

ROUND HOUSE BACKSTAGE

ROUND HOUSE THEATRE
DONOR NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2023
ISSUE 21

FELA!



AUGUST WILSON'S RADIO GOLF



EDUCATION SUMMER CAMP



**ROUND
THEATRE
HOUSE**

GREETINGS FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



DEAR FRIEND,

Summer is often considered the “off-season” for theatre, with subscription seasons concluding and people venturing out on vacations. This summer though, Round House has had plenty to offer.

For the last show in our Bethesda theatre this past season, we were delighted to produce August Wilson’s *Radio Golf*, the final play in Wilson’s renowned American Century Cycle which is one of the most significant depictions of Black life throughout 20th century America. An immensely talented cast brought this ever-relevant play to life, and we were thrilled to host our first-ever Black Out performance during the run—don’t miss a recap of the event on page 4.

But the 2022-2023 Season didn’t end there. Thanks to so many of you for joining us at Olney Theatre Center for a co-production of *FELA!* It is always a pleasure to partner with our friends at Olney and it was an honor to be able to tell this story that hasn’t been seen on an American stage since its national tour and Broadway revival ten years ago. The cast’s irrepressible energy created an absolute powerhouse production that we won’t soon forget. Look back at the fun and festive Opening Night on page 6.

We kick off the 2023-2024 Season with the second show in our co-production partnership, James Graham’s Tony Award-winning play, *Ink*. This timely exploration of the rise of Rupert Murdoch refracts modern debates about the power of media through a dramatized historical lens and is sure to leave audiences talking. Associate Artistic Director Naysan Mojdani offers a sneak peek into the production on pages 12-13. We hope you’ll join us back at Round House this fall to experience this electrifying new drama—and to see a very familiar face on stage!

While it’s unusual for our subscription season to extend through the summer, Round House Education is always a go-to destination for summer fun! Beginning in June, students in grades 1 through college took over Round House spaces throughout Bethesda and Silver Spring to learn, play, explore, design, film, act, and create during nine weeks of summer camp. Our campers and talented Teaching Artists exude creativity and excitement wherever they go, and it’s always a joy to experience the magic of theatre through their eyes.

It has been a great summer, and we have so much more ahead of us. The 2023-2024 Season is filled with new voices and vital conversations—but we couldn’t tell these stories without you. We can’t wait to welcome you back to Round House.

See you at the theatre!

RYAN RILETTE
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ED ZAKRESKI
MANAGING DIRECTOR

SPOTLIGHT ON RACIAL EQUITY PLAN

BY ISRAEL JIMÉNEZ | DIRECTOR OF EDIA & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ROUND HOUSE THEATRE UPDATED its mission in March 2020 to be a theatre for everyone—and in an effort to extend our anti-racism work, we are employing a new three-year Racial Equity plan which will be unveiled to the public in the coming weeks

Round House's Racial Equity Plan is an inspiring commitment to creating a more inclusive and diverse theatre space for everyone. The plan outlines the theatre's mission to be a place where all individuals can feel at home—a theatre of and for our communities.

The heart of this plan lies in Round House's core values as an anti-racist organization. Round House wholeheartedly embraces its role as an ally to communities of color, using its influence to amplify voices that have long been underrepresented and under-resourced in the field of theatre. The aim is to integrate anti-racist practices into every aspect of our work and be a multicultural center that celebrates diversity.

To make these goals tangible and measurable, Round House introduces a comprehensive three-year Racial Equity Plan. This plan is a living document, constantly evolving and regularly reported on to ensure transparency and accountability. As we progress, we will make revisions and updates as needed.

The journey towards becoming an anti-racist theatre is a collaborative effort. Round House has involved every employee and board member in the process, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and represented. We have also sought guidance from DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) consultants and have engaged in meaningful conversations with theatre leaders to gain insights and perspectives.

This plan acknowledges the

historical lack of diversity in American theatre and the industry's systemic challenges. Round House, however, is determined to lead by example. By increasing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) representation among the board, staff, artists, and audiences, we aspire to create an authentic and inclusive community that represents the diversity of the surrounding community.

Throughout this journey, Round House emphasizes learning and growth. We celebrate the progress we have made and recognize that our commitment to racial equity is an ongoing endeavor. We are eager to share our achievements and challenges transparently with our communities.

