

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Katie Perkowski
Director of Marketing & Communications
Alabama Shakespeare Festival
kperkowski@asf.net
334.271.5326



**ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 22 NEW PLAY COMMISSIONS,
ONE OF THE LARGEST COMMISSIONING PROJECTS IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN THEATRE,
TO ENRICH THE SOUTHERN CANON WITH NEW AND RELEVANT VOICES**

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) Artistic Director Rick Dildine announced Alabama Shakespeare Festival will commission 22 plays over the next five years to enrich the Southern canon with new and relevant voices. The commissions will focus on transformative moments in the South that caused important and lasting changes to its people, culture, and land. A minimum of 51% of the commissions will go to women playwrights and a minimum of 51% will go to playwrights of color. This announcement also commemorates the bicentennial of Alabama becoming the 22nd state of the union on December 14, 1819.

Dildine joined Alabama Shakespeare Festival in late 2017 as the fourth artistic director in the organization’s 47-year history. His first major initiative was to reinvigorate the Southern Writers’ Project, a program founded in 1991 at ASF to commission and develop new plays. Dildine began this mission by curating a diverse group of Southern playwrights whose work and identity reflect the ever-evolving face of the South, to accompany him on a “State of the South” 10-day speaking and listening tour of the southeastern United States. The creative team visited 12 cities in seven states with the goal of reassessing Southern identity by conducting one-on-one interviews and group story circles to answer the questions: What is the South?; Who is the South?; Where is the South?

Reporting on The State of the South tour at ASF’s recent Southern Writers Festival, Dildine introduced a new vision statement for ASF’s new play development program. “One of the themes we heard from this trip is ‘stories matter,’” said Dildine. “And stories ‘steeped in specificity’ are actually more relatable. The vision of the Southern Writers Festival is to grow the Southern theatre canon with stories steeped in specificity that are reflective of the diversity of the region yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Embarking on a project of this scale at this point in time will be a significant contribution not only to the theatrical canon but also to shaping a new narrative of the American South.”

ASF developed a short film documenting The State of the South tour and some of the conversations the artistic team had with members of communities they visited. To view the film, visit asf.net/stateofthesouth.

“By telling the stories of our people and dramatizing our shared histories and unique narratives,” Dildine stated, “we give voice to the communities of people who have called the South home.”

EMBRACING OUR COMMUNITY – ONE STORY AT A TIME.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is a not-for-profit organization under the direction of Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Executive Director Todd Schmidt. Designated as The State Theatre of Alabama, ASF is a leader in education and outreach, serving more than 40,000 students annually with artistic programming. ASF is supported by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

###