



MARIN
THEATRE
COMPANY

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Password: CATASTROPHIST2021

**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE AND MARIN THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENT WORLD PREMIERE DIGITAL CO-PRODUCTION
THE CATASTROPHIST**

STREAMING JANUARY 26 – FEBRUARY 28, 2021

Bethesda, Md. (January 5, 2021) – Round House Theatre and Marin Theatre Company announce full casting and production details for ***The Catastrophist*** by **Lauren Gunderson**, a world premiere digital co-production based on the life and work of award-winning “virus hunter” **Nathan Wolfe**. Directed by Marin Theatre Company Artistic Director **Jasson Minadakis**, *The Catastrophist* is available for streaming January 26 – February 28, 2021. See bottom of page 2 for full programming details.

Lauren Gunderson, America's most produced playwright, has written a story for this moment in time about Dr. Nathan Wolfe, the award-winning virologist who proposed a plan to protect the economy from pandemics years before the COVID-19 outbreak. He also happens to be Lauren's husband. *The Catastrophist* is a one-person show starring **William DeMeritt** (*Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole World*, HBO's *The Normal Heart*) that explores Nathan's work combatting epidemics like Ebola and swine flu, his life as a loving father and son, and *Tikkun Olam*, the Jewish concept of healing at the center of it all.

Says Gunderson: “You think you know your partner of a decade. And then you attempt to write a play about them. When Jasson Minadakis posed the idea of writing a new play about my husband, I initially rejected it. But the idea started to make more and more sense. Of course, I told Nathan what I was writing and asked his permission, but I didn't let him read it or see it until the very first rehearsal with our brilliant actor, Bill DeMerritt. I wanted him to not only be the subject of the play, but its first audience. He laughed. He cried. He gave me several notes on the science. This play has both the hardest play I've ever written and the most meaningful. What a joy to share it so widely so soon.”

“There really couldn’t be a more timely production than *The Catastrophist*, in content or presentation,” says Round House Artistic Director **Ryan Rilette**. “In the midst of a global pandemic, Lauren Gunderson has created a deeply personal story about the man who has been sounding the alarm on them for years. I had read Dr. Wolfe’s book, *The Viral Storm*, years ago when I was still Producing Director at Marin, and I immediately wanted to see a stage adaptation. I was thrilled when Jasson reached out to say that he and Lauren were finally going to make that happen, and I’m thrilled to work with them to share that story with audiences in the DC metropolitan area, the Bay Area, and everywhere in between.”

Minadakis adds, “When the reality sunk in that we would not be in theatres in 2020, Lauren and I began discussing projects that could live between the worlds of theatre and film in a virtual space, and *The Catastrophist* went straight into development as a new commission. A work of great intimacy and immediacy, *The Catastrophist* is like nothing Lauren has attempted before, a startling portrait of one of our most important scientific thinkers. I’m delighted to be partnering with Ryan and Round House on this unique experience and look forward to the conversations it sparks across our country.”

Filmed on stage in Marin’s Boyer Theatre, *The Catastrophist* is presented entirely digitally and will be available for on-demand viewing for one month. Audiences are encouraged to gather a small list of household items which will be cued during the play to experience and interact with. DeMeritt is joined by a creative team that includes producer **Nakissa Etemad**, dramaturg **Martine Kei Green-Rogers**, costume designer **Sarah Smith**, lighting designer **Wen-Ling Liao**, composer and sound designer **Chris Houston**, director of photography **Peter Ruocco**, assistant director **Christina Hogan**, and COVID compliance officer **Liz Matos**.

Tickets for *The Catastrophist* are available now for \$30. For more information, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/The-Catastrophist and MarinTheatre.org/productions/The-Catastrophist

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Catastrophist

By Lauren Gunderson

Based on the life and work of Dr. Nathan Wolfe

JAN 26 – FEB 28, 2021 | World Premiere

How do you plan for catastrophe? Virologist Nathan Wolfe, named one of *TIME*’s 100 Most Influential People in the World for his work tracking Ebola and swine flu, proposed pandemic insurance years before the novel coronavirus outbreak. No one bought it. Now, in a post-COVID world, we hear his story—presented entirely digitally. *The Book of Will*

playwright Lauren Gunderson returns with a time-jumping tale based on the life and work of Nathan Wolfe (who also happens to be her husband). A deep dive into the profundities of scientific exploration and the harrowing realities of facing your own mortality, *The Catastrophist* is a world premiere theatrical experience built of and for this moment in time.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Lauren Gunderson (Playwright) has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list twice including in 2019-2020. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University and Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School, where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. She co-authored the *Miss Bennet* plays with Margot Melcon, and her play *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* is available on Audible.com. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*; *Exit, Pursued By A Bear*; *The Taming*; and *Toil and Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists*; *The Book of Will*; *Silent Sky*; *Bauer*; *Natural Shocks*; *The Wickhams*; and *Miss Bennet*), and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr. Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* is available on Amazon. She is currently developing musicals with Ari Afsar; Dave Stewart and Joss Stone; and Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk. LaurenGunderson.com