Round House's Racial Equity Plan is a heartfelt call to action, inviting everyone to be part of a transformative journey. With warmth, inclusivity, and a dedication to change, Round House strives to create a space where diversity thrives, anti-racist practices flourish, and everyone can experience the magic of theatre as one united community.



AUGUST WILSON'S *RADIO GOLF* INSIDE LOOK, OPENING NIGHT, AND BLACK OUT NIGHT

AS OUR FINAL ON-SITE SHOW THIS SEASON, Round House produced August Wilson's *Radio Golf*. Patrons who attended the Inside Look on May 23 heard from artistic director Ryan Rilette, director Reginald Douglas, and members of the cast about working on the final play of Wilson's epic ten-part American Century Cycle.

Radio Golf was Round House's third trip to Wilson's Pittsburgh Hill District (following *Two Trains Running* in 2014 and *Gem of the Ocean* in 2018), opening the evening of June 12. Critics and audiences agreed the show was equally timely and powerful!

August Wilson's *Radio Golf* also featured Round House's first ever Black Out performance on June 18. A Black Out performance is designed to prioritize the needs of Black-identifying audience members by allowing them to be seen and celebrated in theatrical spaces. They provide a supportive and safe space for Black-identifying theatregoers to experience a show made by Black artists in fellowship with each other.

Photos by Kent Kondo and Cameron Whitman Photography



Craig Wallace (Elder Joseph Barlow) and Reginald L. Douglas (Director)



Artistic Director Ryan Rilette and Ro Boddie (Roosevelt Hicks)



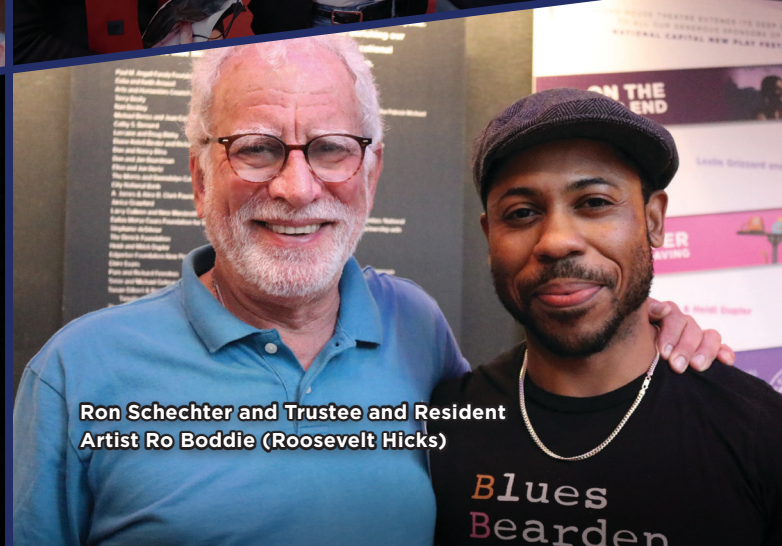
Reginald L. Douglas (Director), Keith Arnaud, and Celia Arnaud



Laura Forman, Bonnie Hammerschlag, David Smith, and Sherry Smith



Harold F. Burgess II (Lighting Designer) and Kevin Mambo (Sterling Johnson)



Ron Schechter and Trustee and Resident Artist Ro Boddie (Roosevelt Hicks)



Show Sponsors Lorraine and Doug Bibb with Ryan Rilette



Show Sponsors Jay and Robin Hammer with Ryan Rilette



Chadwick Cook and Reginald L. Douglas (Director)



Renee Elizabeth Wilson (Mame Wilks) and Joseph Campos-Furber



Dian and Steve Seidel



Judy Zickler, Ed Zakreski, Cathy Bernard, and Leo Zickler



Kim Natovitz Cutler and Stacy Murchison



Mark and Merrill Shugoll



The cast and crew of August Wilson's *Radio Golf*



Meka and Richard Parker

FELA! OPENING NIGHT

FOR OUR FINAL SHOW OF THE SEASON, WE TRAVELED TO OLNEY THEATRE CENTER, where we co-produced the award-winning musical, *Fela!* with music and lyrics by Fela Kuti and book by Bill T. Jones and Jim Lewis. We were thrilled to welcome Round House audiences back to Olney following our last co-production of *In the Heights* in 2017. Audiences were swept away to Fela Anikulapo Kuti's farewell show at the Afrika Shrine nightclub in Lagos, Nigeria. It was a night full of joy, music, and celebration.

