

KELLY KITCHENS **JEANNINE CLARKE**
Interim Artistic Director Managing Director

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A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS AT BOOK-IT REPERTORY THEATRE WITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TRANSITION

SEATTLE, WA – Spring is a time for new beginnings and that is also true at Book-It Repertory Theatre as a hand-off begins for the position of Artistic Director. After three years as Artistic Director, **Gus Menary** will pass the baton for artistic direction of the company to long-time Book-It artist and champion, **Kelly Kitchens**, who will serve as Interim in the position.

Menary, who joined Book-It in January of 2020, has decided to return to Chicago with his wife and new baby. This move will allow them to be closer to their families in the Midwest. Menary will continue with Book-It as director of the final show of the 2022-2023 season.

MENARY'S TIME WITH BOOK-IT

Gus Menary came to Book-It in January of 2000 and, only weeks later, Seattle and the world entered the prolonged shut-down of the global COVID pandemic. Following the onset of this shut-down, Menary pivoted Book-It's season to a full slate of audio-drama so the organization could continue to present theatre and engage with its audiences. In 2021 and 2022 Book-It presented world-premiere audio adaptations of works from Octavia E. Butler, Alexandre Dumas, and N.K. Jemisin, among others, which were helmed and voiced by some of the most talented artists in Seattle. In the Spring of 2022, when the world began opening again, Menary shepherded Book-It's return to in-person stage performances with adaptations of works by Amy Tan, Rachel Ingalls, and Agatha Christie, among others.

Menary leaves behind a legacy at Book-It that included new modes of storytelling, an expanded definition of adaptation, and a focus on diverse stories. During the last three seasons, more than half of the mainstage programming was adapted from works by BIPOC authors.

Menary will be in attendance at our annual fundraising gala (The Paper Lantern Ball) at the Georgetown Ballroom Saturday, April 22.

A MESSAGE FROM GUS MENARY

“My hope is that my time leading Book-It will have been during its hardest fight for survival and continuance of art creation, and that as a result of our work the future will be brighter for our next leader. I am enormously grateful for the opportunity Book-It bestowed on me and incredibly proud of the work the staff and artists have contributed to the organization. Despite challenges, the last few years were also filled with triumph, magic, and incredible examples of the perseverance of human spirit that made all of it supremely worth it. It has never not been hard, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.” – Gus Menary

A MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT CHRISTINE STEPHERSON

“Gus began his Book-It journey at an incredibly difficult time for our entire community personally and professionally. His imaginative twist to producing an audio season and his flexibility as the last few years unfolded was impressive,” said **Christine Stepherson** Book-It Board President. “We are thankful for the work he guided in his time with us and look forward to seeing where his creative talents take him back in the Chicago scene.”

WHAT IS NEXT FOR BOOK-IT

As we look toward the future and build on the recovery from the pandemic, Book-It is very excited to share the news that Seattle theatre artist Kelly Kitchens will serve as Interim Artistic Director for the 2023-2024 Season (which Book-It shall be announcing this coming April).

Kitchens began working with Book-It's staff in March to collaborate with Menary and begin the transition between leaders to ensure continuity of programming and assist in finalizing the season of main stage titles and ArtsEd touring shows for 2023-2024.

Kitchens has been part of the Book-It community as an actor, adaptor, teaching artist, director, audience member and supporter. She has directed Book-It shows, as well as shows at the Seattle Opera, Seattle

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Public Theater, Seattle Shakespeare, ACT Theatre, and more. One of the first roles she landed in Seattle as an actor was the front end of a donkey in Book-It's very own *Owen Meany's Christmas Pageant*, and more recently she directed *Mrs. Caliban* on the Book-It stage last March/April.

Kitchens says: "I look forward to meeting with each department and learning how I can best support the amazing staff, board, and artists as Book-It closes out its 33rd season and begins planning for its 34th."

A further welcome message from Kelly Kitchen will be coming in April.

GUS MENARY TO DIRECT *SOLARIS* AT BOOK-IT THIS SPRING

Book-It is pleased to announce that Gus Menary will be directing the final show in the 2022-2023 season, *Solaris* (adapted by David Greig, based on the novel by Stanislaw Lem). Menary describes the production as "thrilling, scary, heartfelt, and with a prescient message about the dangers of intrusion into the realms of the unknown" and describes this as his "farewell letter to the great city of Seattle."

About *Solaris*:

For the scientists aboard the space station orbiting the planet Solaris, this strange place is a manifestation of their life's work – a dream come true. To explore an unknown world, learn its nature and design, discover its secrets – isn't this the meaning of life? But as their mission forces them to confront their own unexplored grief and pain, science proves woefully inadequate, and they must each decide for themselves where the true boundaries to reality lie... and whether the ghosts from their pasts will help or hinder them in building humanity's future.

The show will run at the Center Theatre at the Seattle Center Armory from June 17 – July 9, 2023.

More info: <https://book-it.org/events/solaris/>

ABOUT BOOK-IT REPERTORY THEATRE

Book-It Repertory Theatre, a leader in the narrative theatre movement, was founded in 1990. Book-It is a non-profit organization with a dedication to great literature and quality theatre experiences employing simple, sensitive and imaginative production techniques, and to inspiring its audiences to read. The company is funded, in part, by generous contributions from corporations and foundations, and hundreds of individuals who share its passion for literature.

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Book-It's Mission: To transform great literature into great theatre, through simple and sensitive production, and to inspire our audiences to read.

Book-It's Vision: To be a nationally-known theatre arts center where Book-It's partnership of theatre, literature, and education nourishes the literacy and the artistic vitality of our community.

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