



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS CONTACT:

Alexandria Moreland, 848.482.0462

amoreland@roundhousetheatre.org

ROUND HOUSE THEATRE CONCLUDES SEASON
WITH THE TONY AWARD- & PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING
TOPDOG/UNDERDOG

A MODERN AMERICAN CLASSIC, WRITTEN BY **SUZAN-LORI PARKS**

DIRECTED BY **JAMIL JUDE**

May 29 – June 23 at Round House Theatre

Bethesda, Md. (April 30, 2024) – Round House Theatre concludes its 2023-2024 Season with the Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning *Topdog/Underdog*, written by Suzan-Lori Parks. This modern American classic, directed by Jamil Jude, explores the lives of two brothers who were bound together by their names, blood, and shared destiny. Press Night is on Monday, June 3 at 8pm. **Please see below for complete program details and ticket information.**

Abandoned by their parents as teenagers, brothers Lincoln and Booth learned to rely on each other. As adults, Lincoln and Booth are locked in a cycle of love and resentment, foretold by the names they were given by their father as jokes and compounded by the challenges of poverty and racism. In her “utterly mesmerizing” (*Variety*) Pulitzer Prize-winner—named the best American play written in the past 30 years by the *New York Times* and recipient of the 2023 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play—celebrated writer Suzan-Lori Parks asks whether we can ever really change the cards we’re dealt as the brothers’ tug-of-war for dominance builds to

devastating, life-changing consequences.

“We’re thrilled to close the 2023-2024 Season with *Topdog/Underdog*,” says **Artistic Director Ryan Rilette**. “With the masterful storytelling of Suzan-Lori Parks, the brilliant direction of Jamil Jude, two of DC’s best actors, and a truly amazing team of designers, this revival of one of the most celebrated plays of the 21st century is sure to be a theatrical highlight of 2024.”

The dynamic two-hander cast includes **Ro Boddie** (*The Mountaintop* and August Wilson’s *Radio Golf* at Round House Theatre; *Tempestuous Elements* at Arena Stage) and **Yao Dogbe** (*Nollywood Dreams* and *Ohio State Murders* at Round House Theatre; *Richard III* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater). The understudy for this production is **Monuaze Mason**.

The cast is joined by a talented creative team, which includes Scenic Designer **Meghan Raham**, Costume Designer **Danielle Preston**, Lighting Designer **Xavier Pierce**, Sound Designer **Nick Hernandez**, Fight Choreographer **Casey Kaleba**, Properties Coordinator **Chelsea Dean**, Casting Director **Sarah Cooney**, Dramaturg **Naysan Mojgani**, Card Manipulation Consultant **Ryan Phillips**, and Production Stage Manager **Che Wernsman**.

Tickets may be purchased by calling 240.644.1100 or ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org. Round House Theatre is located at 4545 East-West Highway, one block from Wisconsin Avenue and the Bethesda station on Metro’s Red Line.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Suzan-Lori Parks (Playwright) is a multi-award-winning American writer and the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Topdog/Underdog*, which recently enjoyed its 20th anniversary Broadway revival. The production won both the 2023 Tony Award (Best Revival of a Play) and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Just last year, in 2023, Parks also had three new works which all received world premieres: at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, *Sally & Tom* (Steinberg New Play Award finalist); at Joe’s Pub in New York City, *Plays for the*

Plague Year (winner of the Drama Desk Award for Best Music in a Play); and at the Public Theatre, Parks's world-premiered a musical adaptation of the 1972 film *The Harder They Come* (winner: Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Off-Broadway Musical).

Parks's other notable works for theatre include: *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess* (Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical), *Unchain My Heart: The Ray Charles Musical*, *White Noise*, *The Book of Grace*, *In the Blood*, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*, *The America Play*, *Father Comes Home From The Wars (Parts 1 ,2, &3)*, and *Fucking A*. Parks's marathon writing "diary play" *365 Days/365 Plays*— her first project in which she wrote a play a day for an entire year—was produced at more than 700 theatres worldwide, creating one of the largest grassroots collaborations in theatre history. A MacArthur "Genius" Fellow, Parks's novel *Getting Mother's Body* is published by Random House. She also writes extensively for the screen—most recently, as the scriptwriter for the film *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* and as the showrunner/executive producer/head writer for the television show *Genius: Aretha*. In 2023, Parks was named among "TIME Magazine's 100." Other notable accolades and awards include the prestigious Gish Prize for Excellence in the Arts and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. She is also a recipient of a Lila-Wallace—Reader's Digest Award, a CalArts/Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, and a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. In November 2022, Parks was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame. She is Writer in Residence of the Public Theater, a professor at New York University, and an alumna of New Dramatists and of Mount Holyoke College, where she studied creative writing with James Baldwin, who encouraged Parks to begin writing for the theatre. In her spare time, Parks also writes songs and fronts her band Sula and The Joyful Noise.

