

ALLEY THEATRE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Alley Theatre Resident Acting Company Members Bring *1984* to Life

"[Michael Gene] Sullivan does an exemplary job of distilling *1984*'s political essence...to clear a path for its trenchant, and still sadly undated, critique."

– *Los Angeles Times*

HOUSTON – The Alley Theatre and **Rob Melrose**, Artistic Director of the Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre, are proud to present a production of **Michael Gene Sullivan**'s adaptation of **George Orwell**'s *1984* next month. Melrose will direct the cast, which stars six of the theatre's Resident Acting Company members. *1984* runs **March 6-29, 2020** in the Hubbard Theatre. Tickets are available at alleytheatre.org or by calling the Box Office at 713.220.5700.

Based on George Orwell's harrowing dystopian novel, *1984* brings us the story of Winston Smith and a stark vision of a world in which freedom of action, word, and thought are controlled by Big Brother. How far are we from realizing Orwell's nightmare? Are we already there? Can there be more than one truth, more than one set of facts? As the story of Winston's fight for individual identity unfolds, the vision grows increasingly terrifying as the world it depicts grows uncomfortably familiar. A ferocious and provocative adaptation of one of the most prescient works of literature of the last century.

"*1984* will mark the third production I have directed at the Alley and I couldn't be more thrilled to work with our talented Resident Acting Company members to bring this classic novel to life," said Rob Melrose.

"I remember when it actually was the year 1984 and there were plenty of news reports about how far off Orwell was in his predictions: the '80s world of neon leg-warmers, big hair, 'greed is good' capitalism, excess, and individuality seemed far off from the totalitarian dystopia Orwell imagined," Melrose continued. "Now in 2020, every phone, computer, convenience store, and street corner have a camera. In our homes, Siri and Alexa listen in on our conversations and suggest products and feed us ads based on them. Now, we have the concept of 'fake news' and we can never be certain if a story is made-up or not. I would argue that Orwell's novel has a lot more to say to us now in 2020 than it did in 1984."

"I'm excited to do this wonderful adaptation by Michael Gene Sullivan, which was originally written for Tim Robbin's LA theatre company, The Actors' Gang. Sullivan imagines the entire

play as a complex interrogation taking place here and now that we as the audience witness. It is riveting theatre!" said Melrose.

The cast is comprised of six Alley Theatre Resident Acting Company members: **Elizabeth Bunch** as the 2nd Party Member, **Shawn Hamilton** as Winston, **Chris Hutchison** as O'Brien, **David Rainey** as the 4th Party Member, **Jay Sullivan** as the 1st Party Member, and **Todd Waite** as the 3rd Party Member.

1984's creative team includes Scenic Design by **Michael Locher**, Costume Design by **Raquel Barreto**, Lighting Design by **Cat Tate Starmer**, Music and Sound Design by **Cliff Caruthers**, Fight Director and Intimacy Consultant **Adam Noble**, Stage Manager **Kristen Larson**, and Assistant Stage Manager **Emily Bohannan**.

Alley Theatre's production of *1984* is based on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell (Copyright, 1949) by permission of Bill Hamilton as the Literary Executor of the Estate of the Late Sonia Brownell Orwell, adapted by Michael Gene Sullivan.

Previews for *1984* begin March 6, opens March 11, and runs through March 29 in the Hubbard Theatre. Performances of *1984* are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Friday at 8:00 p.m., Saturday at 2:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. *1984* is recommended for mature audiences, ages 14 and up.

SPONSORS: Ken and Mady Kades, Mike Loya, Karen and Arthur Rogers, Kathryn Ketelsen, Peter Ragauss and Jennifer Smith, and Norton Rose Fulbright

TICKETS: Tickets to *1984* are now on sale and start at \$30. Discounted tickets are available for military, seniors, and any student and 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).

ALLEY CHAT: The Alley Theatre will present a post-show discussion following the Saturday, March 14 at 2:30 p.m. performance, which will feature the Alley Theatre's Artistic Director, Rob Melrose, discussing the themes of the play and how they are reflected in our lives today. The *1984* cast will be featured during a post-show discussion following the Tuesday, March 17 at 7:30 p.m. performance.

DESIGNER TALK: An hour before the Sunday, March 8 matinee preview performance (2:30 p.m.), a member of the artistic staff will lead a discussion with the production's creative team to give audiences a behind-the-scenes look at the design process. These pre-show talks will offer audiences an exclusive opportunity to ask questions about the designer's work and learn how they brought the script to life. Designer Talks will take place in the Texas Room.

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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 produces at least 16 plays each year in its newly renovated Theatre, ranging from the best current work, to re-invigorated classic plays, to new plays by contemporary writers. The Alley is home to a Resident Acting Company. In addition, the Alley engages theatre artists of every discipline – actors, designers, composers, playwrights – who work on individual productions throughout each season as visiting artists.

Alley's Hubbard Theatre features a 774-seat state-of-the-art performance venue. Matched with the 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre, the Alley offers nearly 500 performances each season. The Alley Theatre reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance and education 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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