



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ROUND HOUSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES
CAST & CREATIVE TEAM FOR UPCOMING WORLD PREMIERES:**

***IT'S NOT A TRIP IT'S A JOURNEY &
WE DECLARE YOU A TERRORIST***

As part of the Inaugural National Capital New Play Festival

Presented in repertory April 5 – May 8

Bethesda, Md. (March 9, 2022) – Round House Theatre today announces full casting and creative teams for the two world premieres presented in rotating repertory as part of the inaugural [National Capital New Play Festival](#): Charly Evon Simpson's *it's not a trip it's a journey*, directed by Nicole A. Watson, and Tim J. Lord's *"We declare you a terrorist..."*, co-directed by Round House Theatre Artistic Director Ryan Rilette and Jared Mezzocchi.

Press night for *it's not a trip it's a journey* is Monday, April 18, 2022, and press night for *"We declare you a terrorist..."* is Tuesday, April 19, 2022. **Please see below for complete program details and ticket information.** (For additional festival information, including [details on the developmental readings](#) that join these world premieres on the schedule, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/Festival.)

it's not a trip it's a journey

June needs a journey. Like, now. So, she convinces her friends to ditch New York City (and their cellphones) for an impromptu road trip to the Grand Canyon. As the four wildly different friends travel through the wondrous and not-so-wondrous sights of the United States, they must come together to contend with being Black, femme, and American...all at the same time. An intimate play with vast ambitions, *it's not a trip it's a journey* is about road trips, friendships, and finding the difference between surviving and thriving.

Director **Nicole A. Watson** describes the exploration of *it's not a trip it's a journey* at Round House Theatre as a joyful and exciting experience. "This play celebrates Black femme friendship. It's an ensemble piece, and there is a joy in creating this with the ensemble. I get excited by Black femmes telling stories, Black femmes being on stage. This play is about the 'yes' of it all: friends that get you, you get them, and you keep it moving."

The cast includes **Dezi Bing** (*The Legend of Georgia McBride* at Round House Theatre; *Wig Out* at Studio Theatre), **Afua Busia** (*Intimate Apparel* at Utah Shakespeare Festival; *School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play* at Berkley Rep), **Erin Margaret Pettigrew** (previously worked with New York Theatre Workshop and Page 73 Productions), and **Cristina Pitter** (previously seen at The Metropolitan Opera and New Ohio Theatre).

The cast is joined by a dynamic creative team that includes Scenic Designer **Lawrence Moten**, Costume Designer **Ivania Stack**, Lighting Designer **Amith Chandrashaker**, Sound Designer **Tosin Olufolabi**, Properties Coordinator **Andrea "Dre" Moore**, Intimacy and Cultural Consultant **Dane Figueroa Edidi**, Casting Director **Sarah Cooney**, Dramaturg **Martine Kei Green-Rogers**, and Production Stage Manager **Samantha Wilhelm**.

"We declare you a terrorist..."

Moscow, 2002: halfway through Putin's first official term as president. After he brutally crushes a rebellion in the territory of Chechnya, a group of Chechen insurgents hijack a blockbuster

musical and take the entire audience of nearly 800 people—including the playwright—hostage. Based on the real events of the Dubrovka Theater hostage crisis, *“We declare you a terrorist...”* follows the playwright as he comes to terms with that tragic night at the theatre. This taut political thriller is brought to life through live theatre and film by co-directors Ryan Rilette and Jared Mezzocchi, the team behind the runaway hit *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the NightTime*.

Co-directors **Ryan Rilette** and **Jared Mezzocchi** express the importance of harnessing digital energy to properly execute *“We declare you a terrorist...”* at Round House Theatre. “We are taking what we learned about digital media during the pandemic and adding it to the work we did on previous collaborations like *Oslo* and *Curious Incident* to create a new way of exploring character with ‘*We declare you a terrorist....*’ We’re using both prerecorded and live video with projections to take you inside the mind of the lead character. We can’t wait for audiences to experience it!”

The cast includes **Elliott Bales** (*Kleptocracy* at Arena Stage; *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* at Theatre Alliance [Helen Hayes nomination]), **Ava Eisenson** (*The Blacklist* on NBC; *Only Murders in the Building* on Hulu [upcoming]), **Cody Nickell** (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Oslo* at Round House Theatre; *Fairview* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre), and **Bekah Zornosa** (*Pipeline* at Everyman Theatre; *ALIEN/NATION* at Williamstown Theatre Festival).

