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Media Contacts:

Caroline Austin, PR and Communications Manager, carolinea@alleytheatre.org, 713.315.3335

Rachel Applegate, Director of Marketing and Communications, rachela@alleytheatre.org, 713.315.3352

Chisa Hutchinson's *Amerikin* to be Directed by Resident Acting Company Emeritus James Black

World Premiere Drama Finally Premieres at the Alley Theatre

HOUSTON TX - The Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre announces the cast and creative team of **Chisa Hutchinson's world premiere drama *Amerikin***. The play is directed by former Resident Acting Company Emeritus member **James Black** and runs February 11 – March 13, 2022 in the Neuhaus Theatre. Developed as part of the 2019 Alley All New Festival, the play was scheduled in both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 in-person seasons but cancelled due to COVID-19. *Amerikin* now makes its world premiere this season.

Hutchinson's world premiere play centers on the idea of connection - to others and to one's self. Jeff Browning, a new father desperate for community, casually follows his buddy's advice and tries to join a white supremacist group...but the results of his ancestry test prove surprising. *Amerikin* follows Jeff as serious consequences come knocking and the line between "us" and "them" gets incredibly blurry.

"I've always felt that the theatre's superpower is its ability to get an audience to empathize with the characters on stage – even when those characters hold vastly different views from each other and the viewers themselves," said Alley Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. "Seeing people as human beings first, I believe, is the path to creating a better society. These past two years, we have seen so much division in our country and I see theatre as playing a powerful role in healing those divisions, disabling strife, and finding a common ground of understanding. I'm so honored to be producing this wonderful world premiere in the Alley's 75th season."

"I wanted to do two things with *Amerikin*: write my way into some sort of understanding of the kinds of people for whom race is a reason to hate, and also hold them accountable for that hate in a society determined to excuse it," shares playwright **Chisa Hutchinson**. "A tricky combination, but one that could maybe inspire others to do the same."

"A truly great play has the power to change the molecules in the air when it is exposed to an audience. It's a tangible sensation. There can be specific moments that elicit a laugh, a gasp, or a tear. There can be moments that confront, challenge or anger. And then, the alchemy begins and something bigger fills the space," shares director **James Black**. "At the end of the night, for the audience, there is a shared acceptance, an acknowledgment that something was learned and a truth was revealed and we, the community, are all the better for it. Chisa has written a truly great play. I had the privilege of directing a reading of *Amerikin* and have felt its extraordinary power firsthand. I am so honored to be invited to return to the Alley to direct its world premiere, supported by an impeccable design team, and a superlative cast. The arts have the ability, the responsibility, to spearhead change in our culture. Politicians and legislation rarely lead. It's the poets and the artists who must go there first."

The cast of *Amerikin* includes Alley Resident Acting Company member **Shawn Hamilton** as Gerald Lamott. Rounding out the cast are **Justin Doran** (*The Lieutenant of Inishmore*) as Dylan Hoffenberger, **Adam Gibbs** (*Cleo*) as Poot Spangler, **David Matranga** (*A Christmas Carol, The Three Musketeers*) as Jeff Browning, **Chelsea Ryan McCurdy** (*Crimes of the Heart*) as Alma Tillery, **Raven Justine Troup** (*Choosing Love, A Christmas Carol*) as Chris Lamott, **Teresa Zimmermann** (*Survivors, an Alamo Play* workshop, *A Christmas Carol*) as Michelle Browning, and **B. Conner Flynn** (*Choosing Love, Twelfth Night*) as Understudy (Poot & Dylan).

The creative team of *Amerikin* includes Scenic Designer Michael Locher, Costume Designer Jessica Ford, Lighting Designer Xavier Pierce, Sound Designer Jane Shaw, Dialect Coach Carolyn Johnson, Stage Manager Emily Bohannon, and Assistant Stage Manager Madolyn Friedman.

PRESS NIGHT: Wednesday, February 16 at 7:30pm. Invitations will be sent at a later date.

COVID-19 POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS: We are committed to the health and safety of all of our artists, employees, and guests. In order to maintain the safest environment possible, all Alley Theatre staff, artists, creative teams, crews, and ushers are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

To ensure the safety of all Alley Theatre lovers, we've implemented the following policies for performances held within our Theatres:

- All guests aged 12 and up will be required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to the performance. Both PCR tests and antigen tests are acceptable. The results must have been performed by a third party, such as a lab. At-home tests will not be accepted. Guests can show either paper or electronic documentation (including photo of negative results).
- Guests aged 12 and up who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (at least 14 days after final dose) may bring proof of vaccination as a substitute for a negative COVID-19 test result. Guests can show either paper or electronic documentation (including photo of card).
- Alley Theatre requires all guests to wear a mask covering nose and mouth at all times while in the Theatre building, except while actively eating and drinking in the lobby spaces. Alley Theatre will provide complimentary masks to guests who forget to bring one. If guests choose not to wear a mask, there will be no admittance to the Theatre building and a refund will be processed.

DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION: From March 14-27, a paid digital version of *Amerikin* filmed live at the Alley, will be available for viewing. Guests who have purchased an in-person ticket and do not feel comfortable attending in-person may transfer their ticket before the start of their ticketed performance to a digital ticket. Digital tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at alleytheatre.org. Limited digital tickets will be available for purchase.

SPONSORS: *Amerikin* is sponsored by Arthur and Karen Rogers. The Alley Theatre is supported by the 2021-22 Season sponsor United Airlines, the official airline of the Alley Theatre.

TICKETS: Tickets to *Amerikin* are now on sale and start at \$28. Discounted tickets are available for military, seniors, and any student or educator, regardless of age, with a valid student ID for designated performances. Tickets can be ordered online (alleytheatre.org) or by phone (713.220.5700).

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ABOUT THE ALLEY THEATRE:

The Alley Theatre, one of America's leading nonprofit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company led by Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden. The Alley is committed to developing and producing theatre that is as diverse as the Houston community. The Theatre produces up to 16 plays and nearly 500 performances each season, ranging from the best current work and re-invigorated classic plays to new plays by contemporary writers. Home to a full-time resident company of actors, the Alley engages theatre artists of every discipline—actors, directors, designers, composers, playwrights—who work on individual productions throughout each season as visiting artists.

The Alley is comprised of two state-of-the-art theatres: the 774-seat Hubbard Theatre and the 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre. The Alley reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance, education, and community engagement programs. Its audience enrichment programs include pre-show and post-performance talks, events, and workshops for audience members of all ages.

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