimore

What do you think sets them apart from women in other regions?

Grit under the refined surface



Carolyn Messina and Laura Gardner
Photo by Nathan James



Laura Gardner and Carolyn Messina
Photo by Nathan James

Have you ever lived or worked in the South? If not, how did you gather info about their way of life?

No. Research via Virginia, who grew up in Alabaster, AL and Carolyn, who has been involved with the play since it's inception – she originated the role of Weezy and she is best friends with the playwright.

How does the intimate nature of The Fountain Theatre benefit in directing this play?

Allows for a subtlety of acting style

How does *Alabaster* reflect the times in which we are living now?

The play is about survival, healing from trauma and learning to move on. In these difficult times we are all dealing with trauma and healing.

Thanks so much!

Alabaster opens on Sunday, Feb. 16 at 7 p.m., with performances thereafter on Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. through March 30 (dark Monday, Feb. 17).

Four preview performances take place on

Wednesday, Feb. 12; Thursday, Feb. 13; Friday, Feb. 14; and Saturday, Feb. 15, all at 8 p.m.

Tickets range from \$25–\$45; Pay-What-You-Want seating is available every Monday night in addition to regular seating (subject to availability); all previews are Pay-What-You-Want.



Erin Pineda and Virginia Newcomb
Photo by Nathan James

The Fountain Theatre is located at 5060 Fountain Avenue (at Normandie) in Los Angeles.

Patrons are invited upstairs to relax before and after the show at the Fountain's café. For reservations and information, call (323) 663–1525 or go to <https://www.fountaintheatre.com/>