The cast is joined by a brilliant creative team, some of whom are also designers for *it’s not a trip it’s a journey*: Scenic Designer **Lawrence Moten**, Costume Designer **Ivania Stack**, Lighting Designer **Amith Chandrashaker**, Sound Designer/Composer **Matthew M. Nielson**, Properties Coordinator **Andrea “Dre” Moore**, Fight Choreographer **Casey Kaleba**, Dramaturg **Naysan Mojgani**, Casting Director **Sarah Cooney**, Assistant Director **Ashley Mapley-Brittle**, and **Production Stage Manager** Che Wernsman.

ARTIST INFORMATION (*it's not a trip it's a journey*)

Charly Evon Simpson (Playwright) is a playwright and TV writer based in Brooklyn. Her plays include *Behind the Sheet*, *sandblasted*, *Jump*, *form of a girl unknown*, *it's not a trip it's a journey*, and more. Her work has been seen and/or developed with Vineyard Theatre, WP Theater, Ensemble Studio Theatre, The Lark, P73, The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Chautauqua Theater Company, Salt Lake Acting Company, National New Play Network, and others. She is a recipient of the Vineyard Theatre's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award and the Dramatists Guild's Lanford Wilson Award and is a resident of New Dramatists and a core writer at The Playwrights' Center. She's a former member of WP Theater's 2018-2020 Lab, SPACE on Ryder Farm's The Working Farm, Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers' Group, and Ensemble Studio Theatre's Youngblood. In TV, she has worked on Showtime's *American Rust* and currently has an overall deal at HBO, where she has worked on several shows, including the second season of *Industry*. Charly has a BA from Brown University, a master's in Women's Studies from University of Oxford, New College, and her MFA in Playwriting from Hunter College.

Nicole A. Watson (Director) is the Associate Artistic Director at the McCarter Theatre Center. Prior to this, she was the Associate Artistic Director at Round House Theatre. On behalf of both theaters, she created the Adrienne Kennedy Festival. While at Round House, she directed *A Doll's House Part 2* and *School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play*. In addition to her work as an arts leader, Nicole continues direct, working at theaters and universities across the country, championing new plays and playwrights. She has worked with New Dramatists, the Fire this Time Festival, the New Black Fest, the Women's Project Theater, The 52nd Street Project, Baltimore Center Stage, Signature Theater, Playmakers Repertory Theatre, A.C.T., Washington National Opera, Theater Latte Da, The Playwrights Center, The Kennedy Center, Working Theater, Smith College, UNCSA, and NYU. She is a New Georges Affiliated Artist, an alum of the Drama League, the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, and a member of the SDC. NicoleAWatson.com

CAST INFORMATION (ALPHABETICAL)

Dezi Bing (Willie) is thrilled to be working on *it's not a trip it's a journey* at Round House Theatre. Previous Round House credits include *The Legend of Georgia McBride*. DC credits include *Wig Out* at Studio Theatre; *All the Way* and *The Great Society* at Arena Stage; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Folger Shakespeare Theatre; *Occupied Territories* at Theater Alliance; and *For Black Trans Girls* at Woolly Mammoth / The Public Theater (NYC). Regional credits include *Stage Directions* at Penumbra Theatre and *All Shook Up* at The Ogunquit Playhouse. Dezi completed a Kenan Institute Playwriting Fellowship at The Kennedy Center, where she wrote and workshopped her first play, *The Peculiar Awakening of Riley Parker*. Dezi is a graduate of The North Carolina School of the Arts. Instagram: @Dezibing; TikTok: @Daaamndez7.

Afua Busia (Rain) is so excited to be a part of the world premiere of *it's not a trip it's a journey* at Round House Theatre. Regional credits include *Intimate Apparel* at Utah Shakespeare Festival; *School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play* and *An Octoroon* at Berkeley Rep; and *A Christmas Carol* at American Conservatory Theatre, where Afua received her MFA in acting. Instagram: @afuab. AfuaBusia.com.

Erin Margaret Pettigrew (June) is a first-generation Los Angeles native, raised in Belizean and American cultures. As a mover, dancer, storyteller, educator, collaborator, and learner, Erin's artist-journey has been developed and shaped with many communities and creators such as Manhattan Theatre Club, New York Theatre Workshop, Page 73, JAG, GungHo, in addition to facilitating and learning alongside educational institutions such as University of California – Santa Barbara, The New School, New York University, CUNY, and many other artistic and vibrant communities. Erin is grateful and blessed to be expanding the love of that community at Round House Theatre with the cast and crew of *it's not a trip it's a journey*.