Photos by Kiati Plooks Photography



Director Lilli-Anne Brown celebrating with David Singleton (Associate Choreographer)

Ryan Rilette and Jason Loewith

Barry Kropf and Aaron Garner

Caroline Oberle and Montgomery County Council member Dawn Ludetke

Patti and Jerry Sowalsky with Deema Turkomani and Louis Delair

Ryan Rilette and Jason Loewith interview with Adebayo Fashanu, CEO of TANTV

Cast and Crew of *Fela!*

Debbie Ellinghaus, Jason Loewith, Ed Zakreski, Ryan Rilette, and Lili-Anne Brown

GIVING SAVVY— MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SUPPORT

Round House Theatre is grateful for our strong community of donors that support our mission to be a theatre for everyone. Did you know there are many ways to support the theatre you love while also gaining a tax advantage? Read on to learn more!

QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a nontaxable distribution from an individual retirement account (IRA) to an eligible charity. QCD distribution can count toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year—and neither you nor the eligible charity will have to pay income taxes.

What is a QCD and what are the requirements?

- A QCD allows you to reduce your taxable income by donating directly to a charity from an individual retirement account (IRA).
- You must be age 70 ½ or older to be eligible for a QCD and may give up to \$100,000 per year.
- Instead of withdrawing your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), which must be reported as taxable income, you can instead tell your IRA administrator to send all or part of your RMD to one or more qualified charities.
- As a result, your adjusted gross income, taxable income, and tax liability are all reduced—and you get credit for giving to an organization you care about, including Round House!

APPRECIATED STOCK

If you donate appreciated stock that you've held for more than a year, you will be able to claim a potential charitable tax deduction for the full fair market value of the stock. This saves you from paying the capital-gains tax.

To make a gift of stock to Round House, please email Development@RoundHouseTheatre.org or call 240.670.8795.

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

The Street 70 Legacy Society commemorates Round House Theatre's original name as part of the Montgomery County Department of Recreation and recognizes those who have generously chosen to include Round House in their estate plans. This can be as simple as making a gift to Round House in a will or naming us as a beneficiary in a qualified retirement plan or life insurance policy.

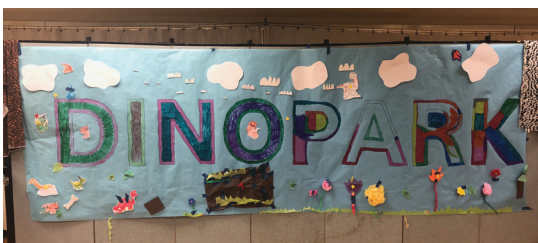
Consider the many appealing ways to give wisely including gifts from your will or trust, from your retirement plan, gifts of stock and appreciated assets, or gifts of life insurance. These gifts don't impact your current lifestyle or your family's security but do help secure Round House Theatre's ability to produce ambitious productions of outstanding plays.

If you're interested in joining the Street 70 Legacy Society, or if Round House is already a part of your estate plans, please contact Veronica Kannan, Director of Development, at 240.670.8795 or VKannan@RoundHouseTheatre.org or visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/plannedgiving.

Planning your charitable giving and estate plans takes careful evaluation. Always consult with your financial advisor or tax counsel for financial advice.

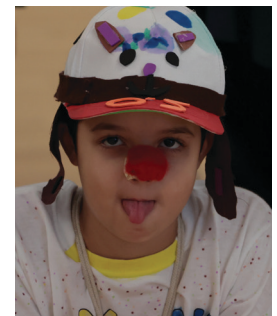
ROUND HOUSE EDUC

Round House Theatre Education had a fantastic summer, offering 9 weeks of camp programming for kids Grades 1-12, across three Round House Spaces! We also held our first ever evening Bootcamp for older high school and college students.



In our ever-popular **DESTINATIONS** program (grades 1–3), over 350 campers traveled from Alien Planets, Atlantis, Jurassic Park, Wakanda, Zootopia, and many more locations all in their imaginations! Each day they explored acting, movement, and design as they explored that day's world, then they used all their newfound skills to create a theatrical event to wrap up the day. On Friday, we invited their families to see a sharing based on Friday's theme.