Nathan Wolfe (Source Author) is the Founder and Chair of Metabiota, which provides a unique data analytics platform for epidemic risk. Wolfe received his doctorate in Immunology and Infectious Diseases from Harvard in 1998. He has been honored with a Fulbright fellowship and the NIH Director's Pioneer Award. He is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and a National Geographic Emerging Explorer. Wolfe has published over 100 scientific publications, and his work has been published in or covered by *Nature*, *Science*, *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, NPR, *The New Yorker*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Forbes*, among others. His critically acclaimed book, *The Viral Storm*, has been published in six languages and was shortlisted in 2012 for the Royal Society's Winton Prize. In 2011, he was named as one of the hundred most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine; *Rolling Stone* named him one of the "100 Agents of Change" in 2009; and *Popular Science* recognized him as one of their "Brilliant 10" in 2006.

William DeMeritt (Nathan) is an actor and dialect coach making his MTC and Round House debuts. Off-Broadway credits include *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World AKA the Negro Book of the Dead* at Signature Theatre Company; *Liz Swados'*

Violence Project at LaMaMa ETC.; and *Mom, How Did You Meet the Beatles?* at The Public Theatre. International credits include *Hamlet* at the Bridge Lane Theater (London) and *October in the Chair & Other Fragile Things* at the Amsterdam International Fringe Festival. Regional credits include Will in *Shakespeare in Love* (U.S. premiere), Fenton in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Sholem Asch in *Indecent* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival; Orsino in *Twelfth Night* at Yale Rep; *We, The Invisibles* at the Humana Festival of New American Plays, Actors Theatre of Louisville; writer and co-creator of the one-man show *Origin Story* (winner, New York Innovative Theatre Award, Best Solo Performance); *Sense and Sensibility* at Dallas Theatre Center; and *The Slam Jam* at the Upright Citizens' Brigade Theatre. Film credits include *The Normal Heart*; *The Lennon Report*; *The Surrogate*; *What's Up, Lovely?*; and *Bad Luck Dandelion*. Television credits include *The Flight Attendant* (HBOMax), *NCIS: New Orleans*, *Person of Interest*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *One Life to Live*, *The Outs* (Vimeo), and *Guiding Light*. Additional credits include the audiobooks *Underground Airlines* (AUDIE nomination, Earphones award winner), *The Mortifications*, *Snapshot*, *The Wild Ones* trilogy, *The Resisters*, and the *Isaiah Coleridge* series; and Featured Narrator for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times* on the AUDM app (streaming service for narrated long-form journalism). William has a BFA from Marymount Manhattan and an MFA from Yale School of Drama. WilliamDemeritt.com, @demeritt

For full cast and creative team information, including headshots and bios, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/The-Catastrophist

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TICKET INFORMATION

The Catastrophist runs from Tuesday, January 26 to Sunday, February 28, 2021. Tickets for on-demand streaming are available for \$30. Tickets can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100 or ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org. If you have any questions, our Box Office associates will be happy to assist you. Associates are working remotely, Monday through Friday, 11:00am – 5:00pm.

ABOUT MARIN THEATRE COMPANY

Marin Theatre Company is the Bay Area's premier mid-sized theatre and the leading professional theatre in the North Bay, producing a six-show season focused on new American plays. MTC is committed to the development and production of new plays, with a comprehensive New Play Program that includes productions of world premieres, two nationally recognized annual playwriting awards and readings and workshops by the nation's best emerging and established playwrights. MTC's numerous education programs serve more than 4,500 students from over 40 Bay Area schools each year. MTC strives to

create intimate, powerful and emotional experiences that engage audiences to discuss new ideas and adopt a broader point of view. Marin Theatre Company believe in taking risks and inspiring people to participate in live theatre, regardless of personal means. MTC celebrates the intellectual curiosity of our community and believes that theatre is an important tool to help build empathy. MTC was founded in 1966 and is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

ABOUT ROUND HOUSE THEATRE

Round House Theatre is one of the leading professional theatres in the Washington, DC area, producing a season of new plays, modern classics, and musicals for more than 40,000 patrons each year at our theatre in Bethesda. Round House has been nominated for 197 Helen Hayes Awards and has won 37, including four Outstanding Resident Play Awards and the Charles MacArthur Award for Original New Play in 2016. Round House's lifelong learning and education programs serve more than 5,000 students each year at its Education Center in Silver Spring, in schools throughout Montgomery County, and at our Bethesda theatre. Cornerstone programs include Free Play, which provides free tickets for students age 13-college, the Teen Performance Company, which culminates in the student-produced Sarah Metzger Memorial Play, Summer Camp for students in grades K-12, and a full slate of classes for adults and youth.

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