Cristina Pitter (Frankie) is a queer multi-spirit afrolatine artist, abolitionist, and alchemist. You may have seen their work at JACK, The Bushwick Starr, Target Margin Theatre, Abrons Art

Center, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Mabou Mines, 59E59, Ars Nova, New Ohio Theatre, Joe's Pub, The Tank, The Metropolitan Opera, or three separate but specific bathtubs.

CristinaPitter.com (They/She).

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

It's not a trip it's a journey

By Charly Evon Simpson

Directed by Nicole A. Watson

CAST LIST:

Erin Margaret Pettigrew as June*

Cristina Pitter as Frankie*

Afua Busia as Rain*

Dezi Bing as Willie

* - *Round House Theatre debut*

ABOUT *it's not a trip it's a journey*:

June needs a journey. Like, now. So, she convinces her friends to ditch New York City (and their cellphones) for an impromptu road trip to the Grand Canyon. As the four wildly different friends travel through the wondrous and not-so-wondrous sights of the United States, they must come together to contend with being Black, femme, and American...all at the same time. An intimate play with vast ambitions, *it's not a trip it's a journey* is about road trips, friendships, and finding the difference between surviving and thriving.

ARTIST INFORMATION ("*We declare you a terrorist...*")

Tim J. Lord (Playwright) is the inaugural recipient of the Apothetae and Lark Fellowship for a writer with a disability, a 2017-18 Jerome Fellow at the Playwrights Center, and the inaugural recipient of the Orchard Project's Reg E. Cathey Writing Residency for a writer adapting classical material. He was commissioned by the Kennedy Center's Theatre for Young Audiences to create a new radio play—the result was *Through the Sunken Lands*, which follows Artemis Sims, a young woman with cerebral palsy, as she attempts to save her hometown from both a massive flood and a couple of corporate raiders with a taste for "flamin' hot" corn chips. His newest play, *We Will Never Reach the Shore*, is an adaptation of Euripides' *The Phoenician Women* and

tells the story of the battle between Oedipus' sons for control of Thebes and the refugee women who get caught between them. It will be presented in New York this spring as part of Queens Theater in the Park's National Disability Convening and Festival. "*We declare you a terrorist...*" received a finishing commission from Round House Theatre and was developed at The New Harmony Project and the Summer Play Festival. Other work has been produced and developed at The Public Theater, The Lark (RIP), The William Inge Theatre Festival, The Vagrancy, Pillsbury House + Theater, The Working Theater, The 52nd Street Project, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. Tim studied with Paula Vogel and is a graduate of the MFA Playwriting Program at the University of California, San Diego. TimJLord.com

Ryan Rilette (Co-Director) is in his tenth season as Artistic Director of Round House Theatre. During his tenure, he has produced five of the best-selling and highest-attended seasons in the theatre's history. His productions have received 63 Helen Hayes Awards nominations and 14 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Original New Play or Musical, Outstanding Ensemble, and Outstanding Resident Musical. Ryan created the theatre's Equal Play Commissioning program, Resident Artist program, Fair Play pay scale for artists, and Free Play ticketing program. For Round House, he has directed *Throw Me on the Burnpile and Light Me Up, Homebound, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Oslo, Small Mouth Sounds, "Master Harold"... and the Boys, The Book of Will, Angels in America: Perestroika, The Night Alive, Fool for Love, This, and How to Write a New Book for the Bible*. Prior to joining Round House, Ryan served as Producing Director of Marin Theatre Company, Producing Artistic Director of Southern Rep Theatre, and co-founder and Artistic Director of Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company. He is the former Board President of the National New Play Network, and formerly served on the boards of theatreWashington and Maryland Citizens for the Arts. Ryan is a member of SDC, AEA, and SAG-AFTRA.

Jared Mezzocchi (Co-Director/Multimedia Designer) is an Obie Award-winning multimedia theatre director and designer. Recent Round House Theatre credits include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Director, Multimedia Designer) and *Oslo* (Multimedia Designer).