ATION SUMMER 2023



Our **PLAYMAKERS** camps (grades 4—6) offered students two types of sessions: Playmakers On-Stage and Playmakers On-Film. Our Playmakers On-Stage campers wrote, designed, rehearsed, and performed a brand-new play or musical, all under the guidance of our exceptional teaching artists. Our Playmakers On-Film campers wrote, designed, filmed, and edited their own scenes to create a final film to send to family and friends. It's not all work though—they find plenty of time to have fun and make friends!



Our **TEEN INSTITUTE** camps (grades 6–12) focused in on more specialized topics, such as improv, filmmaking, musical theatre, or devising. Students get the opportunity to work with professional theatre artists from the DC-area, who are experts in their field! Some of our teaching artists this summer included David Singleton, a recent Helen Hayes nominee fresh from assistant choreographing *Fela!*, Helen Hayes nominee JJ Kaczynski, and local actor/musical director Emily Erickson.



For the first time ever, we offered our new evening **BOOTCAMP** program this Summer, designed for students 16 years old through college, who may not be able to attend daytime programs because of their work schedule. Improv Bootcamp was led by Kevin Corbett, who celebrated 25 years of teaching Improv at Round House.

We had many former students join us on staff this year, eager to give the new generation the same wonderful experience they had at Round House. Alums from our Teen Performance Company, the Roundlings, Summer Camps, and our intern program joined us as staff and interns. They included:

Anna Brosowsky (TPC), Benjamin Pallansch (TPC, Summer Camp, classes), Darren Jenkins-Johnson (TPC, Summer Camp), Dominique Fuller (Intern), Gracie Luna (TPC), Isabelle Strauss-Riggs (TPC), Lila Cooper (Apprentice), Madlyn Bard (Summer Camp), Shana Laski (Apprentice), Xander Toti (TPC), Eva Lee (TPC), Alice Hockstader (TPC), Victoria Keith (TPC), and Jasper Murray (Roundlings). Special shout out to one of our Leading Teaching Artists, Emma Lou Joy, who was a member of the 2010 TPC production of *The Misanthrope* and has been attending or teaching in Round House education programming since 1996!

Another special Round House Theatre Education shout out to Kevin Corbett—who celebrated 25 years of working at Round House Theatre Summer Camps in July by sharing the stage with one of his own offspring in the sharing at the end of Improv FUNDamentals. Kevin remains a favorite teaching artist, and we're thrilled that he has spent so many summers teaching the next generation at Round House Theatre!

WHY INK NOW?

BY NAYSAN MOJGANI | ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



The play centers on Rupert Murdoch and his 1969 purchase and revamping of British newspaper *The Sun*. He and his newly-installed editor, Larry Lamb, transformed *The Sun*, and with it the global news ecosystem.

A S PLANNING COMMENCED FOR the 2022-2023 Season, Round House's artistic team was faced with a challenge: how to produce big and boldly theatrical work that would remind audiences of what they love about theatre, while responsibly and sustainably working with budgets still constrained by a hesitant ticket-buying public. While Round House has been blessed throughout the last few years by generous and loyal donors and board members, this is a near-universal challenge across the American theatre. In that context, building on our past successful partnerships with Olney Theatre Center (2016's *Angels in America* and *In the Heights* in 2017) was an obvious choice: by partnering with each other, our two institutions are able to share resources and risks, enabling us to produce work that might stretch our individual capacities but fulfills our mission and demands that audiences return and engage.

Along with the first installment of this partnership—this summer's *Fela!*, produced at Olney—*Ink* is a perfect example of that balance and the benefits of these co-productions. It's a large cast with an ambitious design (incorporating both a revolving





stage and projections), telling one of the formative stories of the modern age. (It's also a play that both Round House Artistic Director Ryan Rilette and Olney Artistic Director Jason Loewith have loved and wanted to produce for several years.)

The play centers on Rupert Murdoch and his 1969 purchase and revamping of British newspaper *The Sun*. He and his newly-installed editor, Larry Lamb, transformed *The Sun*, and with it the global news ecosystem. While newspapers have always been a commercial enterprise, driven by circulation and advertising, that economic reality has traditionally been balanced by a recognition that journalism is a public necessity. An informed and engaged populace is a keystone of democracy. With *The Sun*, Murdoch and Lamb disavowed that responsibility; the only job of a newspaper, they insist, is to sell newspapers. The wager they make is that a newspaper that gives the people what they want—a newspaper with crime and sex and free giveaways and scandal and *fun*—can sell more copies than a newspaper that gives the people what they need.