Jamil Jude (Director) is a highly accomplished director, producer, playwright, and dramaturg focusing on bringing socially relevant art to the community. Jamil is the Artistic Director at Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia, where he previously served as Associate Artistic Director. Additionally, he is the Co-Founder of The New Griots Festival, which is dedicated to celebrating, advocating, and advancing the careers of emerging Black artists in

the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area in Minnesota. Prior to joining the staff at True Colors, Jamil served as the Artistic Programming Associate at Park Square Theatre in St. Paul, a Producer in Residence at Minneapolis' Mixed Blood Theatre, and a New Play Producing Fellow at Arena Stage in Washington, DC, and co-founded the Colored People's Theatre. Among his many awards, Jamil has been named the recipient of the Turn The Spotlight Fellowship (2018/19), Andrew W. Mellon/TCG Leadership U Fellowship (2015/17), Nautilus Music Theater Management Fellowship (2014/15), NNPN Producer Residency (2011/12; 2012/13), Jerome Foundation/The Playwrights' Center Many Voices Mentorship (2013/14) and the Allen Lee Hughes Fellowship at Arena Stage (2009/10; 2010/11). Jamil received his Bachelor of Arts from Colgate University.

CAST INFORMATION (ALPHABETICAL)

Ro Boddie (Lincoln) returns to Round House Theatre, where he previously appeared in *The Mountaintop*, August Wilson's *Radio Golf*, *The Tempest*, and *A Boy and His Soul*. Select DC credits include *Tempestuous Elements* at Arena Stage and *Pipeline* at Studio Theatre. Off-Broadway credits include *Socrates* at the Public Theater and *Seize the King* at Classical Theatre of Harlem. Select regional credits include *Windfall* at Bay Street Theater; *A Play is a Poem* at Mark Taper Forum; *Blueprints to Freedom* at La Jolla Playhouse; and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* at Baltimore Center Stage. Television credits include *Godfather of Harlem*, *Run the World*, *The Good Wife*, *Elementary*, and *Person of Interest*. Ro is an alum of University of the North Carolina School of the Arts. Instagram: roboddieart

Yao Dogbe (Booth) is happy to be making his return to Round House Theatre. Previous Round House credits include *Nollywood Dream* and *Ohio State Murders*. Off-Broadway credits include *The Doctor* at Park Avenue Armory and *Nollywood Dreams* at MCC Theater. Tour credits include *Othello* and *Love's Labour's Lost* with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks and *Prince Caspian: The Chronicles of Narnia* and *A Christmas Carol* with Hampstead Stage Company. Regional credits include *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Macbeth* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater; *Fly* at Capital Repertory Theatre; *Intimate Apparel* at Northlight

Theatre; *Routes* at Remy Bumpo Theatre Company; *King Lear* at Shakespeare Theatre Company; and *Cymbeline* at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. Yao is a first-generation Ghanaian American actor and an activist for African cultural and dialectical authenticity, on stage and film, for the African diaspora. Other credits include Everett D. Mitchell documentary and *Homebound* web series. Education: MFA Acting, University of Houston; BFA Fine Arts/Graphic Design, Norfolk State University.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Topdog/Underdog

Written by Suzan-Lori Parks

Directed by Jamil Jude

May 29 – June 23, 2024

CAST LIST (alphabetical order):

Ro Boddie: Lincoln

Yao Dogbe: Booth

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/.

ABOUT THE PLAY:

Abandoned by their parents as teenagers, brothers Lincoln and Booth learned to rely on each other. As adults, Lincoln and Booth are locked in a cycle of love and resentment, foretold by the names they were given by their father as jokes and compounded by the challenges of poverty and racism. In her “utterly mesmerizing” (*Variety*) Pulitzer Prize-winner—named the best American play written in the past 30 years by the *New York Times* and recent recipient of the 2023 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play—celebrated writer Suzan-Lori Parks asks whether we can ever really change the cards we're dealt as the brothers' tug-of-war for dominance builds to devastating, life-changing consequences.

DATES AND TIMES:

Topdog/Underdog runs from May 29 to June 23, 2024. Performances are Tuesday through Thursday at 7:30 pm, Friday and Saturday at 8:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 pm.

Audio described performance: Saturday, June 8 at 2:00 pm

Open captioned performance: Saturday, June 15 at 2:00 pm

Mask-required performances: Tuesday, June 18 at 7:30 pm; Saturday, June 22 at 2:00 pm

TICKETS:

Tickets can be purchased by calling 240.644.1100, ordering online at RoundHouseTheatre.org, or visiting the box office. 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-TheHouse 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 three weeks before the first performance of each show. The patron decides the admission price. Limit of two tickets per order. PWYC tickets are available for performances on Wednesday, May 29 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, June 1 at 2:00 pm and are subject to availability.

- **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 all Tuesday performances of *Topdog/Underdog*, all seats are buy one, get one free. 2-for-1 Tuesday tickets are available online or by phone (240.644.1100) with promo code TWOFORONE. 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 HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

Round House Theatre no longer requires that audience members wear masks for most performances in our theatre. However, masks are required for certain performances and for events in other Round House spaces, including our Event Room. We continue to strongly recommend masks as the best way for individuals to protect themselves from COVID-19 and other seasonal viruses, and we ask our audience members to respect the choices of others.

Round House will offer a limited number of mask-required performances for audience members who may prefer a fully masked environment. **Masks are required for performances on June 18 (7:30 pm) and 22 (2:00 pm).**

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 50,000 patrons each year at our theatre in Bethesda. Round House has been nominated for 213 Helen Hayes Awards and has won 42, 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 ages 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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