DC credits include *How to Catch a Star* at The Kennedy Center (Writer/Director); and *The Nether*, *Shipwreck*, *Women Laughing Alone with Salad*, and *Chad Deity* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre (Projection Design). Regional credits include *Someone Else's House* at Geffen Playhouse (Writer/Performer) and *On the Beauty of Loss* at Vineyard Theater (Writer/Designer/Performer). Regional design credits include Portland Center Stage, South Coast Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Cleveland Play House, Baltimore Center Stage, and Company One. In 2016, he received The Lucille Lortel and Henry Hewes Award for his work in Qui Nguyen's *Vietgone* at the Manhattan Theatre Club in NYC. In 2021, the *New York Times* highlighted his multimedia work in a spotlight article on his impact during the pandemic alongside four other artists, including Paula Vogel and Andrew Lloyd Webber. His work was also celebrated as a *New York Times* Critic Pick on Sarah Gancher's *Russian Troll Farm* (Co-Director and Multimedia Designer), where it was praised for being one of the first digitally native successes for virtual theatre. He is a two-time MacDowell Artist Fellow, a 2012 Princess Grace Award winner, and spends his summers as Producing Artistic Director of Andy's Summer Playhouse. Jared is an Associate Professor at The University of Maryland (MFA Design, Projection and Multimedia) and Associate Director of the School for Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies, as well as the Co-Director of the newly announced Brin Institute for New Performance. Over the pandemic, Jared founded Virtual Design Collective (ViDCo), which has aided in the development of over 50 new hybrid works over the last two years, including the current season of Paula Vogel's *Bard at the Gate*, co-produced by the McCarter Theatre Center.

CAST INFORMATION (ALPHABETICAL)

Elliott Bales (FSB Officer) makes his Round House debut with "*We declare you a terrorist....*" DC credits include *Kleptocracy*, *Junk*, and *The Great Society* at Arena Stage; *Kings* at Studio Theater; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Folger Shakespeare Theatre; *Occupied Territories* and *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* at Theater Alliance (Helen Hayes nomination); *Harvey* at 1st Stage; *Not Enuf Lifetimes* at The Welders; and *Last of the Whyos* at Spooky Action Theater. Regional credits include *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry IV, Part 1* at Riverside Theater; and *Annie* and *White Christmas* at Little Theater on the Square. He also performs in film and television and narrates

audio books. Elliott retired from the US Army after 26 years of service.

Ava Eisenson (Kayira) is a New York City-based actor, thrilled to be making her Round House Theatre debut. Previous theatre credits include *Diaspora* at The Gym at Judson; *the giants* at Loft 227; *Old Love New Love* at Luna Stages; *The Mnemonist of Dutchess County* at The Beckett Theatre; and *365 Days/365 Plays* at The Public Theatre. Recent film and TV credits include *Milkwater* (starring Molly Bernard and Robin de Jesús); *Songs for a Sloth* (Winner: Best Film, Venice Film Awards); *The Politician* on Netflix; *Dietland* on AMC; *The Blacklist* on NBC; *FBI* on CBS; and upcoming *Only Murders in the Building* on Hulu. Ava is also working on an art/tech project called SecondBody (secondbody.co). AvaEisenson.com.

Cody Nickell (The Writer) is thrilled to be returning to Round House Theatre. Recently, Cody was seen in *Tuesdays with Morrie* at Theater J. Other recent credits include *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at The Folger Theatre; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Oslo* at Round House Theatre; *Fairview* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre; and *Richard III* at Shakespeare Theatre. Cody's regional credits include shows at Gulfshore Playhouse (Artistic Associate for 3 seasons), The Arden Theatre, The Wilma Theatre;, Playmakers Rep, Portland Center Stage, Santa Cruz Shakespeare, Syracuse Stage, San Jose Rep, Studio Theatre, Two River Theatre, and Barrington Stage, as well as appearances with the Naples Philharmonic, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra. Cody's career also includes film, television, and voiceover work. Cody is the recipient of the Connecticut Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Lead Actor, and he has been nominated for four Helen Hayes Awards. Cody is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama.

Bekah Zornosa (Masha) is so happy to be making her Round House Theatre debut. Recent credits include *ALIEN/NATION* at Williamstown Theatre Festival; *Pipeline* at Everyman Theatre; *The Eulogy* at Rorschach Theatre; *Fantastagirl and The Math Monster* (reading) at Adventure Theatre; and *Jingle in July: A New Play Festival* at Adventure Theatre. Some of her American University credits include *The Sins of Sor Juana*, *The Boy Detective Fails*, and *Miss You*

Like Hell. Assistant directing credits include *Let Me Just* at American University. Bekah is currently studying Musical Theatre, as well as Public Relations and Strategic Communications at American University (class of 2023). BekahZornosa.com. Instagram: @bekahzornosa

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

We declare you a terrorist...

By Tim J. Lord

Co-Directed by Ryan Rilette and Jared Mezzocchi

CAST LIST:

Elliot Bales as The FSB Officer*

Cody Nickell as The Writer

Bekah Zornosa as Masha*

Ava Eisenson as Kayira*

* - *Round House Theatre debut*

ABOUT “We declare you a terrorist...”