It is the impact of that wager that has shaped our world for the last half-century, that makes this a story that demands to be heard, and that makes *Ink* a great Round House play. Rupert Murdoch did not invent sensationalism or yellow journalism. What playwright James Graham demonstrates in *Ink*, however, is that Murdoch showed the public how much fun such things could be, and he showed the news industry how much money there was to be made in such things. And the landscape shifted.

A Round House play focuses on relatable and understandable human beings, and a Round House play sparks debate and asks difficult questions. *Ink* takes us back to the roots that have grown into the 24-hour news cycle and the echo chambers and media bubbles and the sensationalistic outrage that define our modern news media. And it asks us to consider what we've lost along the way—is the *fun* worth the cost? And as much of the best art asks: where do we go from here?

We can't wait to discuss those questions with you—*Ink* runs through September 24!

For tickets and more information, please visit
RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage/Explore/Ink



2023-2024 SEASON

COMING UP IN THE

ELECTRIFYING NEW DRAMA



BY JAMES GRAHAM
DIRECTED BY
JASON LOEWITH

Co-produced by

ROUND
HOUSE
THEATRE



AUG 30—SEP 24, 2023

HISTORICAL REIMAGINING



BY KATORI HALL
DIRECTED BY
DELICIA TURNER SONNENBERG

OCT 11—NOV 5, 2023

WORLD PREMIERE
MUSICAL COMEDY

A HANUKKAH CAROL

OR GELT TRIP! THE MUSICAL

BY AARON KENNY (MUSIC), ROB BERLINER
(BOOK & LYRICS), AND HARRISON BRYAN
(BOOK & ORIGINAL CONCEPT)

DIRECTED AND CHOREOGRAPHED BY
MARLO HUNTER

DEC 6—31, 2023

GROUNDBREAKING
ROCK MUSICAL

NEXT 2 NORMAL

BOOK AND LYRICS BY BRIAN YORKEY

MUSIC BY TOM KITT

DIRECTED BY ALAN PAUL

JAN 24—FEB 25, 2024

INCENDIARY AND
PROVOCATIVE
WORLD PREMIERE

A JUMPING OFF POINT

MODERN
AMERICAN CLASSIC

TOPDOG/ UNDERDOG

BY INDA CRAIG-GALVÁN

DIRECTED BY JADE KING CARROLL

APR 10—MAY 5, 2024

BY SUZAN-LORI PARKS

DIRECTED BY JAMIL JUDE

MAY 29—JUN 23, 2024



VISIT: RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage

SPOTLIGHT ON SUMMER RISE



Summer RISE
Connecting Students to Careers



This summer, Round House Theatre was thrilled to welcome Hadassah Alabi, a rising senior at James Hubert Blake High School, as a Summer RISE student working with our education team during summer camp.

Summer RISE is an initiative led by the Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) Partnerships Unit in collaboration with businesses, government agencies, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations. The program is for rising MCPS juniors and seniors to participate in a career-based learning opportunity during the summer. Students have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning opportunities related to their field of interest. Running for five weeks, from June 26 through July 28, participating students complete a minimum of 50 hours of either in-person, virtual, or a combination of the two experiences. Students receive a \$500 stipend upon successful completion of the program.

This is Hadassah's second year as a Summer RISE student, but her first year joining us here at Round House. During her time with Round House education, she spent two weeks with our rising 4–6 grade Playmakers camp, helping them to create their very own play based on the Disney *Descendants* movies, and one week with our rising 1–3 grade Destinations camp helping our youngest students explore design, movement, acting, and playmaking! She also had the opportunity to attend rehearsals of *Ink* and meet with working professionals at Round House to learn more about the world of professional theatre, on and off the stage.

Hadassah is also part of Community Bridges, a local non-profit focused on empowering girls to become exceptional students and leaders. Through Community Bridges, she was able to attend the Round House *Broadway in Bethesda* Gala, which is how she was first introduced to us!

Hadassah chose to work with us because she has wanted to be an actor her whole life. This fall, she'll be auditioning for 15 different colleges around the country and hopes to attend the University of Southern California to study acting.

For more information on Summer RISE, please visit:

[MontgomerySchoolsMD.org/departments/partnerships/summer-rise/](https://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/partnerships/summer-rise/)

For more information on becoming a Teen Educator, Intern, or Apprentice with Round House, please visit:

RoundHouseTheatre.org/About/Opportunities

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DONOR HOTLINE: 240.644.1405

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