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Alley Theatre's World Premiere Comedy *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* Begins January 21 Helmed by a Texas-born playwright and Houston-born director

HOUSTON TX - The Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre announces the cast and creative team of Texas-born and raised playwright **Vichet Chum's world premiere comedy *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest***. The play is directed by native Houstonian **Tiffany Nichole Greene** and runs January 21 – February 13, 2022 in the Hubbard Theatre.

Vichet Chum is a Cambodian-American playwright and theatre maker originally from Dallas, Texas and now lives in New York City. Tiffany Nichole Greene, a Houston native, splits her time between *Hamilton* as Resident Director of the Philip Tour and freelance directing in theatres across America. Both Chum and Greene hold MFA degrees from Brown University/Trinity Repertory Company where they met and have remained close friends since, championing each other's work over the years. Greene, in fact, brought Chum's play to the attention of Alley Theatre where it was developed in the 2020 Alley All New Festival and Alley at Ucross Residency.

It's 2003, senior year in Carrollton, Texas, and Riverside High School's competitive theatre troupe is climbing back to the top from last year's unprecedented loss. Dara is trying to rally his teammates, while new kid Paul disrupts Dara's complete understanding of himself and his small-town suburban life. When coaches Dirkson and Blow make a bold choice for the one-act play competition and the community takes issue, friends and rivals duke it out and find themselves in this uniquely Texan and thoroughly universal coming of age comedy.

"I adore *High School Play*. I laughed out loud the first time I read it. Then when Vichet was working on it during the Alley at Ucross residency, we would read sections out loud and it made me laugh even more to hear it spoken," said Alley Artistic Director **Rob Melrose**. "But it wasn't until I saw the full reading at the Alley All New Festival that I realized how moving it was. It is no mean feat to write a play that is hilariously funny and deeply moving at the same time, but Vichet has done it. Whether you participated in the UIL One Act Play Contest as a kid or watched your kids participate as an adult or are someone from outside of Texas, like me, simply having wonderful memories of high school theatre, this play will make you laugh until you cry and bring back some of the most important memories of growing up. I'm so proud that the Alley is presenting this wonderful world premiere."

"Conversations around gender expression, sexuality and race in this country are much different now than when I was in high school in the early 2000s," shares playwright **Vichet Chum**. "Still, it is a grave mistake to believe that prejudice goes away when cultural and societal norms shift. In fact, right now in 2021, we are arguably witnessing the greatest movement to progress and its greatest resistance. *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* hopes to show how much has changed in almost twenty years and at the same time,

how much more important work there is still to do. And to show that as a young person in face of a community that denies them, the journey to be the most authentic version of yourself is a personal and perilous one. This play endeavors to be a love letter to today's, yesterday's, and tomorrow's youth... to offer them grace, power, and love to face that very journey.”

The cast of *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* includes Alley's Resident Acting Company members **Melissa Pritchett** as Ms. Blow/Mrs. Simms and **Todd Waite** as Dirkson/Mr. Bland. Rounding out the cast are **Ricardo Dávila** as Rich, **Sabrina Koss** as Kailee, **Mai Le** (*For Steve Wozniak, on His 67th Birthday*, Alley All New Reading of *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest*) as Allison, **Kiaya Scott** (Stages' *The Fantasticks* and *Little Shop of Horrors*) as Sophie, **Jarred Tettey** (*A Christmas Carol*) as Paul, and **Daniel Velasco** (Alley All New Reading of *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest*) as Dara.

The creative team of *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* includes Scenic Designer Michael Locher, Costume Designer Ari Fulton, Lighting Designer Kevin Rigdon, Sound Designer Melanie Chen Cole, Stage Manager Rebecca R.D. Hamlin, and Assistant Stage Manager Ethan Mitchell.

PRESS NIGHT: Wednesday, January 26 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 February 14 through February 27, a paid digital version of *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* 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: *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* is sponsored by Sidley. The Alley Theatre is supported by the 2021-22 Season sponsor United Airlines, the official airline of the Alley Theatre.

TICKETS: Tickets to *High School Play: A Nostalgia Fest* 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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