Moscow, 2002: halfway through Putin’s first official term as president. After he brutally crushes a rebellion in the territory of Chechnya, a group of Chechen insurgents hijack a blockbuster musical and take the entire audience of nearly 800 people—including the playwright—hostage. Based on the real events of the Dubrovka Theater hostage crisis, “*We declare you a terrorist...*”

PERFORMANCE DATES AND TIMES:

it's not a trip it's a journey runs from April 5 to May 8, 2022; and ***“We declare you a terrorist...”*** runs from *April 7 to May 8, 2022*. Visit RoundHouseTheatre.org for full performance schedule.

WHERE:

Round House Theatre, 4545 East-West Highway in Bethesda (one block from Wisconsin Ave. and Metro’s Bethesda station). For directions, parking, and public transportation info, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/Visit-Us/.

FESTIVAL TICKETS & PACKAGES:

Full festival information, including the event schedule and additional programming, may be

found at RoundHouseTheatre.org/Festival. Tickets for the world premiere productions of *it's not a trip it's a journey* and *"We declare you a terrorist..."* are on sale now and can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100, ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org, or visiting the box office.

- **Festival Packages** include savings on purchases of both world premiere productions—*it's not a trip it's a journey* and *"We declare you a terrorist..."*—performed in repertory. Patrons ordering Festival Packages may add free tickets for developmental play readings in advance of reservations opening to the general public.
- **Industry Weekends (April 29 – May 1, 2022 | May 6 – 8, 2022)**: Our professional colleagues from around the country are invited to join us for Industry Weekends in celebration of these exciting new plays. Each weekend has been planned to allow guests to attend both main stage world premieres, as well as two readings and a panel discussion, while leaving plenty of time to catch up with other guests and artists. Contact literary@roundhousetheatre.org for more information.

Available ticket discounts include:

- **Free Play** – free tickets for students ages 13 through college: Round House Theatre's Free Play initiative ties into our greater strategy to develop theatre audiences of tomorrow by providing rich, meaningful arts experiences today. For more information, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/FreePlay or email Education@RoundHouseTheatre.org.
- **On the House** – community ticket access program: Round House's next step to remove barriers that can make it difficult for some members of our community to experience our work is On the House, which provides complimentary group tickets to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and community-serving organizations with a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. For more information, visit RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage/On-The-House or email Community@RoundHouseTheatre.org.
- **Pay-What-You-Can performances**: PWYC tickets go on sale online or by phone only (no walk-up sales) beginning one week before the first performance of each show. The

patron decides the admission price. Limit of two tickets per order. PWYC tickets are subject to availability. PWYC dates:

- *it's not a trip it's a journey*: Wednesday, April 6 at 7:30pm; Saturday, April 16 at 2:00pm
 - *"We declare you a terrorist..."*: Saturday, April 9 at 2:00pm; Wednesday, April 13 at 7:30pm
- **Blue Star Theatre Program**: Active-duty military personnel, veterans, and their immediate family qualify for a \$10 discount off the single ticket price. Learn more at RoundHouseTheatre.org/On-Stage/Tickets.
 - **2-For-1 Tuesday**: For our Tuesday, April 5 performance of *it's not a trip it's a journey* and Tuesday, April 12 performance of *"We declare you a terrorist..."*, all seats are buy one, get one free. 2-for-1 Tuesday tickets are available online or by phone (9240.644.1100) with promo code TWOFORONE beginning one week before the first performance of each show. Discounts may not be combined. Not valid on previously purchased tickets.
 - **Group Sales**: Groups of 10 or more can save 10% off the single ticket price and are exempt from single ticket fees. These tickets must be reserved and purchased in advance by calling 240.644.1100 or emailing GroupSales@RoundHouseTheatre.org.

ROUND HOUSE THEATRE VACCINE AND MASK REQUIREMENTS

Patrons must present a photo ID and show proof that they meet the CDC definition of being fully vaccinated* at the time of entry to into the theatre. Patrons may display proof of vaccination with a physical or digital copy of their vaccination card.

Masks will also be required for all guests, regardless of vaccination status, except while eating or drinking in the lobby café area.

Guests who are exempt from vaccination (including children under 5, people with certain medical conditions preventing vaccination, or those with closely held religious beliefs that prevent vaccination) must provide proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 48 hours of the performance start time.

NOTE: This policy is in effect through March 2022. We will continue to review current circumstances and CDC and local government recommendations to determine whether the mandate may be lifted or extended.

**"Fully vaccinated" means that either 14 days have passed since receiving the second dose of FDA or WHO authorized double-dose vaccines or that 14 days have passed since receiving the sole dose of FDA or WHO authorized single-dose vaccines.*

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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